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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Associated British Foods (ABF) is a multifaceted company on the FTSE 100, generating around £20 billion in annual revenue and employing nearly 138,000 people. Its operations are divided into five key segments: Grocery, Ingredients, Agriculture, Sugar processing, and Retail. The company uses a rather wide market segmentation strategy. Primark is geared toward budget-conscious shoppers across different demographic groups. The grocery brands are aimed at more affluent and health-oriented customers, as shown by Twinings' recent growth of 11%. However, despite its global footprint, ABF remains heavily reliant on the UK and EU markets, making it vulnerable to regional economic fluctuations and shifts in policy.

In 2022, ABF invested roughly £170 million in marketing, striking a balance between traditional avenues like TV commercials and event sponsorships such as the London Marathon and an increasing focus on digital platforms. The company is also boosting its social media engagement and ensuring a strong public relations presence. Notably, Primark is progressing towards improved brand consistency. Nevertheless, its online presence is still quite limited; click-and-collect represents under 12% of sales, while the industry average hovers around 25% highlighting a strategic shortfall in e-commerce engagement. On a broader scale, ABF's decentralised business model continues to pose challenges, particularly in enforcing consistent marketing and communication standards across its varied portfolio of brands and geographic markets.

ABF is following a targeted growth plan, which includes expanding Primark to about 530 stores by 2026, aiming for mid-single-digit sales growth and steady margins. In addition to retail expansion, ABF is investing in grocery sector innovation, prioritizing sustainable sourcing practices, and enhancing its digital infrastructure to bolster long-term competitiveness. Additional strategic opportunities are available in emerging markets and the health-oriented food segments, as well as the ongoing development of e-commerce, particularly through sophisticated digital marketing initiatives. ABF is positioning itself to capture a portion of the £700 billion global online food market, responding to shifting consumer preferences and the growing demand for both convenience and sustainability in food retail. In summary, this report has thoroughly evaluated Associated British Foods plc's growth prospects, both present and future, with a focus on its marketing initiatives and strategies that support its ability to thrive in a continuously changing market environment.

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FUTURE ADVANCEMENTS IN MARKETING AT ASSOCIATED BRITISH FOODS

PLC (ABF)

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing has undergone major changes over the past half-century, shifting from a corporate-centric model to one that really gives consumer needs and preferences top priority. In the absence of effective marketing, even superior products might not secure visibility or traction in the market, complicating the ability of companies to expand or sustain their operations. In the world of commerce, promotion and marketing serve as crucial foundations. Marketing plays a crucial role in differentiating a company's products and services in a crowded and competitive market (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Effective marketing not only showcases the real advantages of a product but also connects with the emotional and psychological desires of consumers, thereby increasing its perceived worth beyond what is expected (Armstrong et al., 2020).

The right marketing techniques led to build businesses trust, foster loyalty to their brand, and encourage customers to buy from them again. These factors are essential for long-term profitability and growth (Solomon et al., 2019). To superbly connect with and engage target audiences, modern marketing employs a wide-ranging array of channels. These include social media platforms, digital advertising, collaborations with influencers, and traditional approaches like television and print advertising (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Marketing, basically, is the connection between a business and its customers — making more sales, making the company more attractive, more competitive, etc. The pandemic actually highlighted the importance of e-commerce, digital engagement, and crisis communication in marketing (Kumar et al., 2021). This report examines these issues closely and suggests ways to help the company stay competitive. It also shows how marketing efforts can be made more effective in this changing environment.

2. COMPANY OVERVIEW

Associated British Foods plc (ABF) is a international company from Britain and established in the year 1935. It operates mainly through Five Sectors: Grocery, Sugar, Agriculture, Ingredients and Retail (Associated British Foods plc, 2024). Throughout its history, ABF has strategically acquired prominent companies such as British Sugar, Twinings, Ovaltine, and

Patak's (Grace's Guide, 2024). These acquisitions significantly strengthened ABF's status as a major global conglomerate and its deliberate approach to expanding its portfolio and strengthening its position within the industry. ABF has around 138,000 employees; total group revenue close to £20.1 billion was announced for the year 2024. ABF is listed on the FTSE 100 directory and has operations in more than 56 nations of the world.

