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MARKETING PLAN FOR WIM BOSMAN C.E.E.B.V.

Bachelor's Thesis 2014

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ABSTRACT

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The topic of this bachelor's thesis was to conduct a realistic marketing plan for the commissioning company Wim Bosman C.E.E.B.V. Wim Bosman C.E.E.B.V. is a micro-company, employing four people operating in the forwarding sector. The company did not have a comprehensive and functioning marketing strategy in use, which is why this thesis was written. The goal of this thesis is to come up with recommendations for Wim Bosman C.E.E.B.V. on what kind of marketing strategy to choose that best would suit the company's purposes.

Both primary and secondary data was used to carry out the research. Secondary data was collected from books, journals and Internet sources. Based on the theory found, qualitative research was conducted by interviewing the branch manager of the commissioning company. Moreover, several discussions were held throughout the process. Also the author's work experience in the commissioning company worked as a basis for this thesis. Descriptive and content analysis were used as methods in analyzing the data.

This thesis resulted in a sound, competitive and realistic marketing strategy that will ensure Wim Bosman's competitiveness and success in the market. Based on the research results and the author's own conclusions, the main finding was that Wim Bosman has a big network and resources behind them and by using them together with their extensive service offering they are able to tackle the competition.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The world of logistics is big, complicated and constantly developing. As most companies have realized, well-functioning logistics operations go hand in hand with efficiency and moreover competitiveness in the market. When businesses decide to go international, there are several things to consider. One of them is to decide what kind of mode they use to get in the target market. Forwarding companies are used often as intermediaries in the supply chain. This reduces the risk but can also sometimes be costly. Forwarding companies operating in Finland face a big challenge with the prevailing competition, changes in the market and the pressure that arises from costs. The purpose of this thesis is to create a solution to this problem for a forwarding company in Kotka.

During the author's studies, she has been most interested in logistics operations and marketing. The author did her specialization training in the case company in spring 2014. Thus, the need of a marketing plan in the company led to this thesis and it felt natural to the author to tackle this issue due to her interest and knowledge in both the field of logistics and marketing.

1.1 Company presentation

The goal of this thesis is to create a sound marketing plan for Wim Bosman to use for their development. Wim Bosman offers international, high quality and comprehensive logistics solutions that are tailor-made to fulfill customers' needs. Wim Bosman is a member of the Mainfreight group, a global supply chain business with over 200 branches all over the world. Wim Bosman is a Dutch-owned company and has been operating in Finland since 2012. Their office is located in Port of HaminaKotka in Mussalo, Kotka. HaminaKotka is Finland's largest general, export, transit and container port, with frequent connections to all major European ports and thereby to the world. (Port of HaminaKotka, n.d.)

Internationality is the core of the business - a global supply chain, networks and offices located all over the world enable different shipments worldwide. Professional forwarders with several years of experience in the field ensure quick and flawless services. Wim Bosman offers a comprehensive service portfolio. The main focus in the business was originally on transit deliveries to Russia, which is still a big part of

their work. As the time has changed, structural and strategic changes have been made which lead to focusing more on import and export services. This is due to the fact that transit deliveries have decreased and the company cannot rely only on it.

Authorized Economic Operator – AEO is a global project, which aims to promote the safety of international supply chains. AEO operator is a company that has gotten customs safety certificate for its customs and logistics operations and thus is justified to get benefits all over EU (Tulli 2014). AEO shipments are an expertise of Wim Bosman and since there are not too many companies with AEO rights in their market, it is one of the company's competitive advantages. Wim Bosman makes everything possible from full container loadings, less container loadings and groupage shipments to oversized and other special transports. Domestic transportation and sea freights are also part of the wide service portfolio. Further, thanks to Wim Bosman's global network, warehousing is also arranged with ease.

As stated above, even though Wim Bosman is just a four-person-office, it is able to offer a huge variety of services to its clients; something that another company of the same size in the area is not able to do. This is due to the huge network and cooperation behind them, which also creates a big amount of pressure to succeed. Wim Bosman has been operating in Finland for only two years and its objective is to make profit. Gaining profit is important for survival in the market and future growth. In order to gain more clients that leads to increase in sales and be able to use the potential the company has more awareness in the market has to be created.

1.2 The research purpose

The purpose of this research is to prepare a marketing strategy for Wim Bosman. As Wim Bosman is a Dutch-owned company, the aim is to gain visibility in Finland, whereby more import and export deals could be made. Further, increased sea freights through full container and less container loadings would be welcome. The company has decided to focus on European and Russian markets, but since it is an international company, operating in nine different countries with global networks, shipments from and to all over the world are possible. The importance and necessity of this research arises from the need of thoroughly analyzing and researching the Finnish markets and the potential of it. Since the company has been operating on Finnish markets since

2012, the main focus is on gaining awareness in the Finnish market and further gaining more customers.

1.3 The research objective

The main objective for this research is to create a functional marketing plan for Wim Bosman, which will create visibility in the market and further enable growth in market share in form of new clients, especially in import and export shipments. The company does not have a comprehensive marketing strategy in use, which increases the importance of this paper. The main focus will be on analyzing the current state of the company by using e.g. SWOT analysis. A competitor analyze will also be conducted. Based on the analysis, a detailed marketing plan will be made. The ultimate goal for this paper is to emphasize the potential for Wim Bosman to gain more clients, grow internationally and most importantly - succeed in competition. This will be possible through examining written literature and moreover by identifying the most effective techniques for the case company to use. The research will be handed over to the commissioning company and they are to decide how to use and proceed with this study.

1.4 The research question

The research question could be formulated as following: in order to gain more clients, gain visibility in Finland and grow internationally, how should the strategic decisions and marketing at Wim Bosman be planned and executed?

1.5 Methodology and methods

There are two ways that data can be collected, by using qualitative or quantitative research methods. The two research methods are used for solving or answering a certain research problem or question by systematically, focused and orderly collecting data. The core difference between these two methods is considered to be that quantitative researchers use measurement, whereas qualitative researches do not. In quantitative research, findings are arrived by statistical methods or other procedures of quantification. In qualitative research on the other hand the data is often collected through interviews and observations, the skills and previous experience of the research

is important in analysing the data in qualitative research. (Ghauri&Grønhaug 2005, pp. 108-11)

The objective of this paper is to conduct a simple and understandable marketing plan for Wim Bosman because they do not have a comprehensive marketing strategy in use. The research is carried out using qualitative methods, the main focus being on interviews and observations that the author has done during her internship in the company. During interviews, the author has been taking notes as precisely as possible in order to keep the data valid. The author's work experience in the company in spring 2014 plays a crucial role in the data collection and works as the basis for this thesis. During the author's internship she was able to deepen her knowledge in the field of logistics and moreover learn more about the company's operations, clients and how they work internationally.

The author carried out the primary research. The main focus was on the face-to-face interviews with the branch manager. Also several meetings and consultations during the author's internship and after were set up to keep the commissioner on track, to keep mutual understanding between the both parties and further to gain detailed information on several points. The meetings and consultations could vary between a quick five-minute review e.g. of prices and meetings that lasted up to an hour when discussing the competition in the market and SWOT analysis. On top of interviewing the branch manager, also other employees were consulted e.g. about the company's agreed dress code. The usage of primary data is important for this paper since it is collected to implement exclusively for the particular case company in form of a marketing plan.

