Marketing Opportunity Analysis for

Ito En Australia

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INTRODUCTION

ITO EN is a tea company specialising in the farming, processing, and distribution of Japanese green tea. It is a brand known for its innovative and sustainable business model. This is evidenced by their dedication to continued improvement and implementation of ESG (environmental, social and governance) factors. As such it must continually evolve its ethical standards to not only maintain its brand image but thrive in a domestic and global market increasingly demanding of green tea products. Therefore, it is proposed that ITO EN change the material of their tea bags from nonbiodegradable nylon to biodegradable nylon and update the packaging image to be more aesthetically pleasing for Australian consumers.

COMPANY BACKGROUND

ITO EN is the largest producer of green tea in Japan and one of the largest in the world (ITO EN Australia, 2017) (technavio, 2020). They began in the 1960's as the Frontier Tea Corporation selling tea in a limited number of specialty stores (ITO EN, 2016). Today, ITO EN is primarily known for its bottled teas, with Oi Ocha being its flagship product (ITO EN, 2019). However, they also produce other products including coffee, loose leaf tea, soft drinks, vegetable beverages, and matcha green tea bags (ITO EN, 2019). The last of which is the subject of this analysis. Their revenue and profits have seen a consistent increase in the last five years from 430.5 billion yen to 504.1 billion yen in revenue and a drastic 7.2 billion yen to 14.5 billion yen in profits worldwide. (ITO EN, 2019).

It's Australian subsidiary ITO EN Australia, is the largest producer of green tea in Australia and is responsible for the production and distribution of ITO EN's products to the Australian market since it entered in 1996 (ITO EN, LTD, 2019). The company consists of 20 employees and is wholly owned by its parent company ITO EN (Ethical Consumer Group Inc, n.d.) (Company 360, 2020). It is based in Victoria, situated close to its farming, processing and distribution sites (ITO EN Australia Pty. Limited, 2017).

MARKET ANALYSIS

The Australian Food Retailing Industry generated a revenue of $130.6 billion in 2018. This was in line with the trend market researchers have seen over the past decade which shows the industry's annual turnover increasing as shown in Figure 1 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). In Australia, supermarket spending accounted for a significant 68% of all expenditure within the Food & Beverage Retail Industry in 2018 (Crothers, 2019). The Oligopolistic nature of the Food Retail Industry remained prominent with Coles and Woolworths owning a staggering 61.6% share of the retail grocery market as shown in Figure 2 (Roy Morgan, 2019).

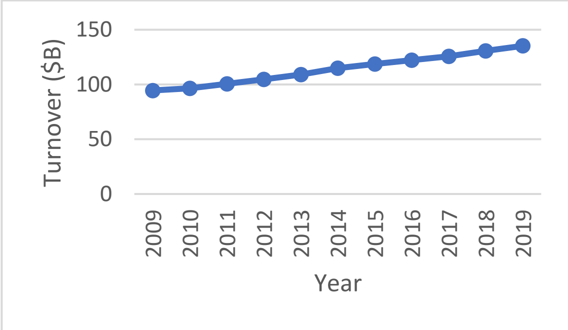


Figure 1 - Annual Turnover of the Australian Food Retail Industry over Time

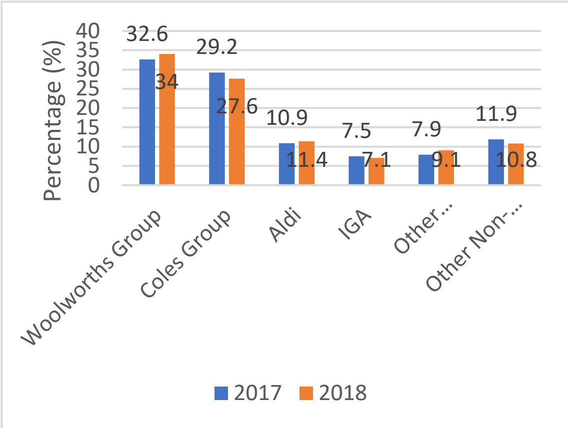


Figure 2 - Supermarkets Share of the Australian Food Retail Industry in 2018 and 2019

