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**THE SWEDISH ECO-FRIENDLY HOME CARE MARKET:
COMPETITOR ANALYSIS ON THE EXAMPLE OF MULIERES**

OÜ

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the competitive situation in a market is necessary to be able to make products and services distinct, which eventually helps to increase the market share. The research problem of the following study is Mulieres OÜ's limited awareness about the competitive environment in green home care industry in the Swedish market, which results in inability to formulate a strong competitive positioning strategy. The aim of this thesis is to identify and analyze competitors of Mulieres OÜ in green home care industry in the Swedish market and choose the right competitive strategy.

In order to reach the aim of the study, four interviews are conducted with different experts of eco-friendly industry, as well as some basic methods of content analysis are employed. As a result, the obtained information helps to answer the research questions of the study. Firstly, it is necessary to identify key competitors of Mulieres in the Swedish market, which turn out to be five brands: Sonett, Sodasan, Ecover, Attitude and Lilly's ECO Clean. Second research question aims to find out what are Mulieres strengths and weaknesses compared to competitors. The main strength is design and packaging, however, the biggest weakness is price. Thirdly, competitive strategy is chosen, which is focused differentiation.

As a result of competitor analysis, it is possible to conclude which competitive advantages Mulieres should sustain, as well as which weaknesses need to be eliminated. It is recommended to focus more on marketing activities, as well as revise the pricing of the products.

Keywords: competitor analysis, competitive strategy, competitive positioning, home care products, eco-friendly products

SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze competitors of Mulieres OÜ, Estonian manufacturer of green home care products, in the Swedish market, in order to choose the right competitive strategy and be able to sustain in the market over time. In order to achieve the aim of the study, two qualitative research methods were chosen: semi-structured interview and content analysis. Competitor analysis in a foreign market is a complex and time-consuming process and it requires a lot of systematic data, both secondary and primary. Interviews had an aim to obtain primary information about Mulieres' competitiveness in the Swedish market, as well as reveal competitor intentions and actions. As a result, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with different experts, who have experience with Mulieres products and operate in an eco-friendly industry. Content analysis was used to interpret relevant secondary sources and derive competitive intelligence needed. Various secondary sources were analyzed: competitors' websites, press releases, media articles, forums, blogger posts, as well as social media channels.

The information collected during the interviews and content analysis was processed into competitive intelligence and used for further competitor research and competitive strategy choice. Further analysis was mainly based on the frameworks discussed in the theoretical part. Hence it was possible to answer the research questions of the study:

1. Who are the key competitors of Mulieres in the Swedish market?

In order to answer this question and identify key or direct competitors of Mulieres, 23 different green home care brands in the Swedish market were analyzed with the help of market commonality and resource similarity model. Finally, five competitor brands were identified, who serve the same market needs with similar resources as Mulieres, acting as direct competitors. The key competitors of Mulieres in the Swedish market are: Sonett, Ecover, Sodasan, Attitude and Lilly's ECO Clean brands.

2. What are Mulieres' competitive strengths and weaknesses compared to competitors?

First of all, marketing mix audit was carried out, a necessary tool within international competitor analysis. It helped to evaluate what are advantages and disadvantages of each competitor compared to Mulieres within such components as product, price, place and promotion. Secondly, based on the marketing mix audit it became possible to benchmark Mulieres against competitors and determine what are its main strengths and weaknesses, reflecting the results in SWOT analysis. Answering the second research question, the main weaknesses of Mulieres products are:

- High price
- Poor assortment
- Low availability through specialty stores
- Low brand awareness

On the other hand, Mulieres has some certain strengths over its main competitors:

- Distinctive design and innovative packaging
- Natural and organic ingredients
- Relevant certifications
- Listing at the nationwide retail chain COOP

3. Which competitive positioning and strategy should Mulieres choose to become successful in its industry?

Finally, based on marketing mix audit and SWOT analysis some recommendations were given regarding the competitive positioning and the strategy. One of the Porter's generic strategies was used. Taking into account different aspects it was concluded that Mulieres should choose focused differentiation as a main competitive strategy. In order to be successful in its competitive positioning, it is necessary to communicate and sustain such distinguishing strengths as design and packaging, high-quality ingredients, as well as certifications. On the other hand, it would be crucial to work on availability through eco-friendly specialty stores, as well as differentiate through assortment enlargement.

Additional recommendation regarding competitive positioning concerned the high price, because it is the biggest weakness of the products. Price could be reduced visually through packaging size reduction, revising the product form (for example, multi cleaner as a spray) and by active communication of price per wash.

Focused differentiation requires a lot of investments into marketing and promotional activities in order to achieve the best competitive position. Marketing activities should have a strategic approach and be as various as possible. For example, promotions through social media, event sponsorship, strategic partnership or guerilla marketing are the options for such products as Mulieres.

Thus, the aim of the study was fulfilled, as well as all the research questions were answered. The results and recommendations of the study have a practical approach and can be used by the researched company, Mulieres OÜ, to improve its sales performance in the Swedish market as well as focus more on its core competences and eliminating the bottlenecks.

