



University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Master of Business Administration

International Marketing: Principles and Practices

Module code: LCMB7026

International Market Entry Strategy and Marketing Mix of KFC in Japan and Saudi Arabia

Student name	Promi Das Gupta
Student ID	2428537
Lecturer	Dian Mayasari
Word count	Approx. 5300

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Comparative market analysis.....	4
3. Comparative analysis of STP and the 7Ps.....	9
4. Directional development strategy in Saudi Arabia	15
5. Ethical issues in the marketing mix	17
6. Recommendations	18
7. Reflective account using Gibbs' reflective cycle	20
References.....	22

1. Introduction

KFC is an interesting example of the international marketing analysis due to the fact that its global brand resources are oddly transparent, but the success of its commerce lies in the extent to which those resources are smartly adapted into local food cultures, channel systems and social conventions. This report presents the comparison of KFC in Japan and Saudi Arabia, which are strategically significant markets that differ materially in terms of demographic profile, digital intensity, religious context, consumption occasions and route-to-market logic. Japan is an aged, urbanised, mature market where KFC has become a part of a unique seasonal eating ritual around Christmas. KFC is operating in a bigger market in Saudi Arabia that is younger and with faster growth rates and where halal expectations, family eating habits, delivery convenience, and the broader Vision 2030 consumption agenda dictate the franchise ecosystem (DataReportal, 2025a; DataReportal, 2025b; KFC, 2020a; KFC, 2019).

The report suggests that KFC standardises its brand core, which is its signature chicken, recognisable iconography, operational discipline and global brand memory, yet the market system around it is customised on a much deeper level that a global template would insinuate. The Japanese adapt culture-wise and occasion-wise. Adaptation in Saudi Arabia is format- and institutionally-based. This implies that the brand cannot be said to be completely standardised or completely localised. A better verdict is that, KFC is selectively adapting around a highly safeguarded international centre and there are various levers engaged along with reaction to the drivers of every market (Levitt, 1983; Douglas and Wind, 1987; Jain, 1989; Hultman and Oghazi, 2024).

The analysis is carried out in six sections. First, it compares the macroenvironment based on PESTEL, as well as more on culture and behaviour than mere environmental listing. Second, it is a comparison of segmentation, targeting and positioning. Third, it appraises the 7Ps, especially, product, price, place and promotion. Fourth, it examines the KFC directional development strategy in Saudi Arabia. Fifth, it discusses the marketing mix issues concerning ethics. Sixth, it gives recommendations. The second part involves the reflective cycle by Gibbs to assess the research and writing process.

2. Comparative market analysis

Table 1. PESTEL comparison of KFC in Japan and Saudi Arabia

Factor	Japan	Saudi Arabia	Strategic meaning
Political and legal	Stable, rules-based, high expectation of service and safety consistency.	Transforming regulatory environment under Vision 2030 with strong support for tourism and consumer sectors.	Japan rewards precision and reliability; Saudi rewards organisational agility inside a fast-changing consumption ecosystem.
Economic	Mature demand, slower population growth, high familiarity with quick-service routines.	Younger and expanding market with strong appetite for organised branded foodservice.	Saudi growth is volume and frequency led; Japan growth is quality, convenience and occasion led.
Social and cultural	Christmas ritual, planning culture, queue tolerance only when organised, strong trust orientation.	Halal baseline, family-centred dining, youth leisure culture, delivery-friendly habits.	The same bucket plays a symbolic festive role in Japan and an everyday family-and-convenience role in Saudi Arabia.
Technological	Advanced but used heavily for pre-order	Near-universal digital reach enables apps, loyalty, delivery and social-	Saudi allows digital by default; Japan uses digital to

	efficiency and service smoothing.	media-led frequency.	improve already established physical demand.
Environmental and supply	Efficiency, packaging and delivery economics matter in a mature market.	Local sourcing, logistics and proof of freshness matter strongly.	Sustainability communication should be market-specific rather than globally generic.

KFC is rewarded because of different reasons by the two markets. The disparity in GDP per capita is not so great economically as to establish a premium versus low-income dichotomy in the same manner as some emerging market comparisons, yet the demand structures are different. Japan and Saudi Arabia are reported to have a GDP per capita of approximately US\$32,487 and US\$35,122 respectively as per World Bank data in 2024 and this indicates that the construction of price architecture cannot be attributed to income (World Bank, 2026a; World Bank, 2026b). Rather, the more powerful difference is in the age structure, family structure, digital behaviour and the social significance of eating events.

Japan is a developed consumption market of 49.8 median age, of low urban concentration, and decelerating population growth. Saudi Arabia is significantly younger, and its median age is 29.6 and rapid population growth (DataReportal, 2025a; DataReportal, 2025b). This is important since younger population groups tend to provide more frequency potential of consuming apps based quick services and promotional reactivity and amplification whereas older population groups tend to favour more on consistency, trust, convenience and occasion relevance. The Japanese strategy of KFC, thus, enjoys familiarity and ritualised demand, its Saudi strategy, scale, youthful demand intensity and digitally enabled frequency.

Both markets are politically and legally stable enough to support large-scale foodservice operations, although the implications of operations vary. Japanese has institutional predictability and strict compliance environment. That reduces the volatility of policies but increases the expectation levels on the reliability of services, food safety, and brand consistency. Saudi Arabia, in its turn, is a blend of regulatory framework and a fast-paced economic transformation driven by the state. Vision 2030 is

broadening tourism, entertainment and consumer facing industries, which contributes to foodservice development. Formal tourism statistics show that the number of visitors and their expenditures are steadily growing, which supports the necessity of convenient chain formats in places of heavy traffic of people in cities (Ministry of Tourism, 2025; Saudi Press Agency, 2026). The strategic implication here is not just Saudi Arabia expanding more but KFC expansion pathway is more connected to the growth of national ecosystems in malls, travel routes, mixed-use areas and digitally enabled urban consumption.

