

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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PART 1

Abstract

Apple Inc. is the American multinational corporation which manufactures computer, mobile phones, tablets and software since 1977. Strategic Management is often referred to strategic planning including strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation. In order to have effective strategic management, there are three stages in the process, firstly strategic formulation then strategy implementation and lastly strategy evaluation. Apple Inc. has to set up clear vision and mission statement for strategy formulation. As strategic management consultant, prior to any recommendations and suggestions made to Apple management, it is essential to have integrated understanding of the internal and external environment of the Company, identifying various threats and weaknesses and maximize the strength and opportunities available and explore the core competencies which can generate competitive advantage. Thereafter, strategies should be implemented and monitored to ensure the sustained growth of the Corporation in this competitive and volatile world. Of course, Apple would encounter barriers of entry into the market of the chosen country with reference to its existing competitors, marketing environment and regulatory governance and the adoption of relevant strategies should be exploited to overcome such barriers

1. INTRODUCTION

The success story of Apple Inc. is the legend and dream of the entrepreneur and businessman alike. It is difficult to decide which strategic policies are adopted before making a thorough review of the overall environment of Apple taking into consideration of various factors and applying suitable analytical tools to enable the managers to make effective strategic decisions and to integrate its business into international market to ensure sustained growth in operation and market share in the world.

Apple's main product is iPhone which runs on its own operating system and accounts for 54.7% of the company's revenue. In 2019, Apple introduced iPhone 11 series and new MacBook products generating 9.9% of the total company's revenue. Apple not only introduced electronic products but also services including digital content, stores, AppleCare and iCloud etc. which generated 17.8% of the company's revenue.

2. BACKGROUND AND ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

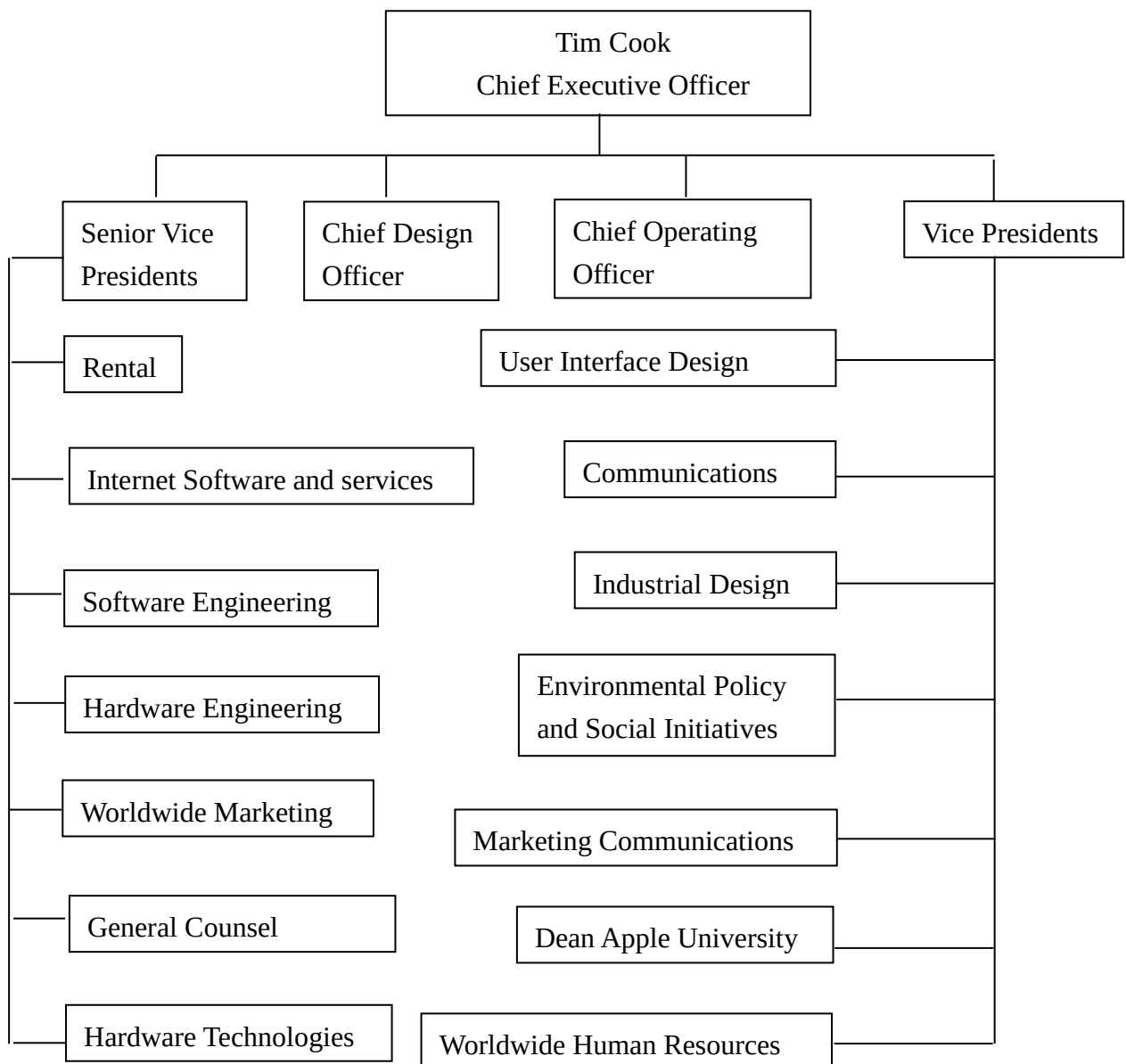
Apple Inc. is an American multinational company that design, develop and sell computer, electronic and software. Apple was founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne on 1 April 1976 to develop and sell computers. Apple Computer Inc. was incorporated in January 1977 with the headquarter in Cupertino California and was listed in 1980. Apple first focused on information technology but later shifted to computer products due to intense market competition. Steve Jobs was forced to resign as CEO in 1985 and resumed as CEO in 1996 introducing new ideas and corporate philosophy. Apple became the market leader in consumer electronics with the success introduction of iPod player in 2001 and iPhone and MacBook in the years thereafter. After years of expansion and marketing, Apple established its own branding and offered computer, mobile phones, music players, television, tablets and laptops.