2 MARKETING STRATEGY

2.1 Competition analysis

2.1.1 SWOT analysis

By identifying its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, a business is able to evaluate its strategic position. When evaluating strengths and weaknesses only

internal resources or capabilities should be included. As opportunities and threats should be listed the expected external events or trends that may affect the company performance. Strengths and weaknesses are considered to be controllable resources where as opportunities and threats tend to be beyond the control of businesses. (Jobber 2010, p. 47) An example of SWOT analysis is illustrated in Table 1 below.

When the SWOT analysis is conducted, with careful and veracious consideration given in every section, it can be used as a great tool for evaluating a business' strategic position. As suggested by Jobber (2010, p. 47) once the SWOT analysis is done, the company has to create conversion strategies. Conversion strategies mean that weaknesses are turned into strengths and threats to opportunities. As an example, if poor customer service is listed in weaknesses, it could be converted to strength by training the staff. Another way of using SWOT analysis is to match listed strengths with opportunities. In other words this means acknowledging e.g. upcoming trends or growing demands in the market and matching it with the strengths in order to create a profitable business.

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Internal | Strengths | Weaknesses |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Your specialist marketing expertise. ✓ A new, innovative product or service. ✓ Location of your business. ✓ Quality processes and procedures. ✓ Any other aspect of your business that adds value to your product or service. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lack of marketing expertise. ✓ Undifferentiated products or services (i.e. in relation to your competitors). ✓ Location of your business. ✓ Poor quality goods or services. ✓ Damaged reputation. |
| External | Opportunities | Threats |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A developing market such as the Internet. ✓ Mergers, joint ventures or strategic alliances. ✓ Moving into new market segments that offer improved profits. ✓ A new international market. ✓ A market vacated by an ineffective competitor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A new competitor in your home market. ✓ Price wars with competitors. ✓ A competitor has a new, innovative product or service. ✓ Competitors have superior access to channels of distribution. ✓ Taxation is introduced on your product or service. |

Figure 1. SWOT analysis (Jobber 2010, p. 47)

2.1.2 Competitor analysis

In order to gain long-run profitability in a company, it has been shown that there is a need to understand and observe competitors. Competitors' operations can spoil your entry to a market but on the other hand their weaknesses can be benefitted from. According to Jobber (2010, p. 708-9) the firms that concentrate on their competitor's operations achieve a better business performance than those firms that concentrate less on their competitors. Gathering relevant data about competitors helps firms to understand their competitors and also to make decisions in the market. This information can be obtained for instance from marketing research surveys, newspaper articles, distribution channels or government published statistics. An example of a competitor analysis is presented in Figure 2 below.

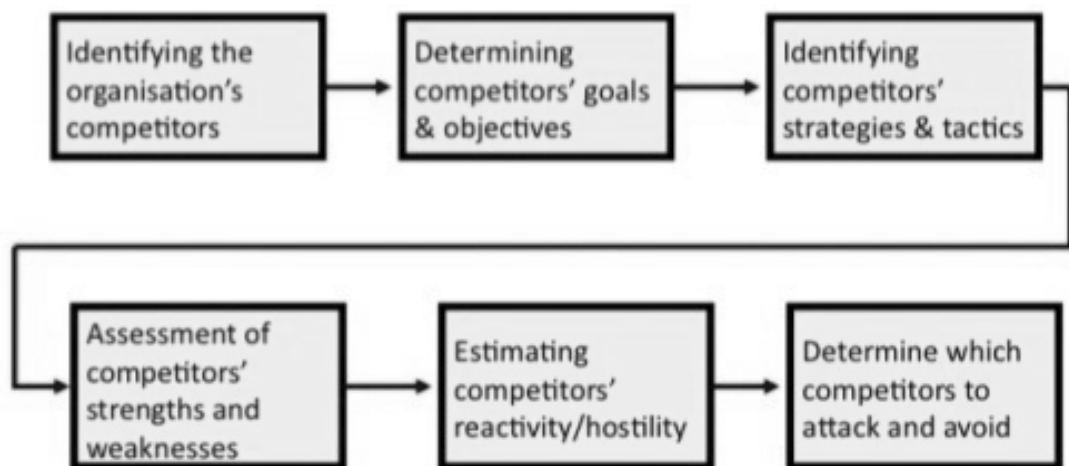


Figure 2. Competitor analysis (Launch Engineering n.d.)

When conducting a competitor analysis, the first step is to identify the competitors. It is crucial to understand that competitors are not only the firms that offer technically the same product or service. All companies in the market that may affect on the performance of your company have to be monitored. Further, beyond the current competitors in the market the potential new entrants need to be taken in consideration as well. (Jobber 2010, p. 709)

After identifying the competitors, the strengths and weaknesses of these companies need to be assessed. This part is important when developing competitor strategy – after all, the success is most often achieved when strength is concentrated against the competitor's greatest weakness. Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses allows a

business to predict how to modify their strategy and moreover to develop a differential, competitive advantage in the market – an attribute desired by the target customers but not provided by the competitors. The next step is to determine the goals and objectives of competitors. Companies may build, hold or harvest products and strategic business units. This is important to know since the companies' response pattern may depend upon these objectives. (Jobber 2010, p. 710)

Competitors may use different strategies. They can be cost-focused, use positioning strategy or define the strategy in terms of competitive scope. It is important to assess what strategies competitors use in order to be able to predict how they respond to a firm's actions in the market. Jobber (2010, p. 712-3) suggests that there are different types of competitors with different response patterns. The *retaliatory* competitors are market leaders who try to control the competitor response by retaliatory action. A slow reaction can be predicted in markets that are characterized by years of competitive stability. Competitors are also unlikely to respond in situations where their previous strategies have restricted their scope for retaliation. These are called the *hemmed-in* competitors. The *selective* type of competitor may respond to some competitive moves but not others because of tradition or beliefs. The final type of competitor is described as *unpredictable* where no factors explain the differences in response.

2.2 Customer-driven marketing strategy

Since buyers are widely scattered, with different needs and buying practices, companies have realized that they cannot attract all buyers in the market. Instead they need to select parts of the market that they can serve best and most profitably. In order to achieve the right relationships with the right customers companies need to design a customer-driven marketing strategy. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2012, p. 214), there are four major steps in creating a proper customer-driven marketing strategy, which are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

The first two steps include selecting the customer by dividing the market into smaller segments where after the company evaluates all of the segments and selects one or more to enter. In the two final steps the company will decide how to create value for the chosen customers. These two steps include differentiating the company's market offering to create superior customer value and arranging for a market offering to

occupy a clear, distinctive and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target customers. (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, p. 214)



Figure 2. Designing a Customer-Driven Marketing Strategy (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, p. 215)

2.2.1 Market segmentation

According to Jobber (2010, p. 260) market segmentation may be defined as *the identification of individuals or organizations with similar characteristics that have significant implications for the determination of marketing strategy*. This leads to dividing the market into smaller and similar sub-markets. Customers can be served effectively by identifying groups with similar requirements and needs. Therefore market segmentation forms the basis by which companies understand their markets and develop strategies in order to serve the target customers better than the competitors.

