Brand Strategy of Belgian Beer in Japan
~How the expensive beer got popular among Japanese people~

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<Contents>
Chapter 1· Introduction
Chapter 2· Literature Review
  2·1 Basic Information of Belgian Beer   2·2 Global Alcohol Market
  2·3 The Growth Strategy in Wine Market
  2·4 The Growth Strategy in Shochu Market
  2·5 Finding Through the Literature Review and My Research Questions
Chapter 3· Methodology
Chapter 4· Research Results
  4·1 Marketing Mix of Belgian Beer
  4·2 Historical review of Belgian Beer in Japan
  4·3 Five Forces Analysis of Belgian Beer Market in Japan
  4·4 Growth Model of Belgian Beer Breweries and Relationships between Belgian Beer Brewery and Japanese Importers
  4·5 Summary of the Research Results
Chapter 5· Conclusion
  5·1 Summary and findings through the research
  5·2 Future Perspective and Issues
References

<Abstract>
Belgian beer has been gaining popular in Japan in the past 10 years. Many restaurants and bars have started to sell Belgian beer. However, compared to Japanese beer, Belgian beer cost almost three times more. This thesis seeks to answer the following question, “How Belgian beer popularity in Japan has grown, and what type of brand strategy distributors utilized to sell Belgian beer in Japan?”

Four methods were used to answer these questions: 1)Marketing Mix, 2)Historical review, 3)Five Forces Analysis and 4)Growth Model Matrix. First, the author used marketing mix to clarify the positioning of Belgian beer in Japan. The beer has been promoted at restaurants and bars, not through advertisement. In addition, the beer has been promoted as the overall name “Belgian beer”, not as a single brand name.
Therefore, customers can enjoy the luxurious and gourmet image connected to the country of Belgium. Second, the author reviewed the history of Belgian beer importation to Japan. Japanese distributors have utilized high brand image strategy to promote Belgian beer in the Japanese market. The history of Belgian Beer in Japan can be divided into four stages: 1) Belgian Beer Debut Period, 2) Craft Beer Boom Period, 3) Belgian Beer Expansion Period and 4) Belgian Beer Boom Period. Third, five forces analysis was used to check the main rivals and issues of Belgian beer in the Japanese market. As Internal Rivalry showed, because of its price and transport advantage, Japanese craft beer is the biggest rival to Belgian beer. Finally, the author made a growth model matrix and categorized Belgian beer breweries into four types: 1) Mega Company Type, 2) Challenger Type, 3) Traditional Brewery Type and 4) Contract Brewing Type (See Figure 1), and the distributors target different brewery types according to how large the companies are. Building a good relationship of trust is also very important for distributors to get exclusive contracts with the breweries.

Based on the findings above, the author argues there will be two threats to Belgian beer market in Japan in the near future. First, Japanese craft beer is the biggest rival of Belgian beer because of its price and transport advantage. The other threat is the appearance of cheap Private Brand Belgian beer by Japanese supermarkets. These cheap Belgian beer brands may destroy expensive, high-quality image of Belgian beer. To avoid a damaged brand image, the author thinks it is important to promote Belgian beer through individual beer brands to Japanese customers.

![Figure 1 Growing Strategy of Belgian Beer Breweries](image)

<Key words>
Belgian Beer, Distributers, Sales Strategy, Marketing Mix, Five Forces Analysis, Growth Model Matrix