Green tea is a rapidly growing component of the Food & Beverage Industry in Australia and internationally. Though the tea industry as a whole has grown slowly of the past decade, flavoured, herbal, green and cold teas have seen a strong increase in demand from consumers. Particularly herbal and green teas as the public perception of the health benefits of these products increases (Lin, 2015). Currently, the Australian tea market is valued at $1.4 billion AUD, $324 million of that being packaged teas in 2019, and is expected to grow by 6.9% annually (CAGR 2020-2025) (Statista, 2020) (Bolten, 2019). Australia has seen its tea revenue grow by more than 56% over the past 8 years and the volume sold has increased by nearly 27% to its current 16.9 million kilograms (Vortex Global, 2019). Over 9.8 million Australians (47.6%) drink at least one cup of tea in an average week which is up by 300,000 from 2014 (Roy Morgan, 2019). According to Statista, by 2025 70% of spending in the tea market will come from out of home consumption (Statista, 2020). Currently though, most teas are purchased in supermarkets (Bolten, 2019). JDE Professional, Nestle, Unilever Australia and Vittoria Food and Beverage own the largest market share of the Australian tea industry (Vortex Global, 2019).

MACRO ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

POLITICAL	Goods & Services Tax	Affects cost of tea leaf supply
	COVID-19 Regulations	Affects shipping and production costs
ECONOMIC	Increased unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic	Reduction in household disposable income
	Non-discretionary spending item	Tea sales in supermarkets will remain consistent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
SOCIAL	Consumer health awareness	Consumers are becoming more likely to choose products beneficial to their health
	Fair Trade	Consumers are becoming more likely to choose products with ethical production and distribution processes
	Australian made products	Consumers are more willing to choose products that have been produced in Australia and/or made from Australian ingredicents
LEGAL	Food Standards Code	Sets standards for packaging, labelling and quality of food products
	Imported Food Control Act 1992	Sets the compliance requirements for imported food to meet national food safety standards
	Biosecurity Act 2015	Sets standards to manage biosecurity threats to plant, animal and human health
ENVIRONMENTAL	Used Tea Leaves Recycling System	Tea leaves used in the production process are recycled into various products
	Climate Change	Increased probability of extreme weather events occuring and affecting crop yields

As tea leaves makes up a large expense of Ito En's production process, the products GST free tax designation creates greater profits for the business to send back to its parent company in Japan. Ito En's processing facility, located in Wangaratta, Victoria is currently subject to COVID-19 lockdown regulations which severely affect health and safety requirements the business has to meet throughout production and distribution. Also as a consequence of the pandemic, Australia has seen a surge in unemployment which has significantly affected disposable income and as result, consumer spending habits. There is a potential for tea sales to decrease even though tea is mostly seen as a staple good.

Over recent years, there has been an upsurge in consumer concern over perceived/actual health benefits of food and whether they are ethically sourced. Consumers are now more likely to pick healthier and Fairtrade food products, this same trend can be seen in Australian made products. This is an advantage for Ito En as they are able to satisfy these consumer preferences. Ito En products are subject to the Food Standards code as this sets the requirements for food quality and labelling and packaging on all food and beverage products. Ito En's matcha from Japan is subject to the Imported Food Control Act 1992 and Biosecurity Act 2015. Climate change is a major factor to consider as past decade's trend of warmer trends and less rainfall has a direct impact on the company's supply chain. Ito En's current recycling initiative 'Used Tea Leaves Recycling System' has decreased the company's unsustainable waste disposal and led to a reduction in CO_2 emissions due to the production method used.