The four major variables in segmenting consumer markets include geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral segmentation. Geographic segmentation includes dividing the market into different geographical units. These units may be e.g. nations, regions, cities, neighborhoods or climate and companies can decide to operate in one or a few areas. Further, companies have to note that there are geographical differences in needs and wants. Demographical segmentation divides the market based on age, gender, income, education, generation, religion etc. This is the most popular variable for segmenting customer groups since the consumer needs, wants and usage rates are closely connected with demographic variables. Further, these variables are also the easiest ones to measure. Social class, lifestyle and personality are variables used in psychographic segmentation. Psychographic characteristics can differ a lot among people in the same demographic group. Behavioral segmentation divides the

market into segments based on consumer knowledge, attitudes, uses or responses to a product. Many companies believe that this is the best starting point for building market segments. Further, when segmenting business markets many of the same variables as in the consumer markets are used. In addition to these variables also customers' operating characteristics, purchasing approaches, situational factors and personal characteristics need to be taken in consideration. (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, p. 215-222)

In order for the market segmentation to be effective it must be measurable and the markets need to be effectively reached and served. Further, the segments need to be substantial – large or profitable enough to serve. The segments need to be distinguishable and respond to different marketing mix elements and programs differently. Finally, the market segments need to be actionable – effective programs can be designed for attracting and serving segments. (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, p. 224)

2.2.2 Target marketing

Target marketing is the choice of which specific segments the company wants to serve and it is also a key element in a companies marketing strategy. Companies need to evaluate the segments by market attractiveness and the company's capability to compete in the segment. Market attractiveness can be examined by looking at market, competitive, political, social and environmental factors. The company's capability to compete can be assessed by analyzing exploitable marketing assets, cost advantages, technological edge and managerial capabilities and commitment. (Jobber 2010, p. 278-281)

The purpose of evaluating market segments is for the company to decide which and how many segments to enter. A target market is a group of identified customer sharing common needs or characteristics that a company wants to serve. Market targeting can be carried out at different levels, from very broad to very narrow targeting. If a company decides to use an undifferentiated marketing or mass marketing strategy, it targets the whole market with one offer despite the segment differences. The company designs a product and marketing program to attract the largest possible number of buyers. Difficulties may arise when a company tries to develop a product or brand that would satisfy all the consumers in the market. Differentiated or segment marketing strategy means that the company targets a few or several markets and designs separate

offers for each segment. Having separate offers in different segments may result in higher sales and a stronger position in the segments but at the same time it also increases the cost of doing business. As an example, developing and producing 10 units of different products is usually more expensive than developing and producing 100 units of one product. Therefore, the company needs to weigh increased sales against increased costs if deciding to use a differentiated marketing strategy. (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, pp. 225-6)

The company may also decide to practice focused or niche marketing strategy, where it develops only one marketing mix to one segment. This is a good strategy to use in small companies with limited resources. Large companies may not even be serving that particular segment or even if they are, the small company using focused marketing may pay better attention to the segment requirements, which makes them competitive despite their size. The need to use customized marketing strategy arises when the requirements of individual customers are unique and their purchasing power is sufficient in some market. The aim of this strategy is to create a separate marketing mix for each customer. Customized marketing can be found on several levels: among service providers such as advertising agencies or architects or within organizational markets where there is a high value of orders and customers with special needs. Further, it includes also the so-called mass customization in consumer markets where highly individual products on a mass scale are marketed and even on the Internet, with customers being treated differently on an individual basis. (Jobber 2010, pp. 282-4)

2.2.3 Positioning and differentiation

In addition to decisions about which market segments companies want to enter and which marketing strategy to use, they also need to decide how to create differentiated value and moreover, what position they want to occupy in the targeted segments. A product's position is defined in consumers' minds by perceptions, impressions and feelings they have relative to competing products. In order not to leave the product's positions to chance, companies need to plan positions that will give their products the best advantage in the target markets. The basis of differential advantage lies in designing a marketing mix and using it to create something special for the customer. (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, p. 232)

Positioning is a choice of where a company wants to compete and how it wishes to do that. Jobber (2010, pp. 285-6) argues that the 4-Cs framework is the key to successful positioning. The 4-Cs consist of clarity, consistency, competitiveness and credibility. In terms of both target market and differential advantage, the positioning idea must be clear. Simple positioning statements are clear and memorable. In order not to confuse consumers, a consistent message is required. A consistent, simple message being communicated to target customers may result in high recall among them. It is vital that the company's chosen differential advantage is credible in the minds of the target customers. They should be able to believe what the company promises to deliver. Finally, the differential advantage needs to be competitive. The company needs to come up with something of value it can offer to the target customers that the competition is not able to supply.

Choosing competitive advantages on which the company will position its product or service may be difficult but also crucial to success. By choosing the right differentiators, a brand can stand out from its competitors in the market. There are several criteria that a difference is supposed to satisfy to be worth establishing. Firstly, the difference needs to deliver a highly valued benefit to target customers. It also has to be distinctive – whether the competitor does not offer it at all or the company can offer it in a more distinctive way. The difference should also be superior to other ways so that it may deliver the same benefit to the buyers. It needs to be also communicable and visible to the customers. Further, the difference should be hard to copy by competitors and the buyers have to afford to pay for it. Costs have to be taken in consideration since the company has to be able to introduce the difference profitably. The creation of differential advantage is discussed later in this paper. (Kotler, Armstrong 2012, pp.235-6)

2.3 Marketing mix

2.3.1 Product

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012, p. 248) a product can be defined as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. A product does not have to be a tangible object – it

can also be intangible such as a service. A lot of companies decide first what kind of a product they are offering and after that start looking and hoping that there is somewhere a market, a need for it. A successful company on the other hand first determines the needs and wants of their wanted customers and then develops a product or service to meet them at the right quality level in the present as well as in the future. Since the case company operates in the service branch, the author lays more focus on services than products.

A service product can be divided into three different levels. The base is the core service – the essential benefit or service the customer gets. The functionality of the core service is an essential starting point of marketing. Thereafter the focus needs to be placed on the seen objects, such as quality of the service, personnel or delivery time. These two levels together shape the basis of the corporate image for a service company. The images related to a company can be based on facts, emotions or the actual service. The size of the company, the location of the office, reliability of the service or the cooperation between the company and the customer can for example define corporate image. Corporate image is a part of the third level, added value. On top of corporate image also guarantee, additional services etc. can add value to the service. Further, the product development has to have the starting point in customers' needs. Customers' participation in the process increases customer satisfaction, loyalty and recommendation of the company to others. (Kuusela 1998, p. 79-81)

2.3.2 Price

The marketing mix consists of different elements, but price is the only revenue earner. For all the effort that is put to producing and marketing a product – price of it is what the company gets back in return. All other elements in the marketing mix are costs. In other words, no matter how good everything else is, if the price does not cover the costs the company will make a loss. (Jobber 2010, p. 422)