Social and cultural determinants are even more firm. Product recognition is not the only strategic point that KFC has in Japan but also cultural embedding. The Christmas campaign, which the brand first started in 1974, made fried chicken a substitute to turkey during the festive season and a strong spike in annual demand that few foodservice brands have ever accomplished in another culture (KFC, 2020a). This is a powerful example of how de Mooij points out that the behaviour of consumers is culture-specific, and that the key to successful international branding is frequently in linking up with local symbolic meaning, as opposed to enforcing a set of standardised communication frames (de Mooij, 2011). The culture of Saudi Arabia has a different impact on KFC. In this case seasonal Westernisation is not the key consideration but rather compatibility with the halal expectations, family-group meals, convenience, youth leisure and social-media-based entertainment. The significance of the partnership between KFC and the Saudi Esports Federation is that the company will be associated with the rapidly expanding youth culture as opposed to promoting the product using only product-centred methods (KFC, 2023).

This difference is enhanced by technology. Japan is at the leading edge of digitalization, yet digital intensity is less than Saudi Arabia based on extensive reach of consumers. In Japan, DataReportal lists internet penetration of 88.2 percent and social media reach of 78.6 percent, whereas in Saudi Arabia, the same is 99.0 percent and 99.6 percent respectively (DataReportal, 2025a; DataReportal, 2025b). Japanese underdevelopment is not to be interpreted in the difference. Rather, it implies that in Saudi Arabia digital touchpoints may serve as the default mass-market operating layer, and in Japan as efficiency and reservation instruments around a physical demand that is already known. This is one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia is particularly predisposed to app-based deals, integration of delivery and loyalty scale, whereas Japan digital innovation is usually implemented to allow easier queueing, pre-ordering and picking up at the high demand times.

The two markets are also influenced by environmental and supply problems in varied ways. The local sourcing agreement of chicken in Saudi Arabia demonstrates that adaptation may be either supplier based or consumer-based. The 2019 news of the KFC of sourcing fresh chicken with major local poultry suppliers to supply over 200 restaurants in the Kingdom was not only discussed as an operations choice, but also as local resonance and economic involvement (KFC, 2019). The environmental strains in Japan are not related to the local agricultural substitution, but to the efficiency, economic packaging and delivery in an established market. The strategic aspect of the issue is that environmental adaptation is not the same in all markets. It should mirror the supply infrastructure of every nation, regulation and consumer confidence anticipation.

On the whole, the comparison of Japan and Saudi Arabia in terms of their cultural embeddedness, queue management and trust-rich consistency, and scale, digital convenience, youth relevance and institutional embeddedness demonstrate that both countries reward these aspects. Global fast-food template can work in either of them, however, only when KFC will be willing to accept that the identical branded bucket can be located in too different market systems.

Another macro difference is the tourism and destination traffic. Demand KFC in Japan remains primarily domestic routine and domestic celebration despite seasonal even though inbound tourism assists urban pedestrian traffic. However, in Saudi Arabia, the wider promotion of tourism, religious travel and entertainment areas is expanding the temporary market of branded quick service. It is not to say that tourists are the heart of the customer segment, but it does imply that KFC has the ability to capture demand in mobility-oriented spaces in such a way that aligns with the transformation agenda of the Kingdom. In terms of market entry and development strategy, this is important as it will enrich the place selection in Saudi Arabia but also increase its dependence on the timing of urban development and the discipline of franchise implementation.

One should also oppose a naive interpretation of cultural adaptation. Japan can be referred to as a homogenous market and Saudi Arabia as a culturally conservative one. Such short-cut descriptions can become traps of analysis. Japan has still a high degree of urban lifestyle difference, generational preferences and consumption events, whereas Saudi Arabian youthful customers are integrating high religious and family values with the active engagement with international digital and entertainment trends. A more persuasive conclusion then would be that both markets are culturally complex but the complexity is manifested in different consumption codes. Social ritual and familiarity which is trusted

is the key code in Japan. In Saudi Arabia, it is legitimacy and plus convenience and shared relevance of leisure.