ABF has developed a vision and is efficiently guiding both present and future marketing activities universally. The company's marketing varies across its different segments but is united by common goals: customer led innovation, strong branding, ethical governance and responsive advertising (Kotler and Keller, 2016; American Marketing Association, 2021).

3. DRIVERS OF MARKETING ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

Selecting the right marketing strategies is crucial as it shapes both the outcomes and the operations of a business. Companies must consider internal dynamics such as capabilities and available resources as well as external forces, such as market competition and shifting consumer patterns. Marketing plans are then harmonized with these so that companies may become competitive and meet the needs of customers effectively (OpenStax, 2025; Angola Transparency, 2025). Externally, technological enhancements such as digital and social media advertising have been adopted to growth client engagement and efficiency (EssayLessons, 2024). In addition, financial, environmental and legal pressures, as well as volatile commodity costs, climate-trade sourcing effects, sustainable packaging laws, and increased demand for ethically sourced products force ABF to execute responsive marketing and compliance tactics (DCF Modeling, 2024). ABF's marketing strategy is shaped by a mix of internal resources and external market conditions, which enables the company to compete and adapt to market challenges.

3.1 MACRO ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS- PESTEL

Political

Brexit & Trade Restrictions: The export of food products to EU markets has encountered significant obstacles due to the new requirements established post-Brexit, resulting in delays, increased certification expenses, and even halts in shipments, particularly affecting items such

as biscuits and tea (Reddit, 2021; DeskLib, 2023). ABF's sugar business has been affected by sugar share policies in the UK and EU, and the possible introduction of sugar taxes (MarketWatch, 2024; DeskLib, 2023).

The current political instability is introducing significant uncertainty and driving operational expenses higher. In response, ABF must approach these challenges with caution, prioritizing conservative strategies to navigate the landscape effectively. Strengthening supply chain resilience and deepening regulatory expertise are critical steps if they wish to remain competitive in the industry.

Economic

Commodity price volatility: ABF turnover has come from worldwide movement in grain, raw material, sugar and when price of raw material increased by approximately 22% from 2022 to 2023 (ABF, 2023) impacted the business. This embraced margins and hit price sensitive areas like food manufacture.

Economic growth and Consumer expenditure: ABF is seeing gains from rising markets as the GDP increases in the UK and developing countries like China. Still, consumer demand and spending are slowing because of high inflation, which was about 6.7% in 2023 (IceLabz, 2024). To deal with this, ABF is putting money into value brands, making and getting supplies locally, and using automation to keep their profit margins up.

Social

Evolving consumer tastes: The market for plant-based and healthy food options is increasing, with 58% of UK consumers moving towards plant-dominated diets (YouGov, 2021). To meet this rising interest, the firm has extended its plant-based offerings, exclusively in its Grocery division, which includes well-known brands like Twinings and Jordans, recognized for their natural and wholesome qualities. ABF sees this evolving consumer landscape presents both a challenge and an exciting opportunity to develop clean-label, plant-based alternatives that appeal to health-driven shoppers.

Technological

Advancements of Digitalisation and R&D: In 2022, ABF allocated approximately £136 million towards research and development, emphasizing sustainable ingredients and health-focused products that cater to evolving consumer preferences. Strategic collaborations with

prominent technology firms such as Siemens and SAP have notably advanced the company's capacity for innovation and operational efficiency (Associated British Foods plc, 2024a).

High levels of internet and mobile access in the UK have provided ABF with the chance to boost its digital marketing and e-commerce efforts. The company's overall income hit £1.5 billion because online sales went up by 40%. Additionally, the business has observed a steady rise in its online earnings. This increase in online sales shows how important digital platforms are for connecting with customers, allowing ABF to adapt to the evolving trends in how consumers shop and what they prefer (Associated British Foods plc, 2024c).

Environmental

Renewable energy & Waste Management: ABF is actively investing in renewable energy sources, including solar power and combined heat and power (CHP) systems throughout its operations, which helps to lessen dependence on fossil fuels while refining energy efficiency (ABF, 2024b; Corporate Energy, 2024). These initiatives demonstrate a clear commitment to reducing dependence on fossil fuels while enhancing overall energy efficiency. Additionally, the company has put effort into improving its approach to handling waste. It has rolled out better systems to recycle and cut down on waste. The company also aims to follow waste-related rules in all countries where it operates.