MICRO ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

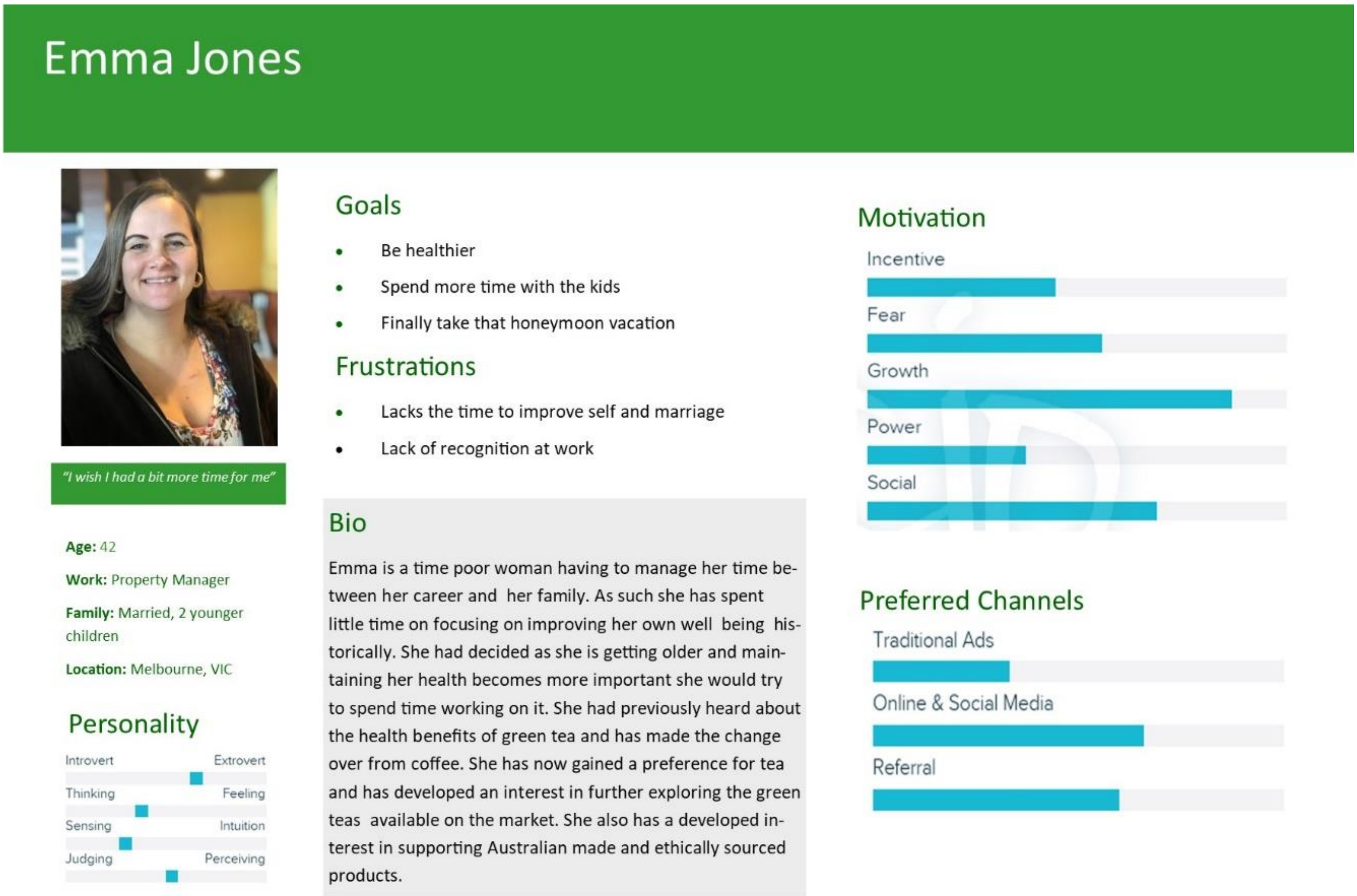
Company Analysis

+	−
- Matcha Green Tea is produced and packaged in Australia from mostly Australian ingredients - Ito En is known for its committment to healthy products - Ito En is known for its simple, consistent and excellect product quality.	- Ito En has a low market presence - Lower reputation compared to more established brands in Australia - Not many advertising resources have been invested to grow market share of Matcha Green Tea

Ito En Australia is a green tea company that has recently entered into the Australian market and as such suffers from a low market presence, compounded by a lack of resources from its parent company to market its product Matcha green tea. This has led to the brand having a smaller reputation than equivalent, more established brands. However, though small, Ito En is known for its drive to produce healthy products that are only made to the highest standards through its involvement in the entire production process. Furthermore, the brand benefits from having Australian made products using Australian ingredients.

Consumer Analysis

The primary purchaser of green tea in the Australian market can be seen in the persona of Emma Jones. Emma is 42 years old and a property manager. She identifies her life responsibilities in the order of mother, wife, career and then self-care last. These responsibilities place great time constraints on her life and limit social and self-care time. Emma spends a great amount of time on social media and greatly values the referrals of trusted sources. Emma is most likely to purchase products from supermarkets and shopping centres to the convenience. She is progressive and willing to try new things.