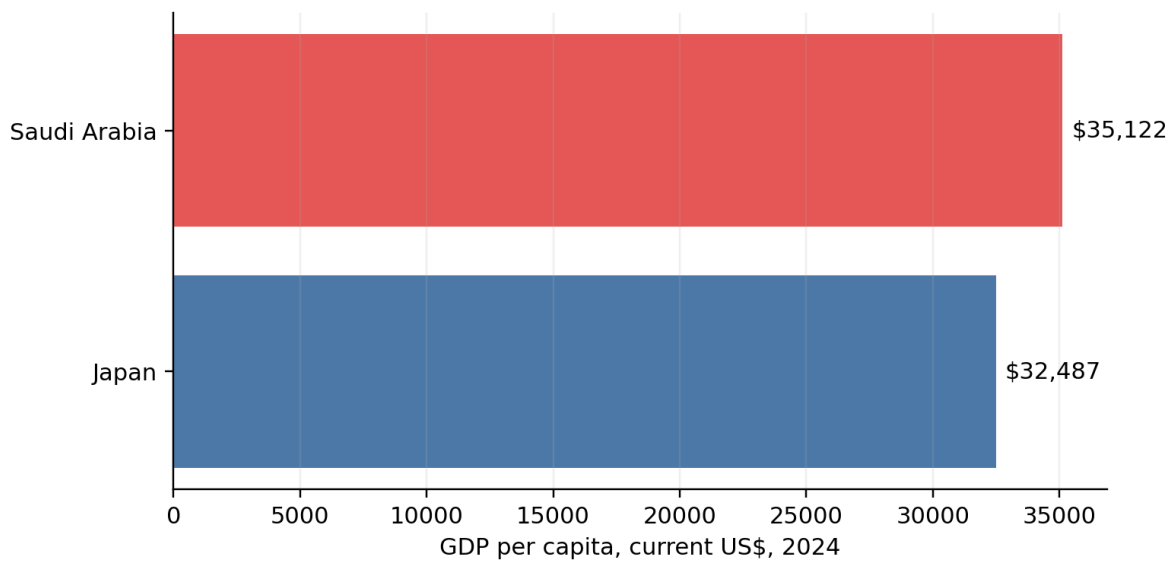


Figure 1. GDP per capita comparison, 2024. Source: author-created chart based on World Bank (2026a; 2026b).

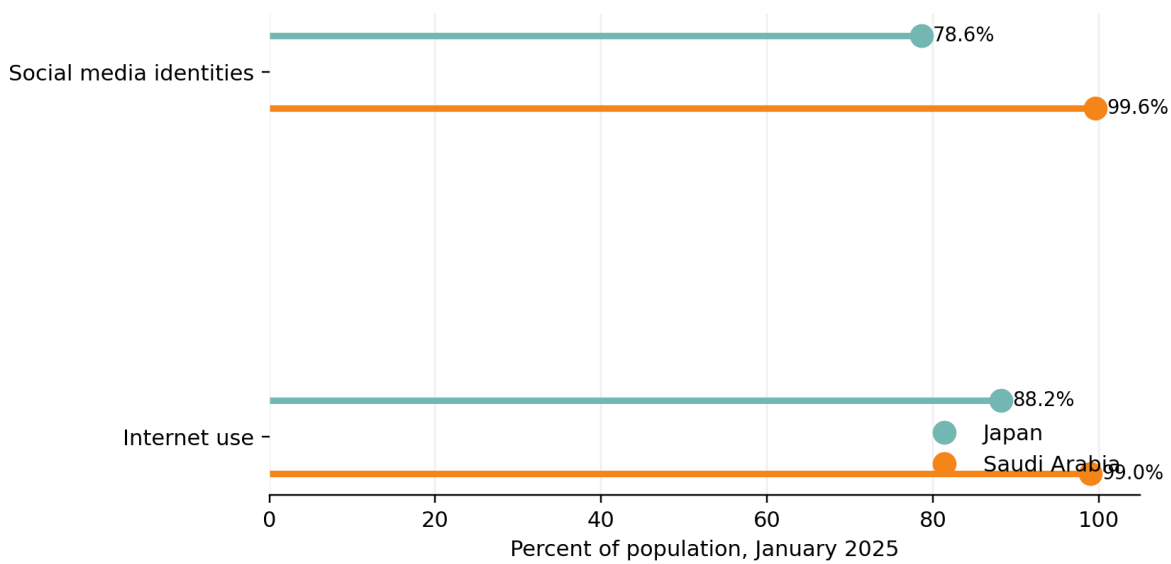


Figure 2. Internet and social media penetration comparison, January 2025. Source: author-created chart based on DataReportal (2025a; 2025b).

3. Comparative analysis of STP and the 7Ps

KFC segmentation in Japan is behaviourally subtle and occasion based. The brand targets value-conscious consumers on a daily basis, family units, younger snackers and a highly unique festive segment that is associated with Christmas and end of year parties. This renders Japanese segmentation not so much about the religion or demographic but the issue of when and why the consumer consumes the brand. The Christmas platform is particularly unveiling as it demonstrates KFC going beyond the usual quick service into a planned seasonal consumption with reservation behaviour and premium bundle acquiring (KFC, 2020a; KFC Japan, 2025a).

In Saudi Arabia, the segmentation is wider and channel and demographic-based. It consists of family meal buyers, younger mobile-first buyers, users who order by delivery more often, value buyers and buyers in whom halal certification is not a luxury but a legitimacy requirement. The youth gaming culture of the partnerships and introduction of the app-led proposition implies that it pays more attention to high-frequency and digitally accessible segments as compared to Japan (KFC, 2023; KFC Saudi Arabia, 2026). This aligns with the literature that indicates convenience, trust, time-saving and e-service quality to have a strong influence on food ordering attitudes online (Al Maalouf et al., 2025; Shankar et al., 2024).

These differences are followed by targeting. KFC in Japan is trying to win over broad family and mainstream consumers but highly occasion-differentiated. It can cater to everyday lunch and dinner demand but its communications and product architecture also focus on festive rituals and pre-order behaviour. Instead, Saudi Arabia seems to be aimed at a bigger always-on mass market where family packages, convenience of delivery and interest among the young people is an issue that is continuously relevant, not seasonally. Not just who the customer is, but how often and via which interface the customer accesses the brand system is the target.

Japanese positioning can be explained as credible luxurious seasonal emotionality. The brand remains identifiably international, but the emotional point of reference remains local. Christmas tradition is not an addition to the campaign in superficiality. It is a positioning asset that is hard to replicate by the competitors since it has gained cultural memory over decades. In Saudi Arabia, KFC is placed more as a trusted, halal-compliant, family-friendly and digitally convenient leader in chicken-based fast food. This stance is reinforced by scale, area sourcing, digital application infrastructure and youth alliances.