Climate impact on agriculture: Climate change is creating significant, long-term hurdles for ABF's agricultural supply chains, particularly in the realm of sugar beet cultivation. This crop is especially sensitive to changes in weather patterns and water supply. As these environmental factors become more unpredictable, ABF is facing increased uncertainty regarding both production costs and the reliability of their yields. The ongoing variability in climate conditions adds considerable risk to the stability and efficiency of their supply chain operations (MarketWatch, 2024).

Legal

Associated British Foods (ABF) faces tight food safety rules following Brexit, exclusively concerning the export of products like cheese powders. These things now need exclusive health certificates for export and cause administrative hold-ups. Industry estimates indicate that UK food exporters have spent more than £200 million on veterinary documents since 2021 (The Grocer, 2024; Guardian, 2024). ABF tracks the safety guidelines set by GFSI and HACCP. They develop their quality assurance processes from these standards. They are underpinned by

key performance indicators at each site and legal expertise that assure compliance throughout the supply chain (ABF, 2025).

3.2 MICRO ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS- PORTER'S FIVE FORCES

The micro environment outline that firms can use to assess their direct market conditions and create plans to boost profits and gain a competitive edge.

Industry Rivalry: Associated British Foods (ABF) is navigating some seriously competitive waters in both the food and retail sectors. In the food arena, they're going head-to-head with heavyweights like Unilever and Nestlé, competing in several categories such as sugar, tea (notably Twinings), and a wide array of grocery products (Case48, 2024). On the retail front, Primark, which is part of ABF, faces tough competition from international fashion retailers such as H&M and Zara. The markets in which ABF operates are highly fragmented, resulting in frequent price competition, accelerated innovation cycles, and aggressive marketing campaigns from other industry players.

To overcome the tough rivalry, ABF focuses on setting its products apart by stressing health-conscious and sustainable options, being creative with ingredients, and aligning its brand effectively. Plus, the cost efficiencies in Primark's supply chain help keep their prices competitive (Case48, 2024).

Threat of New Entrants: ABF capitalizes on high barriers to entry in its key markets, which secure its competitive position. The substantial capital investment, effective brand differentiation, and rigorous regulatory compliance form significant barriers for new entrants (essay48.com, 2018). Established brands benefit from customer loyalty, and strong distribution networks provide additional leverage. Consequently, ABF stands strong in protecting its market position. It focuses on new ideas and growing into new areas. The company doesn't face immediate threats from new rivals in the market (essay48.com, 2018).

Bargaining Power of Suppliers: ABF manages supplier power with care by employing strategic sourcing and its own production capacity. It reduces supplier influence by having a diverse global supplier network and long-term contracts that cover about 75% of its sugar raw material needs, which helps limit the impact of sudden cost changes. With more than 30% of its raw ingredients sourced from outside the UK, this diversified approach further reduces dependence on any single supplier or market (DCFModeling, 2024). ABF's strategy for handling supplier risk involves securing long-term contracts, diversifying sourcing options,

and implementing vertical integration. This combination enables them to control costs and maintain stability even when commodity prices fluctuate.

Bargaining Power of Buyers: Within ABF's food division, major supermarket chains like Tesco, Sainsbury's, and Walmart hold significant bargaining power. This is largely due to their high-volume purchasing, strong presence in the grocery market, and their ability to negotiate for lower prices and better promotional deals (Case48, 2024). This effect is particularly noticeable in the UK, where other giant supermarkets dominate grocery retail, giving them a substantial say in the terms set for suppliers (Desklib, 2023). While ABF enjoys the advantage of popular food brands like Twinings and Ovaltine, which help foster customer loyalty and offer some protection against price pressures, the power of these retailers remains quite formidable. In contrast, Primark's customer base is highly sensitive to price, yet individual shoppers lack meaningful bargaining power. Instead, their collective preference for affordable, fast fashion shapes Primark's overall strategic direction, compelling the company to prioritize value-driven offerings and rapid product turnover.

ABF seeks to limit the extent of buyer influence within the food and retail sectors. It employs tactics such as competitive pricing, loyalty programs, and ongoing investments in their brand to strengthen relationships with retailers and keep customers loyal (Analystock. ai, 2025).

