

Launch in Japan without wasting the first 90 days

What to have ready before the first yen of ad spend, what to run in each month, and the numbers that tell you it is working. Tick it off with your team, your distributor or your agency.

1

Start two months before launch. Marketplace approvals and brand registration take weeks.

2

Go phase by phase. Pages and tracking first, then the demand you can capture, then reach.

3

Use the last page before you hire anyone. Ten questions to ask an agency in Japan.

Mark each item: Done (it matches the green box) · In progress · Not yet.

BEFORE LAUNCH Build what the ads will point at

1 Ad accounts in your company's name, with your team as admin

DONE WHEN

Google, LINE Yahoo Ads, Meta and Amazon Ads are owned by your company, with two admins on your side.

COMMON MISTAKE

The agency opens them in its own name, and the history leaves when the agency does.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

2 Japanese pages that answer what buyers search

DONE WHEN

Japanese page titles, a "where to buy" page listing every official store, and a support page with warranty and returns.

COMMON MISTAKE

A global site with a Japanese banner on top and English page titles underneath.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

3 The legal page for online sales (特定商取引法に基づく表記)

DONE WHEN

Seller, address, phone, prices, shipping, payment, delivery and returns are listed, and the final order screen restates them.

COMMON MISTAKE

Launching without it. It is required, and Japanese shoppers look for it.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

4 Measurement in every channel, counting the same events

DONE WHEN

Tags in Google, LINE Yahoo Ads (the new tag, not the old LINE Tag) and Meta, and a test order that shows up once in each.

COMMON MISTAKE

Measuring Google only, then cutting LINE or Meta because they "don't convert".

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

5 Marketplace listings live, with genuine reviews

DONE WHEN

Japanese titles and images on Amazon and Rakuten (Qoo10 or ZOZOTOWN if your category shops there), reviews through Amazon Vine or seeding labelled as PR.

COMMON MISTAKE

Paying for reviews or undisclosed influencer posts: illegal in Japan since October 2023.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

6 A baseline before you spend

DONE WHEN

You searched your brand in Japanese on a phone in Japan and noted who answers "where can I buy it", "warranty" and "reputation".

COMMON MISTAKE

No baseline, so three months later nobody can say what changed.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

WEEKS 1 TO 4 Capture the demand that already exists

7 A launch date that avoids the big sales

DONE WHEN

Launch four to six weeks before Rakuten Super SALE or Qoo10 Mega Wari, so you join the sale with reviews in place.

COMMON MISTAKE

Launching the week before a big sale, with no reviews and no ranking history.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

8 Most of the budget on intent, little on reach

DONE WHEN

Brand search in katakana and Latin letters, a small budget on the Japanese words your category types, marketplace ads, and a PR TIMES release on day one.

COMMON MISTAKE

Starting with video and influencers before people can find you and buy.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

9 Brand searches tracked every week

DONE WHEN

Weekly brand search impressions, cost per click and conversion rate, and how many top results for your name are your own pages.

COMMON MISTAKE

Flat brand searches answered with more search budget. That is an awareness problem.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

WEEKS 5 TO 12 Add reach, then decide

10 One new channel at a time

DONE WHEN

Each new channel (Instagram, LINE Yahoo display, YouTube, creators) starts alone, with its own budget and a number agreed in advance.

COMMON MISTAKE

Three channels launched in the same week. Nobody can tell which one worked.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

11 A LINE official account, if customers buy more than once

DONE WHEN

Friends collected from packaging, order pages and store counters, and the first messages written before anyone joins.

COMMON MISTAKE

Opening the account and sending nothing, or only discounts.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

12 Every channel on one page, ranked by cost per new customer

DONE WHEN

In weeks 9 to 12 the bottom channel stops unless it has a fixable reason, the top one grows 20 to 30% a week, and next quarter is planned around the sale calendar.

COMMON MISTAKE

Judging each channel by its own dashboard.

NOTES

☐ Done ☐ In progress ☐ Not yet

10 questions to ask an agency in Japan

Ask them in the first meeting, in writing if you can. A good agency answers most of them on the spot; the answers to 1, 3 and 4 decide whether you will be able to read your own results.

- 1 ☐ Will every ad account be opened in our company's name, with admin access for us?
- 2 ☐ What exactly is included in the fee: commission, platform fees, tools?
- 3 ☐ How will you measure sales on Amazon, Rakuten and in stores, not only on our site?
- 4 ☐ Will you set up measurement for LINE Yahoo Ads as well as Google and Meta?
- 5 ☐ Who works on our account day to day, and how many other accounts do they handle?
- 6 ☐ What will you report every month, and can we get the underlying data?
- 7 ☐ How will you decide when to raise or cut the budget?
- 8 ☐ How will you check what each channel really adds before scaling it?
- 9 ☐ Which Japanese rankings and comparison sites matter in our category, and how do we get on them?
- 10 ☐ What would you do in the first 30 days, and what result would tell us it's working?

The order matters more than the budget: pages and tracking, then the demand you can capture, then reach. Most launches that disappoint skipped the first step.

Launching in the next six months?

Before you spend: we look at your category in Japan, who shows up, who already sells your products, and the three things we would fix before launch day. Free, and yours to keep.

Request a free outside review →

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