This conclusion is supported by the 7Ps comparison. The two markets are good in terms of product adaptation although due to different reasons. The product system of Japan promotes the festive bundles, novelty format and snack propositions on the go. The introduction of the new line of Sakutto Kenta, that is planned to be launched in 2026, is an indication of a move to expand the usage beyond the conventional bucket format to lighter and more mobile eating events (KFC Japan, 2026a). Japan thus customises the menu to event diversity and convenience in a culturally known context. The product logic of Saudi Arabia is more rooted in halal legitimacy, family sharing and daily delivery that is appropriate. The domestic source of chicken in the Kingdom enhances the credibility of the product since freshness is matched with compliance and participation in the economy of the country (KFC, 2019). Product adaptation in Saudi Arabia is no longer flavour experimentation. It belongs to the brand trust architecture.

Price adaptation is also not similar. In Japan, the pricing is more closely connected to occasion and channel. The use of reservation systems, festive bundles and delivery price adjustments show that it is trying to preserve value perception and is operating within operational peaks and cost pressures (KFC Japan, 2025b; KFC Japan, 2026b). The economics of pricing is more pronounced in Saudi Arabia and is connected to the promotional intensity, deals that are conducted solely through the application, convenience of delivery, and economics of family basket. The 2025 guidance of Americana also focused on value leadership, introduction of new products and digital loyalty scale-up, which means that price is no longer only used to bring users to the digital channel, but as a way to train repeat behaviour on digital channels (Americana Restaurants, 2025a; Americana Restaurants, 2026a). Such difference is significant since it demonstrates how price adaptation can be episodic, queue-sensitive as in Japan or habitual, ecosystem-building as in Saudi Arabia.

One of the most obvious points of departure is place strategy. Place in Japan entails high levels of physical accessibility, pre-ordering and delivery optimisation within a developed urban market. The reset of its delivery prices in 2026, when KFC Japan introduced pricing of delivery menu items as equal to store pricing and eliminated a minimum order requirement, indicates a shift towards lower friction and increased addressable demand instead of just using premium-priced convenience (KFC Japan, 2026b). Place then is a question design of service. Place is a scale platform in Saudi Arabia. In a portfolio presentation, Americana indicated that it had 734 stores in the KSA as of the end of 2024 and promoted further growth, loyalty roll-out and digital leadership in the Kingdom (Americana

Restaurants, 2025b). This implies that place is not simply store location, but the combination of stores, apps and loyalty and logistics in a regional consumption network.

Adaptation of promotion is also differentiated. Japanese promotion is very culture specific. Deep symbolic adaptation can be seen on the Christmas platform, limited-time products and media storytelling about national festive behaviour. The promotion in Saudi Arabia is more of a lifestyle, platform and youth based promotion. The fact that the Saudi Esports Federation partnership is especially enlightening is due to the fact that it shifts the promotion to community engagement and identity building instead of pure menu advertising (KFC, 2023). Rashkova et al. (2024) demonstrate that online communication should be adjusted by international brands to countries instead of just copying the identical digital script. This is exactly what is depicted in the two markets of KFC. Japan works when ritual and planning are enhanced by promotion. Saudi Arabia thrives where participation is enhanced through promotion, relevancy and online communication.

The remaining 3Ps also matter. Japanese people are expected to provide consistency in the case of extreme seasonal peaks and this increases the significance of queue management, reservation management and service accuracy. The people strategy in Saudi Arabia has to be able to accommodate speed, coordination of delivery and family oriented hospitality expectations of a major franchise network. Japanese process is based on pre-order discipline, operational forecasting and peak management. Process in Saudi Arabia is based on the usability of the apps, integration of loyalty and a seamless last-mile fulfilment. The Japanese physical evidence is the Christmas wrappings, branded holiday indications and familiarity with the store. In Saudi Arabia, it is more connected to the scale, convenient touchpoints, app interface and trust built by the standardised chain presence.

When combined, STP and 7Ps analysis will reveal that KFC does not export a predetermined formula and internationalise. It globalises through maintaining brand recognisability but altering the logic of usage of the brand. In Japan, that rationale is ritual and seasonal sense. It is available scale and digital everydayness in Saudi Arabia.

Most importantly, the standardisation versus adaptation debate can be applied more effectively once it is held at the level of individual marketing variables as opposed to the entire brand. The classic statement that Levitt (1983) made about converging markets still assists in understanding why KFC can take advantage of a familiar product and brands symbols that can be easily transported across the

globe. However, Douglas and Wind (1987) and Jain (1989) are more convincing in this point since convergence does not eliminate the necessity of country fit. The chicken is still familiar around the world, but the purchase motives, the advertising gimmick and the service design are different in a significant way. Hultman and Oghazi (2024) contribute a beneficial amendment since it demonstrates that adaptation entails not necessarily being better. What is important is suitability with the market conditions. The KFC Japan Christmas platform is successful as it is thoroughly embedded in a ritual that is accepted in the country. The digital-and-family model by Saudi Arabia is effective since it is designed to fit a youth-app-saturated and socially shared context of consumption. The adaptation is not random in either of the examples.

The 7Ps comparison also has a lesson of methodology. Product, price, place and promotion are easier to see, but people, process and physical evidences tend to clarify whether the more noticeable variables really work or not. Reservation systems, forecast discipline and labour planning would not be effective in KFC Japan Christmas model. The app-based convenience promise of Saudi Arabia would not work without integrating processes, reliability of delivery and consistent physical and digital service experience. This ensured that the report did not make international marketing to be about advertisement and menu design only.

Table 2. STP comparison

STP element	Japan	Saudi Arabia
Segmentation	Occasion-based: everyday meals, family sharing, snack users, festive planners.	Demographic and channel-based: family buyers, youth users, delivery-first segments, value seekers.
Targeting	Broad mainstream targeting with sharper festive and reservation-focused activation.	Always-on mass-market targeting supported by app promotions, bundles and loyalty.