Competitor Analysis

Table 1: Competitive Market Summary

Competitor	Target Market	Product	Price	Promotional	Distribution	Strength/Weakness
Lipton Tea Bags	• Looking for convenience • 28 – 80 years old • Female • Trust in big brand names • Not looking to try new things	Quality Black Tea Bags (100pk) Intense Extra Strong Black Tea Bags (100pk) English Breakfast Black Tea Bags (100pk) Jasmine Green Tea Bags (40pk) Pure Green Tea Bags (100pk) Decaffeinated Black Tea Bags (50pk) Quality Black Tea Bags (200pk) Pure Green Tea Bags (50pk)	$ 5.00 $ 6.10 $ 5.00 $ 5.00 $ 8.45 $ 5.20 $ 7.50 $ 4.90	• Social media • Television • Radio • Magazines • Newspapers • Billboards • Celebrity endorsement	• eCommerce (Amazon) • Distributors, retailers, and dealers • Via corner shops, supermarkets, and convenience stores	Strengths • Large amount of cash flow • Established reputation • Strong distribution network Weaknesses • Gaps in product range • Low Research & Development spending • Financial planning is poor

T2 Tea	• 20 - 35 years old • Health conscious • Trendy • Willing to try new things • Female	Gorgeous Geisha Flavoured Green Tea Bags (25pk) Melbourne Breakfast Black Tea Bags (25pk) French Earl Grey Black Tea Bags (25pk) Just Peppermint Herbal Tisane Bags (25pk) Lemongrass & Ginger Herbal Tea Bags (25pk) English Breakfast Black Tea Bags (25pk)	$ 16.00 $ 14.00 $ 15.00 $ 12.00 $ 14.00 $ 12.00	• Social media • Word of mouth • Television • Samples • In-store demonstrations • Influencer endorsement	• eCommerce • Maintain brick & mortar stores • Resellers	<u>Strengths</u> • Creates a retail experience for the customer • Highly recognisable branding • Perceived as a premium brand with diverse products <u>Weaknesses</u> • Little to no sustainability reporting or environmental impact transparency
Pukka Tea	• 25 – 40 years old • Health conscious • Female • Quirky • Looking for things that are fun and different	Relax Tea Bags (20pk) Herbal Collection Tea Bags (20pk) Three Mint Herbal Tea Sachets (20pk)	$ 7.50 $ 7.50 $ 7.50	• Social media • Website • Informational videos • Cinema advertising • Pop up cafes	• Resellers • eCommerce •	<u>Strengths</u> • Diverse product range • Focus is on medicinal and organic products • Packaging

	• Ethically minded	Lemon Ginger & Manuka Honey Tea Sachets (20pk) Day to Night Collection (20pk) Organic Feel New Herbal Tea Sachets (20pk) Night Time Tea Sachets (20pk)	$ 7.50 $ 7.50 $ 7.50 $ 7.50	• Seminars • Taste testing • Word of mouth		Weaknesses • Small target market • Offered at a high price due to higher ingredient costs than competitors
Vittoria Coffee	Consumer • 40 – 50 years old • Male • Enjoys café quality coffee and going out • Time poor Business Consumer • Cafes • Hotels • Restaurants	Espresso Ground Coffee (1kg) Italian Blend Ground Coffee (500mg) Espresso Ground Coffee (200mg) Espresso Coffee Beans (500mg) Espressotoria Espresso Capsules (12pk) Espresso Coffee Beans (1kg)	$ 28.00 $ 11.00 $ 8.00 $ 15.00 $ 8.40 $ 28.00	• Social media • Café Advertising	• Directly to businesses • Resellers • eCommerce • Strong investment in supply chain • Health stores	Strengths • Perceived as a barista quality brand due to its commercial deals • Most popular Australian coffee brand Weaknesses • Consumers feel like the brand lacks innovation

		Mountain Grown Coffee Beans (1kg) Espresso Ground Coffee Beans (1kg) Organic Espresso Coffee Beans (1kg)	$ 36.50 $ 15.00 $ 36.50			
Nestle Milo	• 5 – 15 years old • Physically active • Extroverted	Milo (460g) Milo (200g) Milo (700g) Milo Malted Drinking Chocolate (460g) Milo Xtra (395g) Milo 30% Less Added Sugar (395g) Milo Plant Based (395g)	$ 7.00 $ 4.00 $ 10.00 $ 7.00 $ 7.00 $ 7.00	• Television • Social media • Celebrity endorsement • Geographical based promotion	• Retailers • Wholesalers	Strengths • Milo benefits from Nestle's strong brand reputation • Milo is a unique selling point • Product is perceived as having health/performance benefits Weaknesses • Lack of product range • Target consumers are reliant on customers for purchase of product