A product is only worth what the customers are willing to pay for it. Even though the price has to be competitive, it does not necessarily mean that it has to be the cheapest one. By adding extra services that offer customers better value for their money a company can be competitive with a higher price. Therefore, the more you charge the more value and quality is expected by customers. If the company decides to use a higher priced strategy, it needs to remember that the price positions the company in

the market and gives an indication to potential customers where to place the company in relation to competitors. The bottom line is that everything about dealings with customers has to live up their higher expectations that come from the positioning in the market. (The Chartered Institute of Marketing 2009)

2.3.3 Place

A company's product must be available in the right place, at the right time in the right amount. This has to happen while having reasonable storage, inventory and distribution costs. It has been shown that an efficient delivery performance increases a company's competitiveness. The element place does not only mean where the company sells its product but also how it is displayed to the customer groups – e.g. via shop window or Internet. (The Chartered Institute of Marketing 2009)

It is crucial that the chosen solutions concerning availability are also acceptable in customers' minds. Availability of the product needs to be constantly developed to be more efficient and convenient for the customers. In order to develop the product or service, immediate feedback from customers is necessary. If the supply chain is too long with a lot of intermediaries, the feedback from customers can be lost easily between them. (Kuusela 1998, p. 82)

2.3.4 Promotion

Products and companies who offer them should be advertised and promoted. The goal of promoting a product or service is to gain visibility, to reach and affect current and potential customers and to improve the company image. The aim is to ensure that the customer knows how and where to get a product or service. Promotion encourages and gives a reason for the customer to buy product or service. (Kuusela 1998, p.83)

Promotion is a sum of many activities such as, advertising, public relations, corporate identity, sales management, special offers and exhibitions. It needs to be appealing, simple and contain a consistent message. Promotion should not only be a list of the features of the product but also about the benefits a customer obtains from buying it. On top of communicating to customer, promotion ensures that also internal stakeholders are aware of the value and attributes of a company's products. (The Chartered Institute of Marketing 2009)

2.3.5 Additional P's

Marketing mix includes traditionally four different elements that are used to create, uphold and develop customer relations. When marketing a service, this 4P model is often considered to be restricted. According to Kuusela (1998, p. 77) the 4P model has been criticized to be too company-centered. This is why additional P's have been added. The additional P's relevant for this paper are: People, Process and Physical evidence.

A company's personnel, its customers and other people create an image of the company and its operations. Personnel is a crucial part of the offered service, it is a seen message to the customer. How the personnel dresses, performs, behaves and speaks affect how customers evaluate the service. It is crucial to choose the right personnel with needed skills and attributes for the job and to ensure that they are trained properly. In addition to the personnel, the current customers affect what a new customer expects from the service. Anyone who is in contact with a company's current or potential customers can affect positively or negatively on customer satisfaction. After sales support and advice can add value to a company's service and can become a competitive advantage. (Kuusela 1998, pp.100-1)

According to The Chartered Institute of Marketing 2009 the process of offering a service and how those who deliver behave are crucial to customer satisfaction. Waiting times, information given to customers and the cooperation of staff are issues that are vital to keep customers happy. The process has to be planned carefully and the starting point should be in the customer. Process planning is the key to efficiency, growth and success. If this P is used wisely and planned carefully, it can be a great source of competitive advantage.

A service can only be experienced when it is purchased. When buying a service, the customer is buying something intangible. Helping potential customers to "see" what they are buying can reduce their uncertainty. Physical evidence includes e.g. the cleanliness and appearance of the business premise. If the premise is clean and tidy, the customer will likely have a positive feeling about the service, but also – visa versa. Further, a company can ask their current customers for feedback so that they are able to develop reference materials for new customers. This will again reduce the uncertainty to buy. (The Chartered Institute of Marketing 2009)

These additional P's may seem less worthy as the traditional elements in the marketing mix when in fact they give a new perspective to things. Marketing is much more than product planning, price setting, promotion or developing availability decisions. When adding these three extra P's to the mix, a much more comprehensive marketing plan will be conducted.

2.4 Customer relationship management

In its simplest, customer relationship management (CRM) is an attitude, a value that a company places on themselves and the relationship with its customers. CRM looks at ways to treat customers more as individuals, recognizes that each individual has a choice and tries to exercise the choice positively towards the company. CRM consists of three different elements: customer retention, developing customer potential and de-selection of customers. (Roberts-Phelps 2001, pp. 2-3)

Christopher (1997, pp. 26-7) states that it costs even five times more to win a new customer than to retain an existing one. It has been suggested that even a relatively small improvement on the customer retention rate can have a significant impact on profitability. Thus, a retained customer can be said to be more profitable than a new one. This is due to that a satisfied customer is more likely to spend more of their total purchase with the company, it takes time to bring a new customer into profit and retained customers tend to be easier to sell to which leads to flexibility e.g. concerning scheduling which results in lower costs. Further, loyal customers are usually less price sensitive and would not switch to another supplier because of rise in prices.

The second element of CRM is developing customer potential. This includes turning a casual customer into one that spends more on the company's services, more frequently. Probably the most disputable one of these elements is de-selection of customers. At some point, the company needs to lose customers that do not bring value to the company in the long run and concentrate on the more profitable ones. (Robert-Phelps 2001, p. 3)

3 PRESENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

3.1 SWOT analysis

The strategic position of Wim Bosman in the market place is evaluated by using SWOT analysis. It is made possible by identifying Wim Bosman's internal resources (strengths, weaknesses) and expected external events or trends (opportunities and threats). SWOT analysis of Wim Bosman is illustrated in Table 1 below.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationality • Global networks • Staff • Quality of service • Expertise in special deliveries | <p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness • Similar core service to competitors • Lack of marketing expertise |
| <p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with Europe • Cooperation with competitors • New international markets • Location of the office | <p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of economy • Increasing competition • Price war • Pressure from headquarters |

Table 1. SWOT analysis of Wim Bosman

3.1.1 Strengths

The most powerful strength of Wim Bosman is its internationality and networks it possesses. Because Wim Bosman is a Dutch-owned company, it has a huge support from its headquarters and other offices located all over Europe. The global networks are created mainly thanks to Mainfreight group, which Wim Bosman is a part of. This enables different shipments all over the world, warehousing and more – with a competitive price. Further, the quality of service has always been taken in

consideration and been constantly developed to get the best outcome and customer satisfaction which further leads to good and long lasting relationships with customers.

The staff at Wim Bosman is educated, experienced and trained. They ensure a fluent, efficient and good quality service at the fastest delivery time. All services are customized to completely fulfill the customers' specific needs. Since the competition in today's economic situation is harsh, companies need to differentiate their services and create competitive advantages and add value to their services. Wim Bosman is specialized in all kinds of special deliveries and they possess AEO rights, something that most of their competitors do not. This adds value to Wim Bosman and thus the company should focus on those specialties.

3.1.2 Weaknesses

There are a lot of companies that offer logistic solutions in Finland. Wim Bosman and most of its competitors offer the same kind of core service. This is a weakness since it should be differentiated in order to have a stronger position in the market. When the core service is similar to competitors, value should be added through other elements and knowledge in special deliveries enhanced. Further, Wim Bosman has not been able to create enough awareness among its target customers. This might also be a result of lack of marketing expertise in the company. Since there are giant logistics companies in the market, small companies can easily be left unnoticed. This however doesn't mean that smaller companies cannot be competitive in the market.