Positioning	Trusted indulgence with seasonal emotional meaning.	Halal-compliant, family-accessible and digitally convenient chicken leader.
-------------	---	---

Table 3. 7Ps comparison

7P element	Japan	Saudi Arabia
Product	Festive bundles, novelty snacks, portable lines such as Sakutto Kenta, high ritual value.	Halal baseline, family sharing, local sourcing narrative, delivery-suitable menu architecture.
Price	Channel and occasion calibrated, especially around delivery and Christmas reservations.	Value leadership, app deals, bundle economics and loyalty-driven repeat behaviour.
Place	Dense physical network in a mature urban market, pre-ordering and lower-friction delivery.	Large-scale franchise platform, 734 stores in KSA, delivery and loyalty ecosystem.
Promotion	Culture-rich Christmas storytelling and limited-time seasonal activation.	Youth and lifestyle partnerships, esports, app-led offers and broad social relevance.
People	Precision during seasonal peaks and high-consistency service norms.	Speed, hospitality and coordination across a large franchise and delivery network.

Process	Reservation management, queue control and forecast-driven seasonal operations.	App usability, loyalty integration and last-mile convenience.
Physical evidence	Festive packaging, familiar store environment, reassurance and ritual cues.	Scale, convenience, app interface and visible chain reliability.

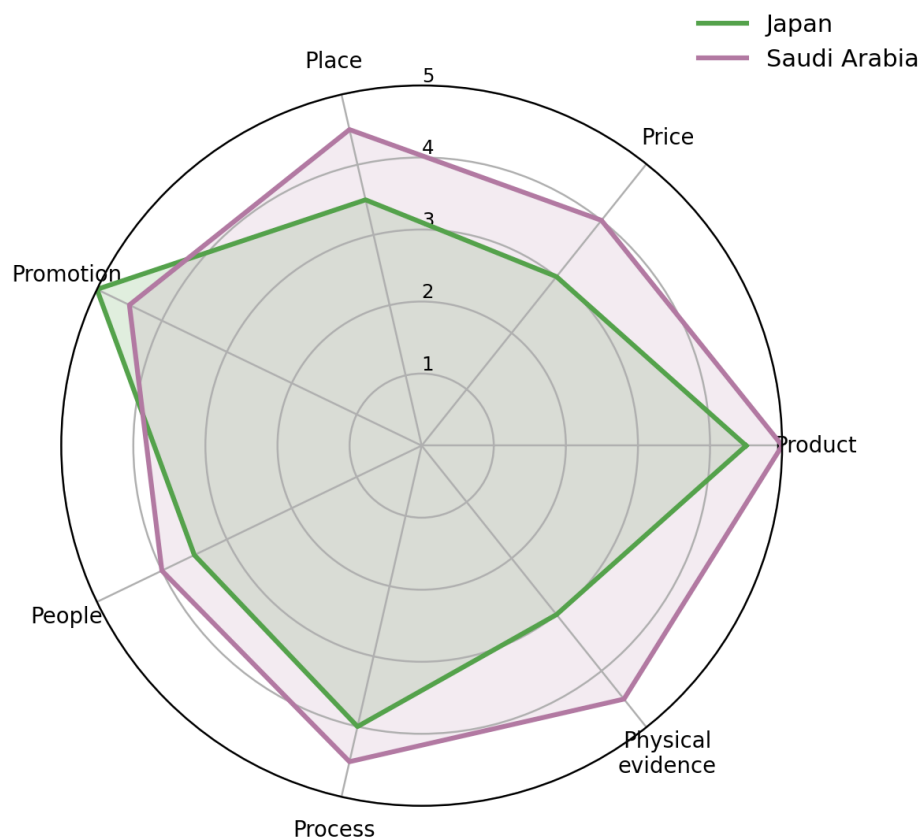


Figure 3. Author assessment of adaptation intensity across the 7Ps. Source: author synthesis of market evidence.

4. Directional development strategy in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is the more suitable one to analyse the directional development strategy of KFC as it demonstrates the transition between the market presence and the ecosystem leadership. It is no longer an easy geographical rollout on the strategic way. On the contrary, it is a synthesis of four reinforcing directions.

To start with, KFC is expanding physical presence by an intense franchise platform. By the close of 2024, Americana had reported 734 stores in KSA and expansion direction in 2025, which confirms that the Kingdom is one of the most significant markets of the company (Americana Restaurants, 2025b). Second, the brand is enhancing online infrastructure. Guidance of Americana focused on the roll-out of loyalty, work on customer data platform and personalisation, which signifies transitioning a transactional growth to a relationship-based growth (Americana Restaurants, 2026a; Americana Restaurants, 2025b). Third, KFC is enhancing local embeddedness by having Saudi supply partners. The local sourcing of chicken reinforces not only the operations but also the legitimacy, since it makes the brand consistent with the national economic diversification discourses (KFC, 2019). Fourth, KFC is expanding the cultural relevance by using gaming and youth collaborations to expand the brand beyond foodservice to participatory-based leisure culture (KFC, 2023).

This path can be explained by the directional logic of Ansoff. The Saudi approach is nearest to the market penetration and market development with the selected product development in the form of new products, digital bundles and the day-part growth (Ansoff, 1957; Americana Restaurants, 2025b). The key point is that the further development of KFC in Saudi Arabia will be based not only on the increase of the number of stores but on the increase of the customer lifetime value based on the loyalty, personalisation, delivery, and occasion growth. The country is thus not only a growth market, but as a platform market.