Red Bull Energy Drink	• 20 – 35 years old • Physically active • Adventurous • Male	Energy Drink Can (355mlL) Energy Drink (4x250mL) Energy Drink Sugar Free (4x250mL) Energy Drink (6x250mL)	$ 3.70 $ 10.85 $ 10.85 $ 11.25	• Social media • Television • Magazines • Celebrity endorsement • Sport/Event sponsorship	• Vending machines • Retailers • eCommerce	Strengths • The 'Red Bull' brand is synonymous with energy drinks world wide • Heavy marketing presence through sponsorships of sporting events, teams and athletes has made the brand ubiquitous Weaknesses • Offers a limited product range which leaves the brand at risk with products only in the energy drink industry • Offered at a much higher price than direct competitors

Table 2: Points of Similarities & Differences

Competitor	Point of Similarities	Point of Differences
Lipton	• Both backed by large multinational corporations • Both lack in product diversity • Both have significant control over supply • Both operate globally	• Lipton has an established and iconic brand in the Australian market whereas Ito En has recently entered the market • Lipton products come in a much larger size anywhere from 40 packs to 200 packs whereas Ito En only offers only 20 packs.
T2	• Both position themselves as a healthy choice • Both operate globally	• T2 has a significantly larger product line than Ito En • T2 product price is offered at a premium (Approximately $14.00/25pk) whereas Ito En is more affordable ($6.00/20pk)
Pukka	• Both position themselves as a healthy choice • Both have the same product size (20 tea bags) • Both promote themselves as having/continuing a traditional 'tea culture' • Both operate globally	• Pukka has a wide product line whereas Ito En has only 6 tea bag products • Pukka promotes itself through immersive experiences like seminars, taste testings and pop up cafes whereas Ito En markets itself through more traditional methods
Vittoria	• Both have narrow product lines • Both have significant control over supply chain • Both operate globally	• Vittoria mostly markets to commercial customers whereas Ito En entirely consumer based • Vittoria has the largest market share in the Australian coffee industry whereas Ito En currently has little brand recognition
Nestle	• Both backed by large multinational corporations • Both operate globally	• Nestle has an established and iconic brand in the Australian market whereas Ito En has recently entered the market • Milo is targeted at 5 – 15-year-olds whereas Matcha Green Tea targets a much older market
Red Bull	• Both operate globally • Both backed by large multinational corporations	• Red Bull targets a younger market looking for thrill at the sacrifice of their health whereas Matcha Green Tea targets an older market conscious of their health • Red Bull is a read-to-drink product whereas Matcha Green Tea requires preparation

Three direct competitors of Ito En's *Matcha Green Tea* are Lipton Tea, T2 Tea and Pukka Tea. All three are marketed towards females though the target market differs from there with Lipton aiming for mass production and making use of its easily recognisable brand; T2 aiming at a younger crowd interested in what's trendy; and Pukka is different again focusing entirely on the health benefits of their products and target a quirkier market. Ito En also markets towards females but an older demographic becoming concerned with their health. All three use traditional marketing mixes including social media, billboards, websites, television ads. Pukka & T2 offer a more immersive experience such as pop up cafes and product sampling. They all distribute through retailers such as supermarkets, with Lipton being the most widely available. T2's products are primarily offered within their stores, as opposed to Pukka and Lipton which are predominately purchased through supermarkets.

Three indirect competitors of Ito En are Vittoria coffee, Nestle Milo and Red Bull. Vittoria mostly targets commercial consumers but they have made use of their brand recognition to make inroads into the consumer market. Milo and Red Bull are both marketed towards a younger age bracket who seek or currently have a more active lifestyle. Vittoria coffee, offered for consumer purposes, and Milo can mostly be found in corner stores and super markets whereas Red Bull is a ready to drink product and is predominately sold through businesses though also offered in supermarkets.