Apple is the largest information technology company by revenue and the world's largest mobile phone manufacturer after Samsung. The company has revolutionized the smartphone market and become an iconic brand. Apple has expanded its business by selling and manufacturing computer hardware and software and achieved significant growth in sales of iPod, iPad and iPhone products. Apple became the first US company to be valued at over US \$700 billion. In

2019, the revenue of Apple was US\$260 billion with profit at US\$55 billion and employed 137,000 full-time employees as in 2019 and maintained its sales force in over 100 countries.

The brand recognition is mainly the result of the concern of the interest and needs of the consumers and introduced new products to satisfy such needs.

The organizational structure of Apple, subject to matrix organizational structure and divisional organizational structure, is illustrated below:



2.1 Organizational Culture

a. Striving for excellency

Apple only hired the best people in the labour market, paid them well and retained them. Steve Jobs was well known for firing employees who did not meet his expectations and Tim Cook basically followed this culture. Striving for Excellency is regarded as a critical success factor in business in particular in product design and development which is an important growth strategy.

b. Creativity

Apple encourages creativity among employees to generate new ideas, knowledge skills and abilities. This is extremely important for an informational technology company to maintain its leadership in product design and development and satisfy customers' expectation.

c. Innovation

The company's organizational culture encourages rapid innovation. It motivates its employees to innovate in individual work performances and contribute to product development processes. Product differentiation through quality is the main focus of Apple's organizational culture.

d. Secrecy

Steve Jobs was the one who encouraged the culture of secrecy. This culture will minimize the chance of theft of proprietary information or intellectual property. This will keep all information within the company and maximize the leading edge over the competitors. Jobs believed in maintaining high level of secrecy and competition proved to generate results and boost employees' morale.

e. Aggressiveness

This culture of aggressiveness relates to Steve Job's combative approach to leadership and echoed with his "stay hungry, stay foolish" attitude. The employees are aggressive to chase for the challenge and change under competitive pressure.