The primary threat in Saudi Arabia is that scale has the potential to create complacency. The high network and brand recognition can be a temptation to over-indulge in volume growth, discounting or habitual promotional repetition. That would be tactically incompetent. As the market becomes more mature KFC will require a more focused segmentation and more disciplined utilisation of first-party data such that growth is generated through improved customer economics and not merely the level

of store count. That is to say that the following stage of development ought to be a transition between expansion-led advantage and intelligence-led advantage.

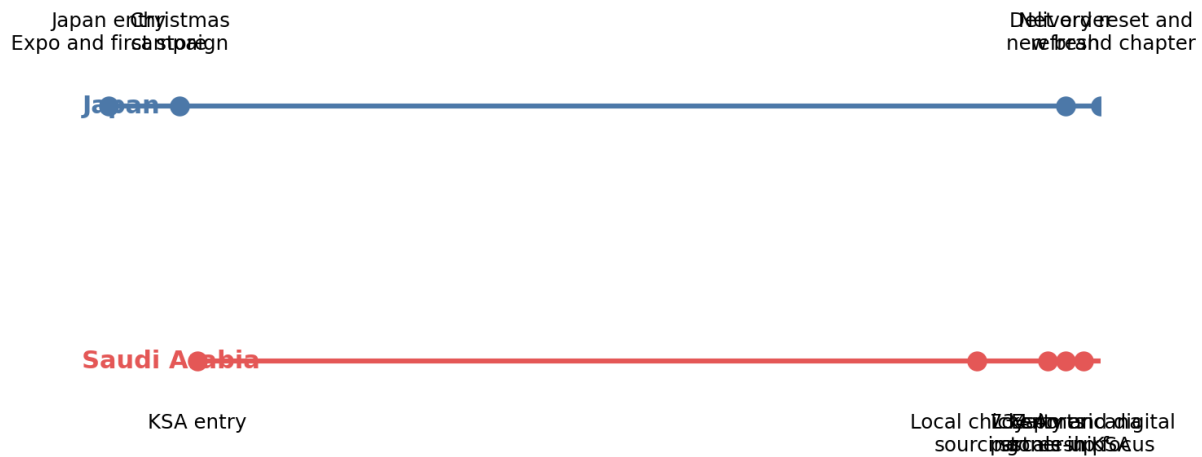


Figure 4. Market development milestones for KFC in Japan and Saudi Arabia. Source: author-created timeline based on KFC (2019; 2020a; 2023), KFC Japan (2026b; 2026c) and Americana Restaurants (2025b).

5. Ethical issues in the marketing mix

There are two ethical issues that are of particular material in the two markets. The first is the conflict between the fast-food expansion which is driven by convenience and the health of people. The studies related to online food delivery always discover that the attitudes to digital ordering and usage intention are aroused due to convenience, trust, time-saving and the quality of e-services (Al Maalouf et al., 2025; Shankar et al., 2024). Commercially, that is of use to KFC, but ethically, it begs the question of whether dealings powered by apps, frictionless reorder features and bundle construction contribute to the normalisation of eating more high-fat, high-salt foods. This issue is more acute in Saudi Arabia due to the fact that digital penetration is approaching a near-saturation point and ordering via apps is becoming a default behaviour, rather than a nice-to-have (DataReportal, 2025b). The question in Japan is not whether people are continuously addicted to the apps but whether they are overconsuming the products by being lured into indulgence through promotions by the seasons.

The second one is supply-chain legitimacy. KFC boasts chicken welfare and Yum! The fact that Brands has a global animal welfare policy is positive (KFC, 2026; Yum!). Brands, 2025). Nonetheless, policy statements are distinctly different than credible assurance. Ethical marketing also involves market level demonstration that welfare, sourcing and quality assertions are being validated in a way that is transparent enough to allow the stakeholders to make a judgement over performance and not be subjected to some token assurance. This is important in both of these countries, though in Saudi Arabia the local sourcing storey has an added reputational value as it collides with the national development objectives, whereas in Japan trust is rooted more on precision, safety and consistency. The main conclusion is that ethics should not be considered as a communications add-on at KFC. Health, sourcing and welfare claims in both markets require more evidential support and promoted boundaries.

Another ethical issue is the use of data. The two markets are increasingly relying on digital ordering, but data capture, predictive behaviour and personalised offers have strategic value. That could enhance convenience and relevance, though it also brings up an issue of the quality of consent, profiling and commercial applications of behavioural nudges. The problem in Saudi Arabia has a larger commercial impact due to the magnitude of app-based interaction, although it exists in Japan as well as delivery and net ordering become more integrated. Ethical practice does not merely require legal conformity hence but it is steered clear of opaque personalisation that smugly necessitates heavier frequency or bigger basket behaviour.

6. Recommendations

The analysis results in four recommendations.

1. To begin with, KFC will need to localise digital CRM more acutely. Japan needs to personalise the festive planning and queue avoidance with the help of reservation history and seasonal data, whereas Saudi Arabia needs to segment family buyers, late-night users and youth delivery clusters with the help of loyalty and customer data.
2. Second, the brand ought to expand health-directed bundle architecture without undermining indicators of indulgence. This does not mean that you should give up on fried chicken. It involves enhancing lateral choices, framing and communication of choice.
3. Third, KFC should bring some transparency to the supply chain. The local sourcing narrative of Saudi Arabia and the broader animal welfare pledges of KFC need to be converted into straightforward, low-end demonstrations of trust that do not exist in the far-off corporate statements.
4. Fourth, KFC needs to maintain occasion-based innovation, however, variously by market. Japan must intensify the culturally oriented experiences like the Christmas, spring party and snack packs. Saudi Arabia ought to continue to expand everyday convenience and family-led bundles and become more discriminating and transparent in value exchange with youth partnerships.