Threat of Substitutes: The rising demand for private label, organic, and plant-based options presents a larger risk of replacement for Associated British Foods (ABF), especially in its grocery division (247CaseAnalysis, 2024). Shoppers are becoming more concerned about their health, the environment, and getting good value for their money, with private label products from large stores frequently offering cheaper alternatives (Foster-Collins, 2023). Furthermore, the worldwide market for plant-based foods is expected to expand rapidly, increasing competition from other food producers (Coates, 2024).

ABF has committed product development, with a focus on botanicals and reduced-sugar products, and improved marketing methods based on origin, sustainability, and nutritional content (DCFmodeling.com, 2025). This does its best to keep the brand in the marketplace, protect its equity, and minimize the dangers coming from emerging substitute products.

3.3 SWOT ANALYSIS

It is a methodical framework to assess whether ABF is leveraging its strengths effectively while confronting industry challenges. It enhances decision-making and facilitates the formulation of strategies that will guide ABF's sustained growth and market competitiveness.

Strengths: Associated British Foods Plc (ABF) exhibits remarkable strengths, with a varied brand portfolio that comprises well-known names such as Twinings, Ovaltine, and Primark, contributing to robust customer loyalty and a strong market presence (Case48, 2024; Kotler and Keller, 2016; American Marketing Association, 2021). Furthermore, ABF's extensive presence provides resilience, allowing the company to adapt successfully to variations in regional economies.

Weaknesses: ABF is markedly reliant on the UK market, making it predominantly vulnerable to fluctuations in the local economy. Additionally, the company's grocery and sugar segments have struggled in recent years, reflecting ongoing challenges within those divisions (MarketWatch, 2024).

Opportunities: ABF can capitalize on the opportunities present in developing markets, especially in Asian nations, by embracing the rising interest in health-oriented and eco-friendly goods. Southeast Asia's ingredients and grocery markets are expanding due to increased production and products adjusted for local tastes (Research-Tree, 2025). By introducing tech to increase product quality and processes, the company can take advantage of these openings.

Threats: The firm faces risks from heightened competition, particularly from private-label brands and worldwide retailers, surging commodity prices, regulatory modifications, and supply chain interruptions (Case48, 2024). By applying planned initiatives to address these tests, ABF can advance its competitive position and secure its long-standing sustainability.

4. TARGETED MARKET AND AUDIENCE

ABF has high growth prospects in the developing world, especially Asia and Africa. These regions see rising incomes and a growing middle class leading to an uptick in demand for food and sustainable goods (Research-Tree, 2025; DCFmodeling.com, 2025).

4.1 Identifying Target Markets: ABF determines strategic brand separation across its diverse portfolio. Primark, for instance, primarily appeals to cost-conscious fashion consumers especially millennials and Gen Z across major European and American markets (Mintel, 2023). In contrast, Twinings targets health-oriented, premium tea drinkers, usually middle to upper-income adults who value wellness and the brand's longstanding heritage (Euromonitor, 2023). Kingsmill, meanwhile, positions itself as an accessible, everyday bakery staple for family households. By segmenting its brands in this manner, ABF effectively reaches multiple demographic groups and adapts its strategies to shifting consumer preferences and regional market trends.

4.2 Determination of the Target Audience: The segmentation tactics for each ABF brand are based on extensive market research that includes geographic and demographic information, consumer behaviour analysis, and evaluations of product-category relevance. For instance, Primark has tapped into a market opportunity in the fast fashion arena, specifically catering to shoppers who are budget-conscious and prefer the tactile experience of shopping in-store rather than online (Deloitte, 2023). This data-driven method allows for precise audience targeting. However, it does have its drawbacks. Relying heavily on traditional retail methods can be risky, especially as more consumers lean towards e-commerce.

4.3 Targeting Approach: ABF has a smart strategy when it comes to targeting different customer groups. mass-market items like Silver Spoon sugar employ wide-reaching promotion plans to connect with a large number of homes. On the other hand, the flour of Allinson and cereals of Jordans are consistent with a more focused approach, emphasizing a specific clientele that appreciates whole grains and healthy living habits (MarketLine, 2014; Simon-Kucher, 2024). Meanwhile, Primark, its value retail section, follows a cost leadership model, aiming a wide range of price-sensitive consumers with in-store fashion offerings across Europe and the US. By tailoring its strategic positioning across various brands, ABF effectively spans consumer needs from staple grocery purchases to lifestyle-focused and fashion-forward markets, although mass market initiatives may face challenges in differentiation and value perception.