2.2 Vision and Mission

Organizational vision and mission always provide a sense of purpose or establish the reason of existence of an organization and embracing both long term and short term goals. The vision statement reflects where the company sees itself in the future and the mission statement outlines the tactics the company looks to implement steps toward its future expansion.

a. Vision

“ We believe that we are on the face of the earth to make great products and that’s not changing. We are constantly focusing on innovating. We believe in the simple and not complex.....”

Some of the components associated with this statement include

- a. Innovations
- b. Integration of partners and excellence
- c. Market specialization

b. Mission

Apple has evolved over the years from a producer of personal computer into a diversified producer of electronic device and related services. The Company’s mission statement and other statements of values and visions have also changed since its incorporation in 1977. The company recognizes the changing market and industry.

The current statement as stated in the 2018 Annual report is

“to bringing the best user experience to its customers through its innovative hardware, software and services’

In the mission statement, the company refers the following components

- a. Best user experience - It is Apple's priority that the product is user- friendly and with security feature to enhance user experience
- b. Improving the lives of people- Apple reiterates the importance of simplicity and user-friendly technology and ensures ease and simplicity to improve user experience.
- c. Empowerment of the public- The company considers its products to be more than mere tools of entertainment and continue to bring new design to meet customers' needs.
- d. Top-quality products- The Company strives to provide the customers with the best quality products and integrate with hardware, software and services to outperform the competitors in the market.

2.3 Strategic Internal Audit

Apple has to undergo a thorough strategic internal audit of the Company before making any decision on strategy setting. It requires the gathering and assimilating of the information regarding the Company's management, marketing, finance, production and operations research and development and management information systems operations. The Company must have a clear understanding of the resources available. The various functions of marketing, product and service planning, pricing, distribution, marketing research and cost/benefit analysis are to be reviewed with reference to the internal resources.

In this situation, an IFE Matrix is set up to assess the internal factor evaluation of the internal environment of the Company

IFE Matrix

	Strengths	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
1	Leadership Position	0.10	4	0.40
2	Innovation Products	0.08	3	0.24
3	Brand Identity	0.07	2	0.14
4	Design and Technology	0.05	3	0.15
5	High Profit Margin	0.05	2	0.10
6	Strong distribution chain	0.06	3	0.18
7	Apple product ecosystem	0.05	3	0.15
8	Sustainability of product	0.06	4	0.24

	Weakness	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
1	High price products	0.05	2	0.10
2	Incompatibility	0.06	2	0.12
3	Depending on few products	0.04	2	0.08
4	Limited advertisement and promotion	0.06	1	0.06
5	Matching customers expectation	0.05	2	0.10
6	Decline sales in China	0.10	3	0.30
7	Market share behind competition	0.06	2	0.12
8	Long waiting time for new product	0.06	1	0.06
	TOTAL	01.00		2.54

2.3.1 Internal Analysis

- a. It was noted that Apple focus on design and functionality of products. It adapted advanced features as it was based of competitive advantage. Apple first introduced iPad, the first device which stored thousands of songs with simple shuffle and the development of Macintosh being the first computer to use graphical user interface.
- b. Apple tried to strengthen it ecosystem. It has vertical integration into software, hardware and services at the same time. As Apple customers cannot switch to other interface, thus developing closed ecosystems creating costs for its customers to the competition.

2.3.2 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis summarizes the key issues from the business environment and the strategic capability of an organization that is most likely to impact than strategy development. In SWOT analysis, Strength and Weaknesses depends on internal factors and Opportunities and Threats depends on External Factors of the Organization. SWOT analysis is useful in decision making about the organization targeting for any new project.

Apple strength in SWOT Analysis

a. Leadership position

Apple is a global market leader which manufactures notable mobile products that generate substantial revenue. It is the second largest phone manufacturer apart from Samsung. Apple is one of the most reliable company producing personalized advanced computers and smart technology.

b. Innovative products

Apple continued to produce innovative products and it becomes one of its key strength. It introduced lines of products from MacBook, then iPod, the iPhone, the iPad, the iWatch and AppleTV that cater for the changing needs of the customers.

c. Brand Identity

The Apple brand is number 3 brand amongst all companies in 2020 well after Google (No2) and Amazon (No.1) with brand value amounted to US \$140 billion and the brand equity is high. The company is capable of introducing profitable new products due to its strong brand image. All the products have the unique designed logo reflecting simplicity and creativity.