Figure 5 gives these recommendations a miscellaneous strategic impact and feasibility prioritisation. Digital CRM localisation is the best short-term win since it strengthens the retention, value perception and channel efficiency in both markets at a reasonably low execution risk.

The implementation must be done in two phases. KFC needs to focus on data-based communication and the low-friction service enhancements in the short term since they are operationally viable and transferable. In Japan that translates to pre-order personalisation, enhanced peak-time fulfilment and occasion prompts of bundles. In Saudi Arabia it implies more powerful loyalty mechanisms, better segmentation of apps and more disciplined promotional rhythmic so that discounts can strengthen the sense of value without teach the customers how to wait until a good deal occurs. KFC needs to create a more prominent responsibility storey on sourcing, welfare and menu balance in the medium run. This would enhance validity in both markets and mitigate the danger that the brand is perceived to be based on mere indulgence and convenience. This balance is important strategically since it is

often not the single campaign that ensures long-run international growth, but instead the repeat demand, which is based on trust.

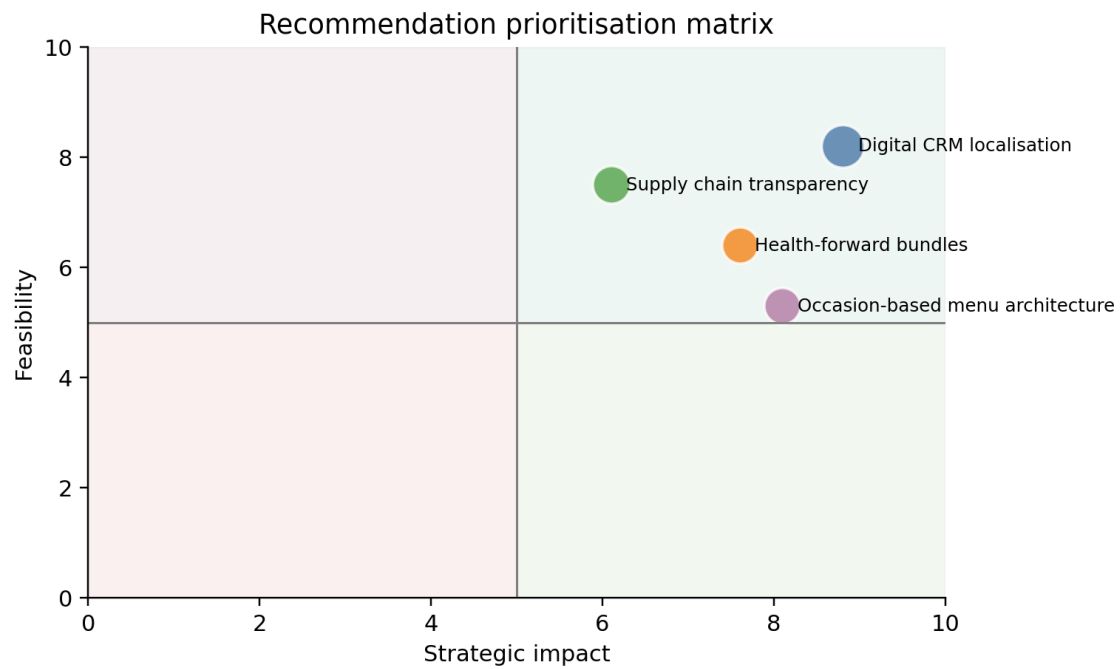


Figure 5. Recommendation prioritisation matrix. Source: author synthesis.

7. Reflective account using Gibbs' reflective cycle

Description

My handling of the task was based on the fact that I approached it as a strategy-comparison exercise, as compared to a country-description exercise. The risk that I identified early on was that I could use PESTEL as a listing tool too much and under-developed the strategic argument. To prevent that, I made the report based on a single judgement: KFC does not compromise its global brand core but shapes the commercial system in Japan and Saudi Arabia in different ways. That thesis assisted me in making a decision concerning what evidence was important and what could be omitted.

Feelings

I was tempted at the beginning to make more obvious comparisons due to the safety of data availability. I was less sure of Japan and Saudi Arabia since these two countries are not typically combined in the teaching materials. After reading company sources and existing market data, however, the comparison was more interesting. The difference was even more intense because the two markets reinforce different types of adaptation. This made the work more interesting, yet also added the pressure of maintaining the balance and evidence-based analysis.

Evaluation

My best process component was the ability to draw on academic theory and the existing evidence in the company and the market. The standardisation and adaptation literature provided me with a conceptual prism, but the report was enhanced when I linked the prism with the specific real-life experience like the Christmas reservation logic at KFC Japan, the local sourcing strategy in Saudi and the digital loyalty strategy at Americana. Time allocation was the most weak area in my process. I had taken too much time to gather the background country facts that were not equally useful at first. In hindsight, I ought to have been more expeditious into the marketing implication of those facts.

Analysis

The cycle that Gibbs suggested motivated me to go beyond description and interpret more, and I enquired about why each bit of evidence was important strategically. The data on digital penetration only became useful after I compared them with channel design. It was only after I had put the Christmas campaign in Japan into a context of a positioning asset and not a simple cultural narrative

that it became the object of analysis. This step also demonstrated to me that the process of adaptation is not one-dimensional. Adaptation is primarily of meaning, timing and process in Japan. In Saudi Arabia, it is positioned better in terms of scale, route to market, supply legitimacy and digital everydayness. That put the analysis beyond the ancient binary debate where firms are viewed as being either standardised or adapted. The report thus represents the more subtle perspective in the literature that international marketing fit is relational and contingent as opposed to absolute (Douglas and Wind, 1987; Hultman and Oghazi, 2024; Rashkova et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The assignment enhanced my knowledge of the way international marketing frameworks are to be applied. I also got to know that PESTEL, STP and the 7Ps are best applied when they are linked through a core argument. I also understood that company websites may be a beneficial source, however, only when taken critically and balanced with academic and institutional sources. The other point that was learnt was that images must not be ornamental. I applied various visual representations since each of them had a different analytical task: comparison, pattern recognition, strategic synthesis and prioritisation.