4.4. Distinction and Placement: ABF targeted different sets of consumers by developing a multifaceted brand differentiation strategy that met specific segments' needs. For example, Twinings leans into its historical roots as a premium tea brand known for quality and tradition. This legacy resonates with consumers who are after authenticity and a bit of prestige in their

drink choices (Euromonitor, 2023). Meanwhile, Jordans underlines environmental accountability and whole-grain nutrition, attracting consumers who prioritize both wellness and ethical consumption. By employing such clear strategies of positioning, ABF ensures the brands differentiate together in the market. This strategy clarifies the brand and lets the company address the different needs of its consumer groups.

4.5. Marketing Mix: The marketing mix, often referred to as the 4Ps—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion serves as a strategic framework for effectively positioning a product in the marketplace. This approach assists businesses in aligning their products with consumer demands and competitive landscapes, thereby enhancing sales and customer satisfaction (Kotler and Armstrong, 2022).

Product: ABF's extensive and varied product range enables the company to reach various consumer segments and lessen reliance on a single market (Embapro, 2025). However, managing this diverse portfolio can blur brand focus and stretch operational capabilities, especially as consumer expectations for innovation, sustainability, and transparency continue to escalate.

Price: ABF adopts a contrasting pricing strategy across its brand portfolio to align with different market positions. Primark is a prime example, which uses a penetration pricing strategy. By keeping prices low, they aim to draw in budget-conscious shoppers. This method has been successful in enhancing foot traffic and revenue growth, yet it also raises issues about sustainability and profit margins, particularly as inflation and wage pressures rise in the retail supply chain (Embapro, 2025).

Place: ABF deploys a mix of traditional and modern circulation strategies to cater to different consumer segments. Their food brands are largely available through supermarkets and wholesalers, making them easily accessible and driving up sales. On the other hand, Primark's limited online presence primarily focused on click-and-collect options or catalogue browsing has received criticism (Embapro, 2025). Moreover, the absence of a fully developed online sales channel could jeopardize its long-term competitiveness, especially as shopping habits increasingly shift towards online platforms.

Promotion: ABF implements a multi-channel advertising strategy to correspond with its extensive brand portfolio. For its established, legacy brands, the company leans on traditional advertising through television and print while pivoting to social media campaigns and influencer

partnerships to engage younger, trend-focused consumers. In-store promotions and eye-catching packaging innovations play a pivotal role, subtly nudging shoppers' purchase decisions right at the shelf. While ABF's promotional approach is comprehensive, it's clear that ongoing adaptation is necessary. The pace of change in consumer media habits and rising expectations around sustainability mean the company can't afford to be complacent (Embapro, 2025).

5. MARKETING COMMUNICATION & CONTROL MECHANISM

Marketing communication is crucial for shaping how consumers see brands and engaging them effectively. Its effectiveness, however, relies on the consistency of the message and its relevance to the target audience. While strategies like integrated marketing communications and digital marketing can achieve extensive reach, they may suffer from oversaturation and message fatigue if not properly focused (Fill and Turnbull, 2019). Consequently, effective communication requires a balance of creativity, clarity, and strategic alignment with consumer behaviour.

5.1. Media Platforms, Communication and Efficiency

Social media: ABF actively utilizes social media platforms, frequently for Primark and Twinings. They engage with audiences on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X by running user-focused initiatives like Primania, which motivates shoppers to post their outfits, resulting in increased in-store visits and creating online buzz, even in the absence of e-commerce (RetailDive, 2015; Digiday, 2015).

Email Marketing: ABF brands, including Twinings and Jordans, make use of email newsletters to keep their customers informed about the latest products, health tips, and promotions. Not only does this method assist in customer retention, but it also provides important content that relates to their lifestyle and health requirements (Twinings, 2025).

Search Engine Optimisation and Content Marketing: ABF's Twinings brand is utilising SEO-optimised content marketing to its advantage. The website focuses on creating recipes and wellness articles which enabled them to rank first for the keyword terms herbal tea and detox tea. This strategy increases their website traffic from search engines and builds their brand's reputation.