d. Design and Technology

Apple is famous in its product design. The advanced technology in computer hardware and software including the OS operating system make the branding unique and fashionable. It has the strong Research & Development Department that follows the latest technological progress.

e. High Profit margin

The core advantage of Apple over its competitors is their commands over its products. It has the pricing strategy that the price will be the same for various retail stores and the company would maintain the price by stabilizing the resale value of the product. High profit margin also allows the business to maintain its operation and cash reserves in times of economic uncertainties.

f. Strong Distribution Chain

Apple basically controlled its direct sales branches and its supply chain with its code of conduct closely monitored. It also sells through trade partners, online channels and through other premium retail stores. This will strengthen the Company's revenue generation and brand recognition. Apple has more than 500 of its own stores across five continents. In order to retain the quality level and maintain its quality standard, Apple sources the best component suppliers and put them in the supply chain.

g. Apple product ecosystem

The Company's ability to design a wide variety of integrated proprietary hardware, software, applications and services make the ecosystem very effective. This is Apple's extinct competitive advantage and many of its competitors fail to copy or imitate.

h. Sustainability of product

Most parts of iPhone can be reused and stored and used for new manufacturing. Also, Apple introduced the refurbished apple products including iPhone, MacBook etc. at discounted price and that would ensure the sustainability of the product.

Apple weakness in SWOT analysis

1. High priced products

Only high and middle income consumers can afford the premium price as apple products are considered luxury products. The premium pricing strategy exposed the weakness of the dependence of sales on high-end market segments.

2. Incompatibility

Many of its products are not compatible with third party software/accessories such as Windows and Android etc. and customers have to purchase Apple apps or accessories to continue using Apple products.. This makes a key concern on consumer decision making on purchasing Apple products such as phone and computer..

3. Dependency on few products

Apple has around 10 -13 products in its portfolio compared with different product lines introduced by Google, Microsoft and Samsung. The dependence on iPhone is very high and it is the leading source of revenue and the decline in iPhone sales has significant impact on the company.

4. Limited advertisement and promotion

Apple is keen on maintaining a loyal customer base even with poor marketing strategies. The Company would not increase their spending on advertising as compared with other competitors, Xiaomi and Samsung.

5. Matching Customer expectation

Every year, the Apple fans have great expectation from Apple on their new products introduced in Macworld Conference since 1980's and how to maintain the expectation is a great lesson to the management. Steve Jobs reminds the management that by the time you give the thing demanded by consumers, they would want something else. This ideology drove Apple to success.

6. Decline Sales in China

The sales of Apple products, in particular, iPhone, in China have started to decline recently. The sales of iPhone in China fell 20% year-on-year in the last quarter of 2018 whereas the sales of Huawei smartphones increased 23% during the same period. The increasing competition from Chinese manufacturers like Huawei and Xiaomi challenged the dominating position of Apple in China.

7. Market Share behind competitors

Apple market share is far behind major competitors for mobile phone Samsung is in the leading position in sales volume. Dell is dominant in computer sales and Microsoft in operating system and office system segments.

8. Weak distribution channel in developing countries

The distribution channel in developing countries is relatively weak. Direct distribution channel include Apple's retail and online shops and indirect distribution channel includes third party cellular network carriers, wholesalers and retailers. Apple has no stores in India not until recently and it is the inherited weakness in India.

Apple opportunities in SWOT analysis

a. Technological advancement

Technological advancement is always the opportunity for the technological company. People are expecting more advanced iPhones, iPads and MacBook with new features in the coming years. The 5G technology together with new camera function such as telephoto, wide angle and multi lens pave the new horizon for the company.

b. Steady Customer growth

Apple has gathered loyal and faithful supporters every year. Their customer retention rate is always over 90% and could adjust price strategy to maintain the segment growth and attract new customers and form new alliances.

c. Utilize Artificial Intelligent and IoT

In order to increase its profit margin and maintain its leading position, Apple should utilize its Artificial Intelligent and extend from 5G to AI and IoT as these would bring opportunities for technological brand. The release of Apple electric car and the cooperation with reputable TV manufacturers such as Samsung and Sony to integrate Apple TV in the TV set also widen the audience of Apple TV.

