



Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Optical Market: Strategies for Expansion and Leadership Sectoral

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Summary

The global optical market has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, driven by technological advances, new business models, and shifts in consumer behavior. Entrepreneurship, combined with innovation, has become the central driver of the sector's expansion, enabling companies to position themselves competitively in a globalized and highly dynamic environment. This article analyzes the main entrepreneurial and innovative strategies applied to the optical market, highlighting the evolution of management models, the role of technology, the importance of product differentiation, and the social and economic impacts of innovation. Studies by Schumpeter (1982), Drucker (1986), and Christensen (1997) are revisited to support the relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation, while contemporary research highlights the trends shaping industry leadership. This work demonstrates that the ability to innovate, combined with strategic vision, is a key element for organizations to not only survive but also lead the optical market on a global scale.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; innovation; optical market; strategies; leadership.

Abstract

The global optical market has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, driven by technological advances, new business models, and changes in consumer behavior. Entrepreneurship, combined with innovation, has become the central engine of the sector's expansion, enabling companies to position themselves competitively in a globalized and highly dynamic environment. This article analyzes the main entrepreneurial and innovative strategies applied to the optical market, highlighting the evolution of management models, the role of technology, the importance of product differentiation, and the social and economic impacts of innovation. Studies by Schumpeter (1982), Drucker (1986), and Christensen (1997) are revisited to ground the relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation, while contemporary research points to trends shaping sectoral leadership. The work demonstrates that the ability to innovate,

combined with strategic vision, is a key element for organizations not only to survive but to lead the optical market on a global scale.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; innovation; optical market; strategies; leadership.

1. Entrepreneurship as a Basis for Transformation in the Optical Market

Entrepreneurship is recognized as one of the main drivers of economic and social transformation, and the optical industry is no exception. Historically, the optical market was linked to artisanal practices, often limited to the manual production of lenses and frames, serving a limited audience. Beginning in the 20th century, with the advancement of industrialization and globalization, entrepreneurship assumed a fundamental role by introducing new forms of production, management, and marketing. Schumpeter (1982), considered the father of modern thought on entrepreneurship, emphasized that innovation is the essence of entrepreneurial activity, as it can "destroy" old structures and create new ones, better adapted to market demands. This concept applies directly to the optical industry, where entrepreneurs were able to identify opportunities for modernization and expansion in a field initially dominated by artisanal tradition.

In the optical industry, the entrepreneurial spirit is inseparable from the process of democratizing access to vision. Drucker (1986) emphasizes that entrepreneurship should be understood as a systematic practice of innovation, not simply as starting a business. Applying this concept, we observe that entrepreneurs in the optical industry did not limit themselves to founding companies, but also revolutionized the way products were designed and distributed. From neighborhood opticians to large international chains, the entrepreneurial vision was present at every stage of the sector's evolution, always guided by the perception that better vision is also a matter of social inclusion and improving quality of life.

Another relevant aspect is the ability of entrepreneurship to identify market niches.

Dolabela (1999) argues that the entrepreneur is, above all, a social innovator, someone capable of identifying gaps and offering creative solutions. In the optical market, this meant realizing, for example, that eyeglasses should not only be corrective devices, but also fashion and style accessories. This paradigm shift paved the way for the fusion of health, aesthetics, and cultural identity, expanding the target audience and allowing the sector to expand beyond the ophthalmologist's office. This movement demonstrates how an entrepreneurial vision redefines the boundaries of a traditional market.

Entrepreneurship was also crucial in driving the internationalization of optical brands. Companies like Luxottica and Essilor exemplify how entrepreneurial strategies enabled not only internal growth but also global leadership. Kotler and Keller (2012) explain that the modern entrepreneur must think globally from the outset, taking advantage of market integration to seek competitiveness. The optical sector

incorporated this logic by transforming small local industries into multinational conglomerates, responsible for setting trends and establishing global standards for consumption and technology. This expansion was only possible through an entrepreneurial mindset open to constant innovation.