SWOT Analysis

	HELPFUL	PROBLEMS
INTERNAL	**S** Strengths 1. **Matcha & Green Tea** – Only product on the market that mixes Japanese Matcha and Green Tea. 2. **Matcha** – Only Matcha product currently available through large food retailers such as Coles and Woolworths. 3. **Australian Made** – Production process is entirely located in Australia from Australian farmed ingredients. 4. **'Used Tea Leaves Recycling System'** – Ito En now use its tea leaves recycled after the drying process to produce recycled packaging.	**W** Weaknesses 1. **Market Presence** – Though Ito En is one of the world's largest producers of green tea products they currently lack market presence compared to top competitors. 2. **Narrow Product Line** – Matcha Green Tea's product range is currently extremely specified, only offering different flavours of Matcha Green Tea. This leaves the brand at risk to changes in consumer demand and delays to the supply of the brand's imported Japanese Matcha. **3. Weak Marketing –** Despite the expensive investment and significant length of time to develop the company's infrastructure and supply chain, the company has not invested in marketing to increase returns.
EXTERNAL	**O** Opportunities 1. **Domestic Growth** – Green tea consumption is expected to grow by approximately 10% per year domestically due to increased demand for health promoting products. 2. **Government Support** – State governments such as Western Australia looking to push green tea farming in Australia due to ideal conditions.	**T** Threats 1. **Climate Change** – Increases in average temperature and extreme weather events leave green tea crop supply at potential risk, especially as farms are closely located. 2. **COVID-19** – The increase in unemployment from approximately 5% before the pandemic to 7.5% (August 2020), may lead reduced sales as result of reduced household income.

Ito En's strengths are in its product which satisfies increasing consumer demand for Australian made products, healthy products, and ethical sourcing. However, it currently has a weak market presence and a narrow product lines that leaves it vulnerable to demand changes and supply issues. Compounding on this is the lack of investment in marketing despite the other significant investment Ito En made to develop its supply chain and infrastructure as it entered the Australian market. Ito En potentially stands to benefit from the fast-growing size of the Australian tea industry also being supported by state-level governments interested in the farming possibilities of green tea. Threats to Ito En include climate change which will start affecting the supply change as a result of increased extreme weather conditions. The current large threat though, is the almost certainty of decreased household spending due to the COVID-19 pandemic which could affect sales.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

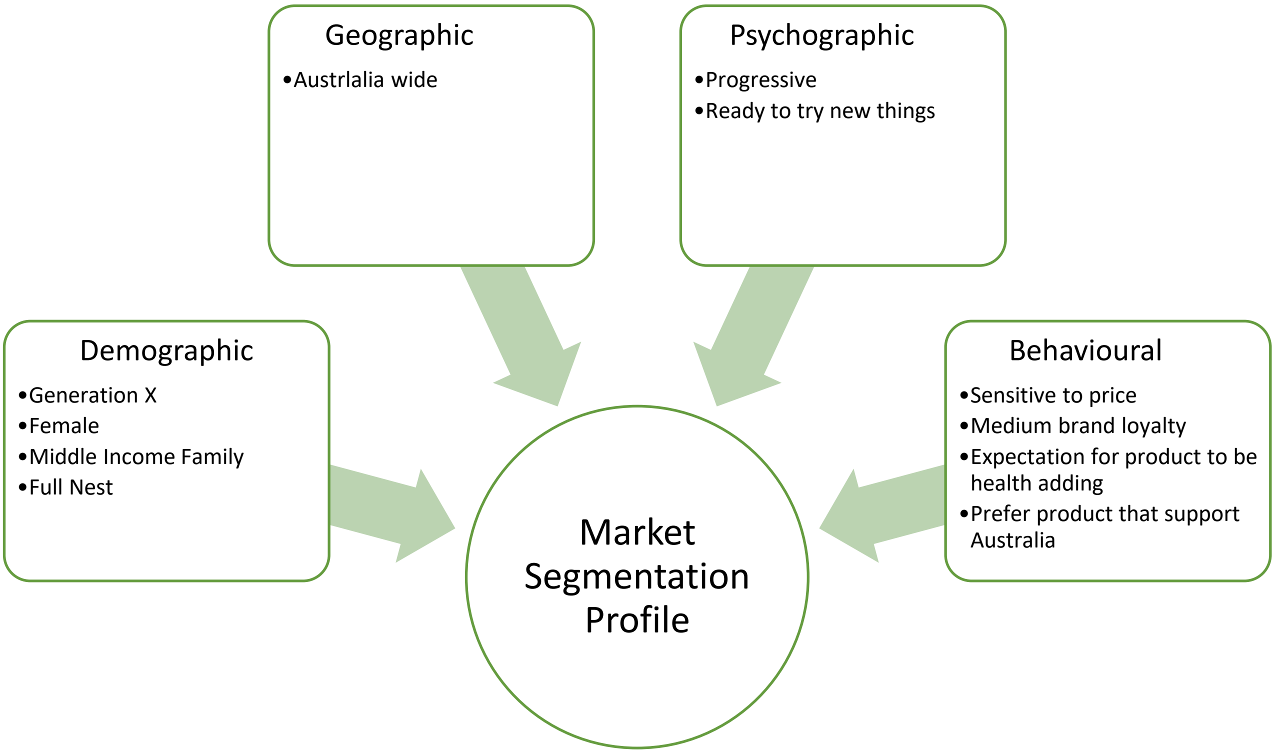
TO INCREASE MARKET SHARE IN THE SUPERMARKET RETAIL SEGMENT OF THE TEA INDUSTRY BY 5% THIS YEAR.