d. Expand Distribution Network

Apple has the opportunity to expand its distribution network and there is a need to change its distribution strategy. The expanded network enables Apple to reach more customers in global market and thus generate higher sales revenue with promotion.

e. Coloration with other brands

As leader of mobile phone in the world, Apple can continue to strengthen its retail chain distribution . It may consider increasing the retail stores especially in Asian market to extend its presence in the fast growing countries. Apple should consider continuing cooperation with Beats on Air pods, and Nintendo on iPhone apps and other lens manufacturer on iPhone lens in future

f. 5G Technology

The development of new 5G technology open a new horizon to Apple to focus on providing new 5G iPhone products including iPhone, MacBook and iPad which can take advantage of the faster internet connection and more efficient data communication.

g. Growing market

With the launching of iPhone in new market such as India and other developing countries in Asia and Latin America, Apple can focus on the growing market and start to send the marketing teams to those countries for brand building.

h. Smart wearable technology

With the great success of Iwatch and Air pods, Apple has the opportunity to grow beyond these two product lines. According to Forbes, the smart wearable technology device will double by 2022. Developing new product lines can support business growth in global market and gain opportunities for further growth in the intense competitive market.

i. Apple TV and Apple Electric Car

The increasing demand for apple TV open new horizon to Apple. It will diversify to entertaining area in particular the production of movie and music. Apple Electric Car is also a new venture in automobile business.

Apple threat in SWOT analysis

a. Coronavirus Outbreak'

With the outbreak of Coronavirus in early 2020, Apple's sales in China have dropped significantly. As Apple set up the major plant to manufacture iPhone in China, it is highly dependent on China for is manufacturing and supply chain. It is expected that Apple's annual revenue for 2020 might be dropped by 32%.

b. Counterfeit products

The third world countries, in particular, China that are illegally using the brand image to sell counterfeit products. Counterfeit products often with poor quality but with much lower price that ruin the reputation of Apple.

c. Market penetration

As Apple uses their own operating system, HTC, Samsung and LG use their android software to create new smartphones which capture 72% of the market Apple is ready to face the challenge from Google Android which they release new features updated to Android 10.

d. Increased competition

Various brand like Samsung and Huawei have introduced newer, lighter, larger screen phones in the market capturing certain niche market customers. For laptops and desktop computer, Dell and Lenovo have released newer models with faster CPU and more peripheral accessories. As the competition is getting stronger, Apple might have to revise its pricing policy.

e. Lawsuits

Several class action lawsuits have been filed against Apple. Some consumers complain that Apple deliberately releases OS updates to degrade the CPU and battery performance for older version phones and thus force the owner to upgrade to newer version phone.

f. Trade War

The acceleration of the intensity of US-Sino trade war has posed threat to Apple as United States exerted higher pressure on both US and Chinese technology firms. The operating cost of Apple will increase as a result of growth in tariff. Tim Cook remarked that the decline in revenue and sales during the first quarter of 2019 was due to trade war and measures will be made to mitigate the loss.

g. Economic Uncertainty

With the slide of Dow Jones and the fluctuation of the global stock market and the launching of the quantitative easing policy of the major developed countries, the worldwide economic growth is uncertain. If the economy of the leading market decline, this will have great impact on the profits of Apple.

h. Rising labour cost in foreign countries

The rising labour cost in foreign markets has impact on the financial performance of Apple especially when concluding contracts with China and the incidental regulatory and labour cost will reduce the profit margin of the company

Based on the SWOT Analysis, it is advisable for Apple to use its major strengths to address and influence its weaknesses. Apple can exploit opportunities to expand its distribution network and develop new product lines so as to consolidate its strength in branding and innovation. Faced with the strong competition from the competitors like Samsung and imitation, Apple should continue to the rapid innovation in developing the company's products. Apple should actively seek to collaborate with more brands and distributors to extend its market penetration. One of the strategies is to shift its investment to area of strong growth potential to consolidate its profit margin position.