However, the role of entrepreneurial culture in strengthening small and medium-sized businesses in the optical sector cannot be ignored. Even with the presence of large corporations, independent opticians continue to hold significant sway, especially in smaller communities. This is because local entrepreneurs are able to add value through personalized service and the creation of trusting bonds with their customers. Drucker (1986) had already emphasized that the competitive advantage of small businesses lies in their proximity to the consumer and the flexibility to adapt quickly to changes. Thus, entrepreneurship in the optical market presents a plural dimension, ranging from global corporations to local micro-entrepreneurs.

Another crucial point is that entrepreneurship in the optical sector is not limited to the corporate sphere, but also connects with social innovation. The democratization of access to eyewear in underserved communities through social programs and private initiatives is an example of this.

Prahalad (2005) highlighted that the base-of-the-pyramid market offers one of the greatest opportunities for entrepreneurs seeking to combine social impact and economic return. Projects distributing low-cost eyeglasses, or even free initiatives, reinforce the role of entrepreneurship as an instrument of social transformation, expanding the reach of visual health as a basic human right.

It is equally important to highlight that the entrepreneurial foundation of the optical market is sustained by a process of continuous learning and adaptation. Dolabela (1999) emphasizes that entrepreneurship is about continuous learning, which in the optical sector translates into the constant incorporation of new technologies, materials, and management models. The dynamism of the market requires entrepreneurs to be attentive not only to technical innovations but also to changes in consumer behavior, which increasingly values experience and personalization. This continuous learning is what ensures survival and competitiveness in the long term.

Finally, it can be stated that entrepreneurship in the optical market is not only a tool for growth, but the very foundation of the sector's transformation. Schumpeter (1982) already pointed out that the entrepreneur is the agent of change that drives the economy. Drucker (1986) adds that innovation and entrepreneurship are inseparable, constituting a single process of value creation. In the optical sector, this reality manifests itself in multiple dimensions: product innovation, service diversification, global expansion, and social impact. Entrepreneurship is, therefore, the driving force that has enabled the optical market to move from being artisanal and local to becoming global, technologically and socially relevant.

2. The Role of Technological Innovation and New Materials

If entrepreneurship is the foundation of the optical industry's transformation, technological innovation is the instrument that realizes this transformation. The industry's recent history shows that new materials, advances in lens design, and the use of digital technologies have redefined the parameters of quality and affordability. Christensen (1997), in proposing the theory of disruptive innovation, demonstrated that traditional sectors can be radically transformed when more accessible and efficient technologies replace established solutions. In the optical market, this translated into the transition from glass to polymers such as CR-39 and polycarbonate, and later to high-performance materials such as Trivex and MR-8. Innovation, in this context, is not limited to the product itself, but also encompasses manufacturing processes, distribution channels, and associated services.

The introduction of digital and personalized lenses is a clear example of how technology redefines standards. Jalie (2015) highlights that the development of personalized progressive lenses, designed using advanced software and produced by high-precision machines, has enabled greater visual comfort and faster adaptation. These digital lenses represent a qualitative leap, aligning with the trend toward personalization, considered one of the pillars of contemporary consumption. Furthermore, they demonstrate how technological innovation can add value to products and differentiate companies in a highly competitive market.

Another significant advancement was the integration of digital technology into optical services. Today, many opticians offer computerized refraction exams, virtual frame fittings through augmented reality, and online sales integrated with mobile apps. Kotler (2017) argues that Marketing 4.0, based on digital connectivity, redefines the relationship between companies and consumers, transforming every interaction into an opportunity for engagement. In the optical sector, this means that innovation is not only in the lens or frame, but also in the shopping experience, which has become multichannel and interactive. This transformation expands companies' reach and strengthens customer loyalty.

Beyond digitalization, materials innovation remains a prominent field. Polycarbonate, with its impact resistance, has paved the way for applications in safety glasses and children's eyewear. Trivex and MR-8, as highlighted in recent WHO studies (2019), have improved optical clarity and durability, allowing consumers access to lighter, stronger, and more comfortable products. These material advances are directly linked to scientific innovation, demonstrating how research in applied chemistry and physics has a tangible impact on the daily lives of millions of people.

Another innovative element is the growing concern for preventative eye health. Young (2015) emphasizes that high-energy blue light (HEV), emitted by digital screens, has cumulative harmful effects on the retina. The industry's response was the development of blue light filters integrated into lenses, an example of innovation driven by social demand. This type of resource highlights that technological innovation is often reactive to cultural and social transformations.

adapting to the new needs of the connected consumer. Thus, innovation becomes not only technical but also culturally relevant.