Action plan

To enhance the source selection methodology in future work, I would prepare better the evidence matrix by coding each source on the basis of its type, recency and strategic relevance. I would also be more conscious in the use of contradictory evidence, particularly in situations where brand assertions and independent scrutiny do not fit so well together. Lastly, I would also write the reflective part sooner to ensure that self-evaluation comes with the report and not as an appendix. The primary learning in this assignment is that originality in the postgraduate work is not based on the unusual country choice per se but on making a specific argument based on credible evidence.

References

- Al Maalouf, N.J., Sayegh, E., Makhoul, W. and Sarkis, N. (2025) 'Consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward food ordering via online platforms', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 82, 104151. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104151>.
- Americana Restaurants (2025a) *FY 2025 earnings release*. Available at: <https://www.americanarestaurants.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/4.-AMR-FY-2025-Earnings-press-release-vF.pdf> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).
- Americana Restaurants (2025b) *2024A earnings presentation*. Available at: https://www.americanarestaurants.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/AMR_2024A_Earnings-Presentation_final.pdf (Accessed: 17 March 2026).
- Americana Restaurants (2026a) *Financial releases*. Available at: <https://www.americanarestaurants.com/investor-relations/financial-releases/> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).
- Ansoff, H.I. (1957) 'Strategies for diversification', *Harvard Business Review*, 35(5), pp. 113–124.
- DataReportal (2025a) *Digital 2025: Japan*. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-japan> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).
- DataReportal (2025b) *Digital 2025: Saudi Arabia*. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-saudi-arabia> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).
- de Mooij, M. (2011) 'Cross-cultural consumer behavior: a review of research findings', *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 23(3-4), pp. 181–192. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2011.578057>.
- Douglas, S.P. and Wind, Y. (1987) 'The myth of globalization', *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 22(4), pp. 19–29.
- Hultman, M. and Oghazi, P. (2024) 'On the (in)effectiveness of standardized versus adapted international promotion strategies: Evidence from entrepreneurial firms', *Journal of Business Research*, 170, 114351. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusres.2023.114351>.

Jain, S.C. (1989) 'Standardization of international marketing strategy: some research hypotheses', *Journal of Marketing*, 53(1), pp. 70–79.

KFC (2019) *KFC bolsters KSA presence with partnerships for locally sourced chicken*. Available at: <https://global.kfc.com/press-releases/kfc-bolsters-ksa-presence-with-partnerships-for-locally-sourced-chicken> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC (2020a) *How 'Kentucky for Christmas' began in Japan*. Available at: <https://global.kfc.com/stories/how-kentucky-for-christmas-began-in-japan> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC (2023) *Saudi Esports Federation and KFC announce partnership to empower local esports talent onto the global stage*. Available at: <https://global.kfc.com/press-releases/saudi-esports-federation-and-kfc-announce-partnership-to-empower-local-esports-talent-onto-the-global-stage> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC (2026) *Chicken welfare*. Available at: <https://global.kfc.com/chicken-welfare> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC Japan (2025a) *Kentucky Christmas 2025*. Available at: <https://www.kfc.co.jp/campaign/xmas> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC Japan (2025b) *Delivery menu price revision notice*. Available at: https://japan.kfc.co.jp/news_release/8071 (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC Japan (2026a) *'Sakutto Kenta' series launch*. Available at: https://japan.kfc.co.jp/news_release/8127 (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC Japan (2026b) *KFC delivery renewal*. Available at: https://japan.kfc.co.jp/news_release/8119 (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC Japan (2026c) *KFC: The Next Chapter*. Available at: https://japan.kfc.co.jp/news_release/8129 (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

KFC Saudi Arabia (2026) *KFC Saudi Arabia app*. Available at: <https://apps.apple.com/sa/app/kfc-saudi-arabia/id1491761668> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

Levitt, T. (1983) 'The globalization of markets', *Harvard Business Review*, 61(3), pp. 92–102.

Ministry of Tourism (2025) *Saudi Arabia records growth in international visitor spending in Q1 2025*. Available at: <https://mt.gov.sa/about/media-center/news/220> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

Rashkova, Y., Moi, L., Marku, E. and Cabiddu, F. (2024) 'Online integrated marketing communication strategies of international brands: standardization vs. adaptation approaches', *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 30(7), pp. 810–833. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2023.2177710>.

Saudi Press Agency (2026) *Saudi tourism sector achieves remarkable growth in 2025*. Available at: <https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/N2508056> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

Shankar, A., Jebarajakirthy, C., Dhir, A. and Kumar, A. (2024) 'Why do consumers choose online food delivery services? A meta-analytic structural equation model', *Journal of Business Research*, 177, 114640. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114640>.

World Bank (2026a) *Japan data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/japan> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

World Bank (2026b) *Saudi Arabia data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/saudi-arabia> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).

Yum! Brands (2025) *Global animal welfare policy*. Available at: <https://www.yum.com/wps/wcm/connect/yumbrands/4c34c593-4766-446d-9132-fe53ea18d3e8/Animal-Welfare-Policy-Update-oct-25.pdf> (Accessed: 17 March 2026).