3.1.3 Opportunities

There are a lot of opportunities for Wim Bosman. Since Wim Bosman has 23 offices located all over Europe, cooperation between them can be done easily. This also enables Wim Bosman to customize their services according to their clients' wishes e.g. if the clients need warehousing and because Wim Bosman does not have their own warehouses, it can arrange it through other offices' warehouses.

Further, also cooperation with competitors might bring extra revenue and other opportunities for the case company. Since Wim Bosman does not have their own trucks, close cooperation with carriers has to be made. When long relationships with

these companies have been established and both parties are satisfied with the cooperation a better and competitive price can be offered to the customer.

Moreover, the location of the office could not be better. The office is located in the office building in Port of HaminaKotka, the biggest export and import harbor in Finland. This gives the case company the opportunity to e.g. short delivery times and efficient, competitive service. Further, in spring 2014 there was a photo shoot in the office building to promote rentable business premises. On top of shooting empty ones, also the premises of Wim Bosman were shot to a leaflet that was distributed to companies operating in Kotka - which was free, additional advertising to the company.

Wim Bosman has also the potential to serve customers in new international markets thanks to its global networks. To have offices located in several countries in Europe and connections all over the world that comes from being a part of Mainfreight group makes it easy to Wim Bosman to gain information and help in deliveries and shipments to more unfamiliar destinations.

3.1.4 Threats

The state of economy is a big threat for Wim Bosman. The recession is still ongoing which has led to decrease in shipments and deliveries - and also the demand for services that Wim Bosman offers. Still, the competition increases all the time. As stated before, the case company is specialized in special deliveries and has AEO rights but it cannot survive only by offering those services. And, the core service which demand is the highest is offered by a numerous amount of other, more known companies. This is why Wim Bosman needs to invest in marketing to gain more awareness among target customers.

Further, the pressure from headquarters can become a threat to Wim Bosman. The headquarters in Holland is pressuring to getting more revenue, performing better etc. This would be a positive thing if it would be in a positive tone, encouraging and supporting for development and better results. But it is rather pressuring and intimidating, which may lead to bad decisions in the company that further may affect the outcome, customer satisfaction and thus it represents a threat for the company.

The price war is getting more and more intense. As the economic situation is what it is, the customers are seeking for the lowest possible price. The companies on the other hand are trying to deliver service of good quality – something that is not possible with the lowest price in the market. The dilemma is that the customers demand for quality service, at a short delivery time with the lowest price, something that cannot be done. All these three elements cannot happen at the same time. Since the case company wants to keep up standards and deliver a high quality service, the price will definitely form a threat for the company.

3.2 Competitors

As stated before, the competition is quite tough especially in the area where the company is located in. The office building of Port of HaminaKotka, where also the business premises of Wim Bosman are located, is crawling with businesses offering forwarding services. Only in the area of Kotka are located a huge amount of other forwarding companies. All companies offering forwarding services in Port of HaminaKotka are listed in Appendix 2. Moreover, based on the nature of the service, other forwarding companies located all over Finland may also be considered as competitors. This makes all business efforts more difficult for the case company. The Finnish Freight Forwarders' Association (Suomen Huolintaliikkeiden Liitto) is a forwarding company interest group operating in Finland, which focuses on business and labor market policy matters. Today, the association has around 70 member companies located around Finland. (Suomen Huolintaliikkeiden Liitto 2014)

Further, Wim Bosman considers not only other forwarding companies but also e.g. carriers offering forwarding services and companies offering warehousing as their competitors. This is due to the fact that the case company does not have trucks or warehouses of their own but need them to deliver services to customers. Even though e.g. carriers do cooperation with Wim Bosman, they might offer the same service to customers with a lower price than Wim Bosman. This price volatility happens because carriers charge a higher price for other forwarders than their own. A list of the biggest competitors is conducted below. The biggest competitors to the case company are chosen on the basis of location and similarity / diversity in services offered, compared to the case company. These companies have been discussed and confirmed as the

biggest competitors to Wim Bosman by the branch manager. (Parviainen-Tohmo 2014).

- DHL Freight (Finland) Oy
- DHL Global Forwarding (Finland) Oy
- Nurminen Logistics Oyj
- Oy Viktor Ek Ab
- SA-TU Logistics Oy
- Steveco Oy
- VR-Yhtymä Oy, VR Cargo

All of the companies listed above operate in Port of KotkaHamina, which gives them the same advantage as Wim Bosman concerning the location. Further, all of them offer forwarding services (Port of HaminaKotka, n.d.). According to the website of Port of HaminaKotka (n.d.) all of the listed competitors offer transport services, something that Wim Bosman does not. This is a setback for Wim Bosman since they have to get the transportation service from another company. When the supply chain gets longer - the price for the customer increases. Moreover, DHL Freight (Finland) Oy, Nurminen Logistics Oyj and Steveco Oy service portfolio differ from the case company's as they offer terminal and warehousing services. DHL Global Forwarding (Finland) Oy and Oy Viktor Ek Ab offer airfreight services. On top of airfreight, Oy Viktor Ek Ab also offers sea freight and clearance services. SA-TU Logistics Oy and Oy Viktor Ek Ab offer container services, which is an asset in the fast-growing container traffic.

As studied previously in this paper, AEO-rights are an asset for Wim Bosman. Out of the listed competitors, only SA-TU Logistics Oy has AEO-rights (SA-TU Logistics Oy, n.d.). By assessing the similarity and diversity in the service offering, SA-TU Logistics Oy can be considered to be probably the biggest competitor to Wim Bosman in the current situation. The author's research shows that the businesses are of the same size, they offer similar services, and are located in the same building. Further, SA-TU Logistics Oy is able to offer transportation services, which leads to a lower price compared to Wim Bosman's. Moreover, Steveco Oy is Finland's largest stevedoring services provider (Steveco 2014). Thus, it has gained awareness among customers all over Finland and can be considered to be a big competitor to a small

company like Wim Bosman. Still, since Wim Bosman is able to create tailor-made solutions to fulfill the needs of its customers and create more personal relationships, it is able to compete with the giants in the market.

4 STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN

4.1 Segmentation

Wim Bosman aims to target a quite wide market. As most companies in B2B markets, also the case company demonstrates a customer distribution that confirms the Pareto Principle or the 80:20 rule (B2B International, 2014). This means that only 20 percent of the customers bring 80 percent of the revenue. This also works the other way around, 80 percent of customers account only for 20 percent of revenue. Further, personal relationships are important in B2B markets but of course need to be adjusted depending on whether the customers fall into the 80 or 20 category. Primary customers will get more personal service and better benefits.

Since Wim Bosman Group is a global company; it has the capacity to work wherever around the world. That is why Wim Bosman (Finland) is able to target a wide market. They can offer their services practically to any businesses that are engaged in international trade. Even if they have the capacity to do so, Wim Bosman has decided to target a bit narrower market in order to tackle competition and have a good position in the chosen segment. Since there are huge logistics companies such as DHL in the market, it does not make sense for a small company to target all groups they have resources to because they would only get stomped over by the giants in the market.