Innovation also directly impacts logistics and mass production. Techniques such as 3D printing of frames and automated lens grinding processes have reduced costs and increased production speed. Porter and Kramer (2006) emphasize that process innovation can generate sustainable competitive advantage by improving efficiency and reducing waste. In the optical industry, this advantage translates into the possibility of offering higher-quality products at more affordable prices, expanding public access and strengthening social inclusion.

Another key aspect is the relationship between innovation and sustainability. Elkington (1998) introduced the concept of the *triple bottom line*, emphasizing that innovative companies must generate not only economic value, but also social and environmental value. In the optical sector, this is reflected in initiatives such as lens recycling, frames made with biodegradable materials, and selective collection programs in optical stores. These projects not only respond to regulatory and social pressure but also strengthen brand image among increasingly conscious consumers. Innovation, therefore, is also a strategy for social responsibility and market differentiation.

Finally, it's important to emphasize that technological innovation in the optical market is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather the result of the convergence of science, entrepreneurship, and culture. Schumpeter (1982) had already observed that innovation only becomes effective when it finds an entrepreneurial environment capable of absorbing it and transforming it into economic value. In the optical sector, this convergence is expressed in safer products, more efficient processes, and more personalized experiences. This is a clear example of how technological innovation can redefine an entire sector, making it more inclusive, competitive, and connected to the needs of the 21st century.

3. Business Models and Global Expansion Strategies

The contemporary optical market is characterized by a strong presence of large corporate groups that have successfully expanded their business models internationally. This process of globalization in the sector is marked by entrepreneurial strategies that combine operational efficiency, product innovation, and cultural adaptation. Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasize that, in a globalized world, companies must think strategically about global positioning from their founding. In the optical sector, this movement is exemplified by conglomerates such as Luxottica, Essilor, and Hoya, which have become global leaders by adopting expansion models based on mergers, acquisitions, and portfolio diversification. These corporations have transformed the market into a global ecosystem, in which international brands coexist with local entrepreneurs, often through franchising.

The franchising strategy has proven to be one of the most effective in the optical sector, as it combines quality standardization with accelerated expansion. According to Aaker (1996), strong brands can be replicated in different markets while maintaining their identity, which explains the success of chains like Óticas Carol and Chilli Beans in Brazil. Franchises allow small entrepreneurs access to know-how, suppliers, and marketing strategies that they would otherwise struggle to obtain on their own. This model also guarantees large corporations a broad geographic presence, with lower financial risks, since part of the investment is made by franchisees.

Thus, the franchise is configured as a hybrid model, in which entrepreneurship and corporate standardization come together to generate sustainable growth.

Besides franchises, another model that revolutionized the sector was e-commerce. The rise of e-commerce, fueled by changes in consumer behavior and technological advancements, has profoundly altered the dynamics of the optical industry. Kotler (2017) emphasizes that the transition to digital marketing requires companies not only an online presence but also multichannel integration. In the optical market, this has translated into omnichannel strategies, in which the physical and digital experiences complement each other. Glasses can be tried on virtually through augmented reality, orders can be placed online and picked up in-store, and after-sales services are integrated into digital platforms. This model increases consumer convenience and strengthens the relationship with the brand.

Internationalization has also been driven by cultural adaptation strategies. Kotler and Keller (2012) argue that global brands must be able to adapt to the specificities of each local market to remain competitive. In the optical industry, this means adjusting frame collections to local tastes, adapting pricing strategies to socioeconomic realities, and, in some cases, even modifying lens designs to meet the specific needs of certain populations. Companies that fail to understand these cultural differences have difficulty establishing themselves, which reinforces the importance of a global yet culturally sensitive entrepreneurial vision.

Another fundamental aspect is the vertical integration of value chains. Luxottica, for example, has established itself as one of the largest global players by controlling everything from the production of lenses and frames to distribution through points of sale and private labels (Foster & Resnikoff, 2005).