Measurement and Metrics: ABF evaluates the success of its campaigns at the brand level by analysing data and observing customer behaviour.

Sales performance is traced through revenue growth and comparable sales. For instance, Primark reviews its campaigns by analysing the quarterly increase in store traffic and sales after digital initiatives (Forbes, 2024).

Customer engagement is assessed through social media interactions (likes, shares, reach) and web/email metrics, with Primark frequently monitoring Instagram engagement for campaigns such as #Primania (Marketing Beat, 2023).

E-commerce analytics for brands like Twinings by employing platforms like e. fundamentals to monitor conversion rates and optimize their online performance. Nevertheless, its effectiveness hinges on prompt implementation and cohesive collaboration across various departments (KamCity, 2024).

5.2 Marketing Control Mechanisms

ABF employs systematic marketing control frameworks including quarterly performance assessments, budget variance evaluations, consumer feedback mechanisms, and brand-level KPI dashboards to steer campaign refinement and resource allocation. While they provide a controlled way to track progress, they also need rapid interpretation and collaboration across departments to adapt to the fast-paced marketplace changes (Associated British Foods plc, 2024).

6. CONCLUSION

Associated British Foods has firmly cemented its status as a global player, now spanning operations in 56 countries and maintaining a notably varied portfolio such as groceries, ingredients, retail, etc. The agility of the company is remarkable; it has pivoted towards health-oriented products and sustainability, effectively harmonizing with the shifting preferences of consumers (Euromonitor, 2024). The inflation is unstable, and commodity prices are anything but stable, posing continuous challenges for the marketing team, who must now be even more adaptable and robust. ABF's strategic deployment of the marketing mix underpinned by robust brand communications and management controls like KPIs, budget variance checks, performance monitoring and flexible realignment. Using analytical tools such as SWOT and

PESTLE has revealed potential in emerging markets, but have also raised concerns about vulnerabilities, especially in light of Primark's weak digital presence.

The marketing spotlight tends to shine on major brands like Primark and Twinings, who are adept at running targeted campaigns and creating content tailored for various platforms. On the other hand, different business sectors grapple with subpar performance, often associated with ESG challenges, supply chain difficulties, and compliance obligations. Fundamentally, ABF remains strong, but with competitive intensity and regulatory shifts looming, sustained innovation, a genuine commitment to sustainability, and balanced brand promotion aren't just buzzwords they're essential for any hope of long-term success.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

ABF's business landscape is being shaped by several key trends, such as swift technological advancements, financial strains, global challenges, and a heightened focus on social and environmental responsibilities. These factors create both major challenges and exciting opportunities for companies. By focusing on milestones in areas like marketing, organizations can elevate themselves to the next level.

Focus on investments in digital platforms, products offerings, and brand growth: ABF increased its marketing budget for key grocery brands in 2024. This led to a 4% rise in sales and a 17% jump in adjusted operating profit (Associated British Foods plc, 2024). The stronger marketing clearly helped improve the company's results, attract more customers and boost product sales.

Investing in digital technologies, innovative products, and strong branding is now fundamental for ensuring long-term business growth and maintaining a competitive edge (McKinsey, 2020; Lin & Ma, 2024). Enhancing digital capabilities through the use of AI, data analytics, cloud-based systems, and automation allows companies to strengthen customer engagement, streamline their operations, and adapt to keep pace with rapid market changes (Deloitte, 2021; Cflow, 2024). So, regular product innovation, aligned with evolving customer expectations, serves to heighten satisfaction and foster loyalty (Lin & Ma, 2024). Meanwhile, strategic investment in brand building, meanwhile, improves confidence and awareness, both of which become very important in today's saturated market (Mastercard/HBR, 2022).

ABF's strategic boost in spending on digital services, products, and branding in its retail division. In addition, the company reported that it invested in website improvements, search engine refinement, paid ads, and customer relations during the first half of 2025 to get more site visitors and boost sales (Associated British Foods plc, 2025). Furthermore, spending more on online marketing must lead to clear results, especially with tough competition and rising costs to find new customers. Simply allocating additional resources is insufficient; these expenditures must clearly translate into tangible returns to justify their value.

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