Due to these reasons, Wim Bosman aims to target global companies operating in European markets. The target business is a company who exercises trade to and from Russia, through forwarding. Further, the target group does not have their own logistics tools, which creates the need for a forwarding company, an expert in logistics. The target group is mainly concerning forwarding business to and from Russia but also to and from other European countries. The target group deals mostly with break bulk cargos that consist of goods of high value.

Wim Bosman's global supply chain enables them to work with the customer from the beginning and creates the opportunity to offer unique service. It has been confirmed by Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) that Wim Bosman's biggest clients include amongst others Sony, Xerox, Estee Lauder, Gap, Marks & Spencer, Nestle and Medcom. This variety of companies tells a lot about Wim Bosman – it is able to offer services to different kinds of companies, adjusting its service depending on the customers needs, no matter where the cargo is coming from and by which means it is going further to its final destination.

4.2 Positioning

According to Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) Wim Bosman's goal is to create a strong company brand in the minds of their customers. The aim is that when the customers see the company name, they will associate it with good quality service. Wim Bosman strives to being perceived as a company delivering an efficient service that is tailor-made to meet the wishes of the customers, has short delivery times in a process that is fluent and flawless, with competitive prices and everything is done always without compromising on the quality of the service. This positioning is supported by the choice of companies that Wim Bosman is in cooperation with and moreover by their professional staff with several years of experience in the field.

In order to stand out from the competition, Wim Bosman's strategy will concentrate on creating a strong customer loyalty by offering tailored and comprehensive logistics solutions to its customers. Thanks to its global networks and wide range of services, Wim Bosman is able to adapt quickly to changes in the market and to changes in the expectations and demand of services. Wim Bosman aspires to obtain an outstanding reputation among their target customers.

Even though the forwarding business itself is not a unique business in Kotka area, Wim Bosman is able to differentiate itself from the competition by its diverse service offering. Wim Bosman will concentrate on being in business with partners that enable them to deliver a quality service and moreover help them to differentiate themselves in the market. The diversity of services offered, the efficient service process and the quality of the service will appeal to the target customers that share the same values as Wim Bosman.

4.3 Marketing mix

4.3.1 Product

Wim Bosman offers international, high quality and comprehensive logistics solutions to its customers. Wim Bosman offers international forwarding services for deliveries to Finland, from Finland to Europe and outside of Europe. Networked partners and the company's own offices across Europe enables Wim Bosman to carry out different deliveries by size and quantity. International sea and airfreights are delivered everywhere in Finland by road or railway. Further, Wim Bosman offers forwarding services related to Russian transit traffic for cargos coming from Finland, from elsewhere Europe and from outside of Europe. Moreover, Wim Bosman provides warehousing and value-added services. According to Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) the main services offered by Wim Bosman will be listed and examined below.

- Export and import services
- Transit deliveries to Russia
- T1-transits and EX export declarations
- Certificates of origin
- AEO shipments
- Full and part loadings and groupage shipments
- Oversized and other special transports
- Domestic transports
- Sea freights
- Warehousing

As can be interpreted from the list, the service offering at Wim Bosman is diverse and automatically brings a differential advantage over competitors. Thus, the diversity of services means that all of them are not even offered by competitors in the area. Transit deliveries are one of the most common core services in the forwarding companies in Kotka area, as it also was for Wim Bosman. Since the market and the demand have changed over years, the company needed to react and focus more on other services they provide. Still, transit deliveries to Russia are a big part of the company today.

In a nutshell, transit delivery means a delivery from a country of origin to the country of destination through a third country. The goods are not bought for the transit country, they are not declared in the custom of the country nor are they registered as foreign trade. Transit is a customs procedure that facilitates transport of goods and international trade. If the goods are passing through, they can be sent by T1-transit to transit countries (EU and EFTA countries) or with TIR-carnet to outside of Europe. (Tulli 2014). This also brings a differential advantage to Wim Bosman since not all of the competitors have the authority to T1-transits.

One of the biggest assets and competitive advantage for Wim Bosman is that they are an AEO operator. Authorized Economic Operator – AEO is a global project, which aims to promote the safety of international supply chains. It has been confirmed by Einola (2014) that reduced inspection of customs clearance documents and a quickened clearance processing, improved security in supply chains and a reputation of a trustworthy operator are a few of the benefits customers get from Wim Bosman's AEO status. This brings a huge value to the customer and only a couple of competitors have this status in the Kotka area.

Moreover, Wim Bosman has the possibility to offer warehousing in Europe. According to Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) the demand of warehousing services occurs if the mode of transport changes during the shipment from e.g. sea freight to road transport, the goods would need to be repackaged, instructions would need to be put in goods if not done in the factory etc. The company has over 340 000 m² storage facilities, 23 offices with 1600 employees all over Europe (Wim Bosman Group n.d.). Even though Wim Bosman does not have own warehouses in Finland, it can also be arranged there. Warehousing services include for instance regular warehousing, warehousing of food and chemicals, customs warehousing and special secured warehousing. Further, warehousing of spare parts, inventory management and product placement (JIT, Kanban) are a part of Wim Bosman's warehousing services. (Wim Bosman Group n.d.)

Wim Bosman offers also value added services to gain more and retain current customers. These services include:

- Packaging, kitting and late configuration, assembly, rework, repair etc.

- Repackaging and (re) conditioning
- Invoicing
- Order management
- Back office functions
- Customs handling e.g. bonded warehousing and fiscal representation

In combination with logistics, Wim Bosman also offers European distribution, air & ocean and information management for full supply chain solutions. (Wim Bosman n.d.)

4.3.2 Price

Since the service offered by Wim Bosman is of a higher price, the company cannot directly compete with the price. However, a higher price indicates a better quality. Customers think that if they pay more they get more. This is exactly the case with Wim Bosman. They offer services that are customized, of good quality and bring better value for the customer's money, which is why the company is able to charge more. Further, on top of quality matters, long supply chains result in a higher price. Since Wim Bosman does not have e.g. their own warehouses in Finland, if they arrange warehousing to a customer it increases the price because the warehouse needs also it profits. The bottom line is that Wim Bosman lives up to its customers' expectations and maintains its image of superiority.

There are some competitors in the area offering the same services with a lower price. This means that some of the target customers will choose the competitors' service just because of the price. However, they will not receive the same quality as they would if they choose Wim Bosman. The unfortunate fact in this economic state, every penny counts – also for the customers. This may lead to choosing a lower price over good quality. In order to tackle this issue, Wim Bosman aims to support the image of a higher quality and value for money with a higher price by providing information about the company's services to its target customers.

The existing customers of Wim Bosman on the other hand are not price sensitive and are willing to pay a higher price for good quality. This is because they seek for high quality and secure deliveries within the agreed timetables. They are used to fluent and

quick service processes and moreover to get what they expect – or even more. Further, they will not be startled by increases in prices since they understand where they come from and know that they will get a better value for their money than from the competitors.