This model ensures greater quality control, cost reduction, and brand strengthening, while simultaneously creating barriers to entry for smaller competitors. Although criticized for creating market concentration, this type of strategy highlights how large-scale entrepreneurship redefines the rules of the game in the global optical industry.

Digital entrepreneurship has also brought new opportunities for startups that challenge large conglomerates. Christensen (1997) notes that disruptive innovations often emerge from smaller companies that explore niches overlooked by giants. In the optical market, examples include startups that sell eyewear subscriptions, custom lens platforms, and affordable express delivery services. These initiatives demonstrate that

global expansion does not depend only on large corporations, but also on the entrepreneurial creativity of small businesses that find gaps in the market to grow.

Another important point is linked to managing the customer experience as a competitive differentiation strategy. Keller (2003) argues that successful brands are those that create memorable experiences, going beyond the product itself. In the optical sector, this translates into concept stores, personalized service, and technology integration at the point of sale. These elements are essential to consolidating leadership in highly competitive markets, where simply offering quality products is no longer enough to ensure customer loyalty.

Therefore, business models and global expansion strategies in the optical industry reflect the convergence of entrepreneurship, innovation, and strategic management. Whether through franchising, e-commerce, internationalization, or vertical integration, companies that successfully align entrepreneurial vision with cultural and technological adaptation consolidate their leadership position. The optical industry, therefore, becomes an exemplary field of how business model innovation can redefine the boundaries of a traditional market, transforming it into a highly competitive and diverse global ecosystem.

4. Differentiation, Branding and Value Building in the Optical Sector

In today's competitive landscape, where the technical quality of products tends to level out, differentiation has become a central element for business success. In the optical industry, this translates into the ability to transform glasses and lenses from simple visual correction devices into objects of desire, identity, and style. Aaker (1996) argues that a brand's value is directly linked to its ability to generate differentiation, building attributes that go beyond the product itself. This logic is strongly evident in the optical market, where companies have begun to invest heavily in branding, experiential marketing, and design—elements that add symbolic and emotional value to the product.

Building strong brands is one of the pillars of differentiation in the industry. Keller (2003) explains that a solid brand creates positive associations in the consumer's mind, influencing not only purchasing decisions but also long-term loyalty. In the optical market, this means associating eyewear with status, fashion, and lifestyle, as brands like Ray-Ban and Oakley do, which have become global icons. This transformation from a medical object into a fashion accessory represents one of the industry's greatest strategic achievements, as it significantly expands the consumer base and repositions the product in the collective imagination.

Another important element is experiential marketing, which seeks to engage the consumer in a sensory and emotional journey during their interaction with the brand. Kotler (2017) argues that the contemporary consumer doesn't just buy products, but experiences. In the optical industry, this translates into concept stores that combine modern design, personalized service, and

Digital integration. Environments that offer virtual frame fittings, style consulting, and personalized services reinforce the perception of value and create an emotional connection with the brand. This strategy increases loyalty and strengthens differentiation in a market saturated with options.

Differentiation also occurs through innovation in frame design and portfolio diversity. Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasize that market segmentation is essential to serve different audiences with specific needs and aspirations. In the optical industry, this means offering everything from luxury frames to affordable models, including collections aimed at young people, athletes, and professionals. This segmentation allows companies to reach different market niches, strengthening their competitive position and expanding their relevance on a global scale.

In addition to design and experience, communication plays a central role in building value. Aaker (1996) emphasizes that strong brands are supported by consistent narratives that clearly communicate their values and differentiators. In the optical industry, advertising campaigns that associate eyewear with freedom, authenticity, or sports performance are examples of how narrative can be as powerful as the product itself. This symbolic construction reinforces differentiation and allows brands to charge premium prices, supported not only by the product itself, but also by the intangible value associated with it.

Another relevant factor is the growing appreciation of personalization as a competitive differentiator. Christensen (2016) argues that consumers increasingly seek solutions tailored to their individual needs. In the optical industry, this is reflected in the production of personalized lenses, digitally designed based on the user's facial anatomy, and the possibility of customizing frames. This trend reinforces the idea that differentiation is not limited to marketing but must be rooted in the production process itself, becoming an intrinsic attribute of the final product.