2.4 Strategic External Audit-PENSTEL Analysis with tools

In order that Apple can have a comprehensive review of the external audit of the organization, it is common to use PESTLE analysis to give insights for management to make decisions:

a. Political Factors that affect Apple's Business

The China-US Trade War is the most important political element that affects Apple and its profit performance in China. Following the impact from the increase of US tariff on Chinese imports into the US, US Government announced in April 2020 to give subsidies to US corporations to move the factory and plants back to the States and many US corporations have planned to retreat from China by phases. Due to coronavirus outbreak and pressure from the US government, Apple will gradually relocate its operating plants back to the States and this would increase the operating cost and reduce its profit margin. Political instability would lead to chaos and disruption of Apple's sales and supply chain.

b. Economic Factors that affect Apple's Business

The economic stability of many developed countries can create opportunities for the Company. However, the high economic growth rate of some developing countries in Asia provides major opportunities to increase the revenue and sales and attract investors from these countries. The strong dollar environment also makes the investment in Asia more attractive.

c. Social Factors that affect Apple Business

Apple's business is subject to the effects of social or sociocultural trends. People have the general impression that Apple products, in particular, iPhone in terms of design and quality are fashionable and meet with customers' satisfaction. The company's internal cultural approach always aligns with sociocultural trends of the world. The demand for Apple products assisted in formulating strategy to open franchises and make investment in developing countries.

d. Technological Factors that affect Apple's Business

The new technology of cloud computing services and the growing mobile market provides great opportunities for Apple to maintain its leadership position in the market. Apple can exploit the opportunity by integrating the connected devices and platforms. However, the advancement in technology of the competing brands in particular in android technology and the limited life cycle of the Apple brand poses threat to the growth of Apple.

e. Legal Factors

The increasing privacy regulations provide both opportunity and threat to the organization. Although Apple is firm in its anti-trust laws and health and safety laws, copyrights, patent and intellectual property laws still pose threat to the Company. However, the closed operating system reduces the chance of cyber-attack and provides a much safer environment than Android. However, Apple has been facing legal proceedings and claims from the competitors and the customers.

f. Ecological/Environmental Factors

Apple has taken approach to reduce carbon footprints and take environmental responsibility by disposing waste properly, producing products with less heat emission and reducing air and water pollution. The climate warming creates climate change that affects Apple's supply chain and the dependence on China market creates concern on environmental issue. The Company's environmental concern is due to its strategy for health consciousness that is being analyzed in legal and socio-cultural impacts.

Competitive Profile Matrix

		Apple		Samsung		Sony	
Critical Success Factor	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Score</u>
Advertising	0.08	2	0.16	3	0.24	1	0.08
Product Variety	0.08	2	0.16	4	0.32	2	0.16
PC Market Share	0.10	4	0.40	3	0.30	2	0.20
Smart Phone Market Share	0.10	3	0.30	4	0.40	2	0.20
Tablet Market Share	0.10	3	0.30	2	0.20	1	0.10
Financial Profit	0.12	3	0.36	2	0.24	1	0.12
Customer Loyalty	0.12	3	0.36	4	0.48	2	0.24
Price Competitiveness	0.12	2	0.24	4	0.48	2	0.24
Product Quality	0.08	4	0.32	4	0.32	2	0.16
Geographic Location	0.10	3	0.30	4	0.40	2	0.20
TOTAL	1.00		2.90		3.38		1.70

EFE Matrix

	Opportunities	Weight	Rating	Weight/Score
1	Technological advancement	0.08	4	0.32
2	Steady customer growth	0.03	3	0.09
3	Utilize AI & IoT	0.08	3	0.24
4	Expand Distribution Network	0.05	1	0.05
5	Collaboration with other Brands	0.04	2	0.08
6	Growing market	0.05	2	0.10
7	Smart wearable technology	0.05	3	0.15
8	Apple TV and Electric Car	0.10	3	0.30

	Threat	Weight	Rating	Weight/Score
1	Coronavirus outbreak	0.10	4	0.40
2	Counterfeit products	0.05	2	0.10
3	Market penetration	0.05	3	0.15
4	Increased competition	0.08	3	0.24
5	Lawsuits	0.05	2	0.10
6	Trade War	0.08	3	0.24
7	Economic Uncertainty	0.06	3	0.18
8	Rising labour cost	0.05	2	0.10
	TOTAL	1.00		2.84

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