The prices of service companies are not available like e.g. prices of clothing shops. Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) states that Wim Bosman's prices are average if comparing to competitors in the area. The prices of services vary a lot, depending on e.g. how big the workload is for the forwarders. Further, the same service may cost more to one customer than another. This is due to e.g. different levels of security for different deliveries.

4.3.3 Place

Wim Bosman offers its services to its customers through a physical location. Their office is located in Port of HaminaKotka, the biggest export and import port in Finland. There are two office centers in Port of HaminaKotka, one in Hamina and the other in Mussalo, Kotka. Wim Bosman had previously its office in Hamina but in recent years has moved to Mussalo, where it now operates. Port of HaminaKotka is the most significant port in Finland - the biggest advantage being its location and connections to the predominant ports in Europe and thereby to the world (Port of HaminaKotka, n.d.). The closeness of highway E18 ensures good conditions to different modes of transport such as road, railway and maritime. HaminaKotka is located almost at the Russian boarder and thus creates a predictable and competitive route from EU to Russia and back. Further, the Port's wide range of different kinds of premises brings possibilities for various forms of business activity. Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) states that this is an advantage for Wim Bosman since many companies they cooperate with are located in KotkaHamina.

4.3.4 Promotion

Wim Bosman wants to stand out from the competition by creating and maintaining good and long relationships with its primary customers. Wim Bosman is a good position for developing genuine and close relationships with its customers because of its size. Big logistics companies are not able to do so, which is why Wim Bosman needs to concentrate on creating loyal and long-lasting customer relationships in order

to survive in the market. The biggest setback concerning promotion is budget related. The company does not have the money to make big marketing efforts, which is why they need to be creative in order to gain visibility among the target customers.

Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) states that currently Wim Bosman's main promotional channel is their webpages. Based on the author's research, the webpages are clear, consistent and gives a professional image for people surfing on and finding information from the webpages. The home page consists of the company logo, a few circulating images and a brief introduction to the company and what it does. There are drop-down menus including information about the company, their services and ways to contact them. To make the search even faster and easier for the customer, in addition to drop-down menus there is a quick links section on the home page. Further, since Wim Bosman is an international company the webpages are available both in Finnish and English.

Moreover, the location of the business can be used as a promotional tool. The office building Merituuli, where Wim Bosman is located in, frequently publishes information about itself, promoting its available business premises and companies operating there. In fact, a few months ago a leaflet (Kotkan Satamatalot Oy 2014) about rentable premises was made and on top of shooting empty spaces they also shot premises that are in use, Wim Bosman's office being one of them. This was totally free of charge and a great advertisement for Wim Bosman since a lot of potential partners and customers read that leaflet. More about the effect of business premises on the customer will be discussed below in the next chapter. Further, customer relationship management and networking with partners are a part of Wim Bosman's strategy but also it's promotion.

4.3.5 Additional P's

Additional P's bring a new perspective to the traditional marketing mix and by using them Wim Bosman is able to create a sound, well functioning and a more comprehensive marketing mix. As discussed previously, additional P's in this study include People, Process and Physical evidence. These three elements create probably the biggest competitive advantage for Wim Bosman.

People are a seen message for target customers and other companies. That is why according to Laptенок (2014) Wim Bosman wants to have a smart casual dress code for their staff. When meeting customers, a more formal dressing is in place. The staff is instructed to speak and behave professionally at all times. Further, all members of the staff have several years of experience in the field, they possess the right skills and by character are suitable to work as a team but also are able to handle tasks by themselves. On top of staff members, also current customers affect on what new customers think about the company and expect from their service. Moreover, anyone who is in contact with current or potential customers may affect their perceptions about the company positively or negatively. This is why Wim Bosman needs to make sure that they give the best possible outcome to ensure a good word of mouth. After sales support and advice can be converted to competitive advantage if done correctly.

Wim Bosman aims to have a superior service process. Efficient employees and location of the business minimize the waiting times and quickens the process. Thorough information is given to the customers and other people involved in the process such as drivers. All these elements together with a fluent cooperation of staff ensure that the customer is satisfied. As the process planning is done wisely and carefully at Wim Bosman's, added value and competitive advantage is gained. The cleanliness and appearance of the business premise are factors of physical evidence and reduces the uncertainty to buy for a customer. Since the business premise is rather new with modern, stylish but simple furniture, it creates a professional image in minds of customers. Further, the cleanliness is assured with a thorough daily cleaning of the whole premise. The cleaning is included in the rent and thus doesn't cost extra for the company. (Laptенок 2014)

4.4 Customer relationship management

Wim Bosman aims to treat customers as individuals and thus is willing to customize each of its service according to the customers' needs. Parviainen-Tohmo (2014) states that the company focuses on retaining old, profitable customers and wants to establish long relationships with them. As the branch manager at Wim Bosman has noticed, small things can have a big impact on the profit. All employees at Wim Bosman make sure that their customers are treated well, personally and kindly. Wim Bosman aims to retaining new customers by being as flexible as possible, e.g. concerning timetables.

They want to have satisfied and loyal customers that keep coming back for their services. When taking care of customer satisfaction and offering services that are competitive, the customers do not even feel the need to search for another company. To keep the customer satisfied, the branch manager is frequently in contact with the customers and sees them regularly in order to get direct feedback and opinions from the customers. Thus, Wim Bosman is able to quickly react if something does not go as planned. Further, keeping an old customer is way cheaper for the company than searching for a new one. That is why Wim Bosman invests rather in customer retention than in seeking and winning over new ones.

In addition to customer retention, Wim Bosman is also focusing on customer potential. Even if they have loyal customers – all companies are better off if they have more. In order to get potential customers not only to buy ones but more frequently, Wim Bosman aims to creating closer relationships with these potential customers. In order to do so, employees and the branch manager pay visits to potential customers and set up meetings in order to create an image of more personal relationships. Meetings or visits are not always necessary, but also phone calls create the same effect in customers' minds. It is not a big investment but may result in relationships that the company benefits from in the long run. Potential customers can become a part of the most valuable customers for the company.

Since the times are hard and all costs should be as low as possible, de-selection of customers need to be made sometimes. At Wim Bosman, it may seem that no customer is an unprofitable one, but in the long run they turn out to be exactly what they are. That is why the company needs to go through their customers from time to time and see how much they have invested in a customer versus what they have gained. If the investment is bigger than the gain, there is no point in investing more in such unprofitable customers.

4.5 Networking and cooperation with partners

Wim Bosman is a part of the Mainfreight Group, a supply chain business and a network with over 200 branches around the world. It offers sophisticated logistics solutions in and out of the most dynamic economies in the world. Wim Bosman benefits from being a part of Mainfreight group in terms of getting awareness among international companies and the cooperation in delivering services. Further,

Mainfreight Group has huge resources and the membership enables Wim Bosman to use them and to offer effortless and fluent service to their customers. On the website of Mainfreight group, Wim Bosman is named as the only member in Europe offering logistics services and thus doesn't have to compete with other members of Mainfreight Group. This is a big advantage for Wim Bosman since most of other small forwarding companies do not have such a global partner behind them.