Social responsibility and sustainability have also become differentiating factors in the optical market. Porter and Kramer (2006) explain that companies that align competitiveness with social responsibility create shared value, strengthening their image and winning over conscious consumers. Brands that develop frame recycling programs, sustainable lenses, or social inclusion initiatives in access to visual health care stand out in the market and reinforce their leadership position. In this context, differentiation occurs not only through the product but also through the positive social impact generated.

In short, differentiation, branding, and value creation in the optical industry reflect the transformation of a technical product into a cultural, aesthetic, and social object. Aaker (1996), Keller (2003), and Kotler (2017) demonstrate that success in the contemporary market depends on the ability to create meaning, experiences, and lasting relationships. In the optical industry, these strategies broaden the scope of companies' operations, transforming eyewear into symbols of identity, innovation, and responsibility. Thus, differentiation is no longer just a

marketing strategy to become the very essence of competitiveness in the global optical market.

7. Industry Leadership and Future Trends in the Optical Market

Industry leadership in the contemporary optical market is the result of a combination of entrepreneurial vision, technological innovation, and strategies for adapting to global social and economic transformations. Companies that currently occupy prominent positions, such as EssilorLuxottica, Hoya, and Zeiss, have built their leadership not only through technological mastery but also through their ability to anticipate trends and shape consumer behaviors. Christensen (2016), discussing the theory of *jobs to be done*, emphasizes that leading organizations are those capable of deeply understanding consumer needs and offering solutions that go beyond the product, integrating experiences, services, and meaning. In the optical sector, this translates into companies that sell not just eyewear, but also quality of life, cultural identity, and preventative healthcare.

One of the main future trends is the growing personalization of optical solutions. Contemporary consumers increasingly value products tailored to their individual needs, and digital technology has made this possible on an industrial scale. Customized lenses, produced based on digital analyses of the user's ocular anatomy and visual behavior, are an example of how innovation is shaping the future of the industry. Kotler (2020) states that the era of data- and technology-driven marketing 5.0 requires companies to be able to deliver customized and highly relevant solutions. In the optical industry, this trend not only improves visual performance but also strengthens the emotional connection between consumer and brand.

Another relevant trend is the integration of optics with digital health. The advancement of *wearable devices*, such as smart glasses capable of monitoring physiological parameters, demonstrates the convergence between optics, information technology, and preventive medicine. McKinsey (2021) reports indicate that the integration of health and technology will be a central focus of the next decade, opening up significant opportunities for the optical sector. This convergence expands the role of eyewear beyond vision correction, positioning them as tools for monitoring and promoting health, with a direct impact on the prevention of chronic diseases.

The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) should also be highlighted. Christensen (2016) notes that sectors that incorporate emerging technologies into their design, production, and service processes are able to differentiate themselves and lead. In the optical market, AI is already being used in ophthalmic diagnostics, the development of digital lenses, and customer service platforms. This technology enables greater accuracy, error reduction, and mass customization, elements that strengthen companies' competitiveness. The incorporation of AI into the sector

represents one of the most promising trends, with the potential to completely transform the consumer experience.

Another trend shaping industry leadership is the growing concern with sustainability and social responsibility. As noted by Elkington (1998) and Porter and Kramer (2006), companies that integrate social and environmental values into their competitive strategies ensure legitimacy and consumer loyalty. In the optical market, this means that companies that invest in recycling programs, sustainable lenses, and social inclusion in access to vision will be better positioned to achieve leadership. This movement reflects the changing mindset of global consumers, who value brands that demonstrate responsibility beyond profit.

The diversity of business models is another determining factor for future leadership. Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasize that leading companies are those that can operate multichannel, combining physical and digital presence, and hybrid experiences. In the optical sector, this translates into omnichannel strategies that combine physical stores, e-commerce, mobile apps, and augmented reality. This integration allows consumers to move seamlessly between channels, reinforcing convenience and increasing loyalty. Companies that fail to adapt to this new standard will struggle to compete in an increasingly digitalized market.

Furthermore, the optical market is expected to be impacted by the rise of new players from emerging markets. Prahalad (2005) argues that the base of the pyramid represents not only a social challenge but also a strategic opportunity for innovative companies. Startups in developing countries are already demonstrating the ability to create inclusive business models, offering affordable eyewear and simplified services. These initiatives have the potential to challenge large, established corporations, shaping a scenario of greater diversity and competitiveness in the near future.