- **This market objective was chosen as Ito En is currently falling behind in market presence compared to top competitors. This is another step towards Ito En's long term goal of having market dominance in the Australian green tea industry.**

INCREASE BRAND AWARENESS AMONG CONSUMERS AGED 35 - 50 WHO ALREADY DRINK TEA BY 10% OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

- **This market objective was chosen as the lack of brand awareness hamstrings the brand despite its well developed product design which has been proven widely successful in foreign markets.**

SELECTION OF TARGET MARKET



The target market is generation X females from middle income families with teenage children. The target market is across all of Australia. They are progressive and like to try new things but very sensitive to the health benefits and implications in the products they purchase. They have a sensitivity to price and medium brand. Now that they are at a stage in their lives with increased disposable income, they prefer to engage in offers that meet their ethical requirements. This target market was chosen as the current product attributes already meet the needs of this target market.

POSITIONING STRATEGY

Positioning Strategy

The recommended positioning strategies to be used will involve positioning by product attributes and benefits and by product quality. This differentiation strategy should be used as it will further associate Ito En's product with high quality, high health benefits, sustainable practices, and a strong commitment to environmental awareness sustainability. These strategies will make use of the *Matcha Green Tea* brand's current product features to further highlight Ito En's unique selling point, matcha, and increase the differentiation in positioning from its competitors.

Positioning Attributes

Health Benefits of Matcha Green Tea

- This allows Ito En to capitalise on a recent demand trend that has presented itself over the past decade. Consumers are increasingly choosing the healthier option when faced with similar products.

Well Designed Product

- Matcha Green Tea is a product that well meets consumer expectations for taste and quality of matcha and green tea

Lower Price than Premium Competitors

- Ito En currently offers its products at lower price than competitors with a similar premium green tea product. This lowers the entry barrier for new consumers looking to try a previously unknown product.