The following study focused on the competitor characteristics from the customer point of view, taking into account qualitative measures used in marketing research. In further competitor research it would be useful to employ quantitative approaches through customer surveys, to find out their opinion on the competitive situation, for example. Also it would be possible to concentrate on strategic aspects of the competitor companies, taking into account their financial performance, organizational culture and other internal strengths and weaknesses of a company. In addition, it would be possible to research the industry-wide competition and influence of the external environment on a competitive position of the company. Finally, studying the influence of potential and indirect competitors could also bring the knowledge about possible competitive attacks in the industry.

SISUKOKKUVÕTE EESTI KEELES

ROOTSI ÖKOLOOGILISE KODUKEEMIA TURG: KONKURENTIDE ANALÜÜS MULIERES OÜ NÄITEL

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Tänapäeval üha rohkem eksportijaid puutuvad kokku tiheda konkurentsiga välisturgudel, mis võib olla suureks taktistuseks eduka eksportimise läbiviimises. Arusaamata konkurentsi situatsioonist on raske välisturul eristuda ning saavutada tugev positsioon. Seega konkurentide analüüs on vajalik samm rahvusvahelistumise protsessis.

Mulieres OÜ on väike Eestimaine ettevõtte, mis tegeleb looduslike puhustusvahendite tootmisega. Ettevõtte on hakkanud eksportimisega tegelema 2016. aasta lõpus ning kõige aktiivsem eksportturg on tänaseks Rootsi. Käesoleva magistritöö uurimisprobleemiks on Mulieres OÜ vähene teave konkurentsi situatsiooni kohta öko kodukeemia nišis Rootsi turul, mille tõttu ei saa ettevõtte formuleerida konkurentsivõimelist strateegiat turul tegutsemiseks. Seega, antud magistritöö eesmärgiks on identifitseerida ning analüüsida Mulieres OÜ konkurente Rootsi turul ning valida sobiv konkurentsivõimeline strateegia.

Magistritöö koosneb neljast osast. Esimene osa keskendub konkurentsi ja konkurentide analüüsi teoreetilisele taustale, kus samuti käsitletakse rahvusvahelise konkurentide analüüsi põhimõtteid. Teises osas seletatakse lahti öko toodete ja öko turuniši alused, lisaks sellele ka maailma ja Rootsi öko turu trendid. Pakutud on ka ülevaade Mulieres OÜ äritegevuse kohta. Kolmandas peatükis vaadeldakse valitud meetodikat. Meetodina on kasutatud kvalitatiivuuringut: poolstruktureeritud intervjuud ning sisuanalüüs. Intervjuud viidi läbi nelja eksperdiga, kes omavad teadmisi öko niši kohta. Sisuanalüüsi käigus analüüsiti erinevaid allikaid, sealhulgas ka konkurentide veebilehed, pressiteated, blogid, foorumid, aruanded jm. Viimane osa sisaldab empiirilist analüüsi –

konkurentide tuvastamist ning analüüsi, seejärel on pakutud peamised järeldused ja ettepanekud konkurentsivõimelise positsiooni ja strateegia kohta.

Magistritöö alguses püstitati kolm uurimisküsimust. Esimese küsimuse sisuks on otsuste konkurentide tuvastamine Rootsi turul. Selleks, et vastata küsimusele, analüüsiti 23 erinevat brändi turu ühtsuse ja ressursside sarnasuse mudeli (*market commonality and resource similarity* – töö autori pakutud tõlge) põhjal ning tuvastati viis peamist konkurenti: Sonett, Sodasan, Ecover, Attitude ja Lilly's ECO Clean.

Teise uurimisküsimuse eesmärgiks on leida Mulieres tugevused ja nõrkused konkurentidega võrreldes. Esimese sammuna leiti konkurentide nõrkused ja tugevused klassikalise turundusmeetmestiku auditi kaudu. Teiseks, võrdluse kaudu leiti Mulieres nii tugevused ja nõrkused, kui ka võimalused ja ohud SWOT analüüsi abil. Mulieres peamised nõrkused on kõrge hind, väike sortiment, vähene kättesaadavus ökopoodide kaudu ja madal bränditeadlikkus. Tugevused on eristatav disain ja innovaatiline pakend, looduslikud koostisosad, ökomärgised, kättesaadavus COOP jaeketi kaudu.

Kolmanda küsimuse sisuks on konkurentsivõimelise positsioneerimise ja strateegia valik. Porter'i kolme strateegia mudelile tuginedes valiti turuniši diferentseerimise strateegiat (*focused differentiation* – töö autori pakutud tõlge). Selleks, et olla edukas antud strateegia järgimisel, oleks vaja keskenduda peamistele tugevustele ning edastada neid aktiivselt tarbijateni. Teiselt poolt on oluline nõrkuste ja kitsakohtade kõrvaldamine.

Kõige olulisem ettepanek konkurentide analüüsi tulemusena on keskenduda rohkem turundusele ja tõhusale kommunikatsioonile, mis aitaks seletada klientidele, kuidas Mulieres eristub teistest brändidest ja milline täiendav väärtus kaasneb Mulieres toodete tarbimisega. Lisaks sellele on oluline hinnastamise strateegia üle vaadata.

Kokkuvõtteks võib järeldada, et uurimistöö eesmärk on täidetud ning vastused peamistele uurimisküsimustele on ka leitud. Käesolev magistritöö on praktilise suunitlusega ning võib olla

kasutatud uuritava ettevõtte poolt oma konkurentsivõime kujundamisel ning ekspordi ja turunduse strateegia planeerimisel nii Rootsis, kui ka teistel välisturgudel.