In short, industry leadership in the optical market will be shaped by companies' ability to integrate personalization, digital technology, artificial intelligence, sustainability, and social inclusion into their business models. Christensen (2016), Kotler (2020), and McKinsey (2021) reports indicate that the next decade will be marked by profound transformations, in which only organizations capable of continuous and strategic innovation will consolidate their leadership position. The optical sector, therefore, is moving toward a future in which science, technology, and social responsibility intertwine to create more complete, humane, and competitive solutions.

Conclusion

The analysis of entrepreneurship and innovation in the optical market reveals a sector in constant transformation, in which strategies of expansion, differentiation and social responsibility are

intertwine to shape a highly competitive and globalized environment. From local entrepreneurial practices to the formation of multinational conglomerates, success in the sector depends on the ability to align strategic vision with technological innovation and adaptation to social change. Schumpeter (1982) had already stated that the entrepreneur is the agent of change, and this premise is confirmed when observing how entrepreneurship transformed a traditionally artisanal market into an industry with global reach.

Technological innovation is emerging as one of the main drivers of this transformation. The introduction of new materials, custom digital lenses, protective filters, and integrated digital health solutions demonstrates that the sector not only follows trends but also creates new consumption patterns. Christensen (1997) emphasizes that disruptive innovations redefine entire sectors, and in the optical market, this is evident in the way companies have reinvented themselves to meet new consumer demands. Thus, technology is not only a competitive differentiator, but a structural element of the sector's very identity.

From a social perspective, the evolution of the optical market is closely linked to the democratization of access to vision. Pascolini and Mariotti (2012) and Resnikoff et al. (2008) demonstrate that millions of people still live with uncorrected visual impairments, especially in developing countries. In this context, inclusive entrepreneurship and social responsibility initiatives become essential strategies not only for expanding markets but also for transforming lives. The optical sector exemplifies the convergence of purpose and profit, demonstrating that innovation can simultaneously generate economic value and social impact.

In the economic arena, the global expansion of optical companies proves that leadership and competitiveness are directly linked to adaptability. Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasize that internationalization strategies and flexible business models, such as franchising and omnichannel, allow companies to reach new markets and consolidate their position globally. At the same time, startups and local entrepreneurs demonstrate that innovation can emerge at different scales, challenging the status quo and opening up new consumer possibilities.

Another fundamental aspect is building value through branding and differentiation. Aaker (1996) and Keller (2003) emphasize that strong brands are those that create meaning and emotional connections with consumers. In the optical market, this logic manifests itself in the transformation of eyeglasses into symbols of identity, fashion, and lifestyle, expanding the sector's relevance beyond visual health. This movement demonstrates that industry leadership depends not only on technology but also on the ability to communicate values and create memorable experiences.

Sustainability emerges as an indispensable pillar for the sector's future. Elkington (1998) and Porter and Kramer (2006) demonstrate that companies that align competitiveness with environmental and social responsibility create a sustainable competitive advantage. In the optical market, this translates into initiatives ranging from the development of biodegradable materials to recycling and social inclusion programs. The integration of these values strengthens companies' legitimacy and meets the expectations of increasingly conscious and demanding consumers.



Looking ahead, it's safe to say that the optical market will be shaped by the convergence of science, technology, and social responsibility. Kotler (2020) and McKinsey (2021) reports reinforce that personalization, artificial intelligence, sustainability, and integration with digital health are trends that will define the next decade. Companies that successfully incorporate these dimensions into their business models will not only survive but will lead the industry on a global scale. Entrepreneurship and innovation, therefore, are not just strategies, but conditions of existence for the 21st-century optical market.

It follows, therefore, that the future of the optical sector will be determined by the ability of entrepreneurs and companies to balance technological innovation, social impact, and environmental responsibility. More than just visual correction instruments, eyeglasses today represent symbols of identity, health, and sustainability. The optical market exemplifies how entrepreneurship and innovation, when integrated with social and environmental values, can generate profound transformation, positioning the sector as a benchmark for competitiveness, inclusion, and leadership on the global

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