Positioning Map

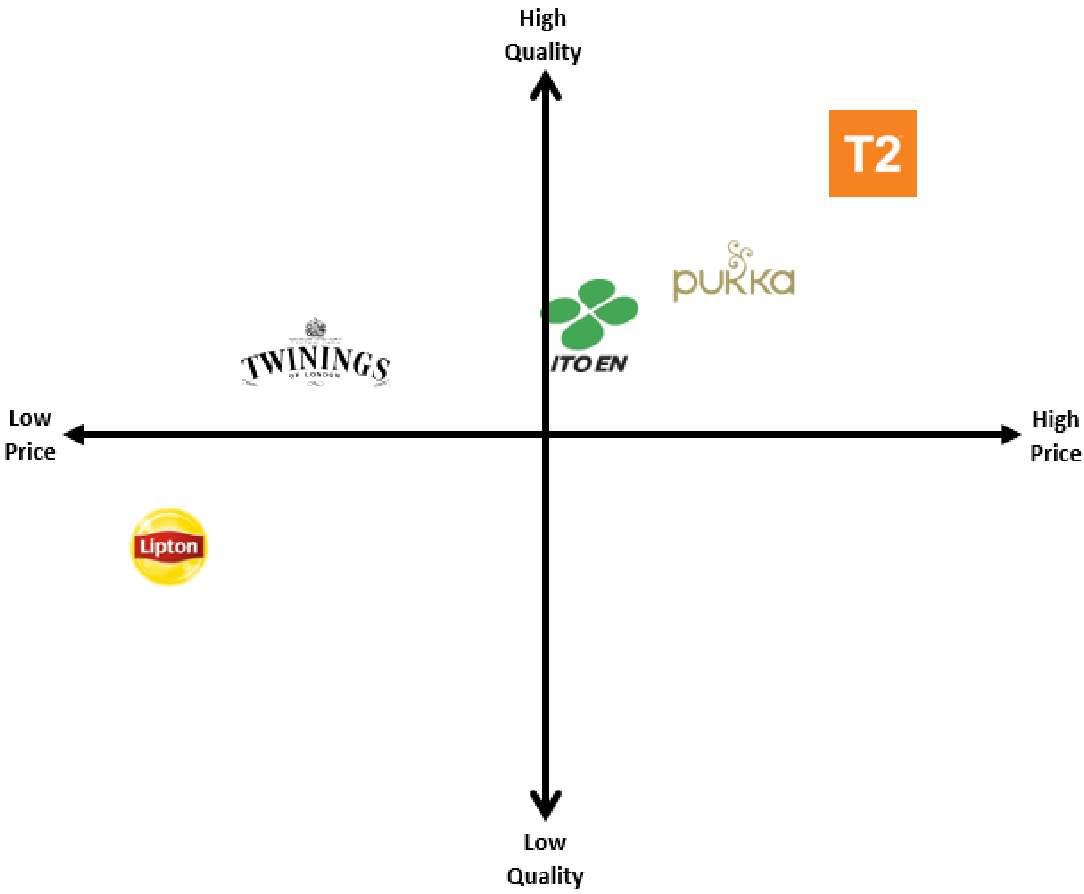


Figure 3 Example of Ito En's Matcha Green Tea & Oi Ocha product lines

PRODUCT

The core benefit of Ito En's *Matcha Green Tea* is the satisfaction of the biological urge of thirst through a quality, health benefiting product.

Ito En builds this benefit from a multitude of directions including manufacturing materials, packaging, and labelling. The matcha green tea is produced using Australian grown green tea leaves and Japanese matcha. It is then fermented and packaged in Australia before either being sold domestically or exported back to Japan. *Matcha Green Tea* is currently packaged in a cardboard box containing 20 tea bags separately packaged for convenience. The tea bag itself is made from nonbiodegradable nylon and attached to a cotton string and water treated paper tag. The packaging itself is predominantly green which symbolises and plays off its namesake ingredients matcha and green tea. Its labelling heavily emphasises that it is an Australian made product through its clear origin source information and pictures.

It is proposed that Ito En change the tea bag material from non-biodegradable nylon to biodegradable nylon. To capitalise on this product modification the packaging should slightly altered by including label saying 'New! Biodegradable tea bag". This change is to increase product awareness in potential new consumers who have an interest in environmental sustainability or who strive to do so. The target market consumers have a larger disposable income to facilitate supporting products with enhanced environmental sustainability in line with their ethical beliefs. Furthermore, it is proposed to remove the image of a cup of brewed matcha green tea from the packaging as it will polarise potential new consumers. In its place, it is suggested that the tea bag image on the original Japanese packaging be used instead. This is too meet the target market's preferred aesthetic which is integral in lowering the entry barrier for initially purchasing the product.

Defining the Product Attributes

Attribute	Benefit
Fully Biodegradable	Satisfies consumer's environmental sustainability ethics
Packaging Aesthetics	More pleasing to the consumer

New Label

New Image

In conclusion, key opportunities in the green tea industry is the increasing state government interest for alternative farming crops of which green tea is leading; the increasing size of the retail tea industry; and the increasing demand for healthy products. It is possible for Ito En to capitalise on all of these opportunities as long as the ensuing recommendations are realised. The long-term recommendation is for Ito En to invest more resources in marketing *Matcha Green Tea* as they already have a strong mature product that only lacks in brand awareness. To meet the long-term recommendation, it is proposed for Ito En to modify the tea bag material to make it biodegradable and to change the images on the packaging to make the product more aesthetically pleasing to the Australian market.

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