Further, Wim Bosman does close cooperation with other companies in the field, sometimes even with competitors. One example of cooperation is that Wim Bosman does not have their own warehouses in Finland and so they cooperate with companies that do have. When establishing close relationships with these companies, warehousing at a reduced price is likely. Of course companies have to be benchmarked but when having a close relationship with someone, a better price is more likely than from a new company. Wim Bosman aims to value and take good care of not only its customers but also the relationships with its partners.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the key findings of the research are discussed, followed by the benefits of this paper for both the commissioning company and the author. Finally, recommendations for the commissioning company and an overall self-evaluation of the thesis process are presented.

5.1 Key findings

The purpose of this thesis was to find out how Wim Bosman is to find and retain customers, gain more awareness in the market and succeed in the prevailing competition in the field of forwarding and logistics. Even though the competition is hard, Wim Bosman is in a superior position to serve customers with different needs all over the world because of its networks and resources. Wim Bosman mainly targets international companies operating in the European market, focusing on forwarding to and from Russia. The shipments are mostly break bulk and of a high value. The target

companies need an intermediary such as Wim Bosman to get a quick and secure delivery for their goods. Wim Bosman has the opportunity to reach new target markets by promoting their AEO rights, which aims to increase safety in international supply chains.

Wim Bosman's competitive advantage is their wide service portfolio. Thanks to their cooperation with their European offices and other partners, they are able to offer comprehensive logistics solutions to different kinds of customers with different needs - something that a competitor of the same size is not capable of. This enables Wim Bosman to compete also with the bigger competitors in the market. Further, Wim Bosman offers tailor-made solutions to its customers and always with the best quality possible. In today's economical state, a lot of companies use a low-price strategy in order to gain customers, whereby the quality has to suffer in order to reach a low price. Wim Bosman on the other hand trusts that its loyal customers want to have a good quality service, within the right timetables and thus are willing to pay more.

Since customers need to pay more for tailor-made services, Wim Bosman cannot compete with their price in the market. Thus, the high price of the service should create an image of good quality, flexible timetables, security etc. in the minds of the customers. If the customers value those things in the service process, they are willing to pay more. Further, value added service offering decreases the price sensitivity. Wim Bosman offers information about their services and promotes their AEO status in order to support the high quality and reliability image of their services.

The most interesting opportunity for Wim Bosman is their location in Port of Kotka/Hamina. As stated previously, it is the biggest export and import port in Finland. Port of Hamina/Kotka is located almost at the Russian border and thus creates a predictable and competitive route from Europe to Russia and back. Further, the location ensures efficient, secure and competitive service and short delivery times from and to Europe and Russia. In addition, the location of Wim Bosman's business premise in the office building in Mussalo strengthens the brand image and increases the visibility of the company.

The biggest stumbling block for the company has been lack of awareness amongst target customers. This is mainly due to the little advertising that the company does. Wim Bosman does have functional and comprehensive webpages but they solely are

not enough to advertise the company. Since the marketing budget is small, creative and cost-efficient ways of marketing needs to be done. Social media is a modern, effective and inexpensive tool to promote a business and to communicate with customers. As the company does not exist in the social media yet, it would have to join and create a page in e.g. Facebook. The page should be regularly updated in order for the information to be accurate and to ensure flawless communication between the customer and the company. Moreover, it is also a possibility that the target group of Wim Bosman is too narrow compared to its resources. Further, the prevailing price competition might turn from a threat to a weakness for Wim Bosman. Because of savings in all costs, customers might be strong-armed to choose a low price over good quality.

5.2 Benefits of this paper

After handing in this thesis to Wim Bosman C.E.E.B.V. they are to decide how to use it. However they will have information regarding what kind of strategy to choose, what threats to prepare for and what opportunities to tackle. Further, they will get another point of view about the main factors that they should focus on in order to succeed in competition. All the information given in this paper will provide evidence and perspective to Wim Bosman for it to make the final strategic decisions concerning its marketing.

For the author this project has taught different things from searching reliable information to conducting interviews and concisely use the information gathered. The author used critical thinking when deciding on what information to use and evaluating which of it was relevant for this paper. The author deepened her skills in all the elements and phases of conducting a marketing plan for a company. That knowledge will surely be of great use in the future when working for an international company or moreover as a starting entrepreneur, having to do those decisions from scratch.

5.3 Recommendations for the commissioner

Based on the theory read, the results of the interviews and consultations and the author's personal thoughts, knowledge and experiences the appropriate recommendations for the commissioning company are the following:

Marketing of the company needs to be increased. In order to gain visibility in the market and amongst target customers, the company and its services needs to be promoted. Even if the marketing budget is limited, creative and less expensive ways to promote the business needs to be found. For example, being in touch and developing a more personal relationship with potential or less frequently buying customers can increase their willingness to buy. Since the business premise is tidy and the staff professional, no changes in them should be made. More regular meetings with the most profitable customers should be held to ensure that the relationships stay close and the customers satisfied and loyal. Customer satisfaction is crucial in the business and the communication between the company and their clients should be fluent and direct in order to avoid complications in the service process. Moreover, if a customer is unhappy with some parts of the service, when communicating directly, possible issues can be tackled quickly. Since the supply chains can be long, efficient communication between all members is crucial for customer satisfaction.

Social media should be exploited by setting up a page for the company in e.g. Facebook. By using social media as a promotional channel, the awareness among target customers would increase since a lot of companies have been studied to use different social medias today. On the page, Wim Bosman could share information, build relationships and promote the business and its services. Social media is a modern, efficient and most importantly an inexpensive tool to engage with customers. When updated and checked frequently, the company is able to directly communicate with its customers and that way improve their services and customer satisfaction.

Further, Wim Bosman should promote their wide service offering and most of all their AEO status. The company's AEO status does not only bring the opportunity to widen their customer base but it also promotes their company image of a safe, reliable, fast and high-quality service offering. As most deliveries that Wim Bosman handles are of a high value e.g. electronics and high-quality cosmetics, safety is one of the top priorities for the clients. Also the company's value added services such as warehousing should be brought forward and in the knowledge of the target customers so that the company could differentiate itself from the competition.

Lastly, one of the most important things that the company should do in order to survive the competition is to focus on customer retention and convincing customers

that quality is what they want. Their staff needs to be able to sell their comprehensive, high-quality services in the way that the price is not the main element. Since Wim Bosman can't compete with price in the competition, they have to create an image of superior service in the minds of their current and potential customers. If the customers value what they get for their money, price is not an issue. The customers need to be convinced that it is better to pay more for a flawless, professional service, safe deliveries without complications and with fast and flexible delivery times. Further, the company has to make sure that they always live up to those expectations, which leads to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

5.4 Further research and development ideas based on the self-evaluation

This thesis has been developing throughout the entire process and the author feels that she has managed to conduct a realistic marketing strategy for Wim Bosman that helps them to succeed in the competition. Throughout the whole process it was quite clear to the author what she wanted to get out of this paper, which led to a quite straightforward proceeding.

The structure of this thesis follows the guidelines set by Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences. The author feels that the theory part has been covered well but the implementation of that theory has not been done as accurately. The author believes that there is not enough depth when turning the theory into practice. The main constraint of this thesis was lack of time. Due to some changes in the planned thesis schedule, the author was not able to make this research as fundamental as could have been possible. In order to improve the conducted marketing plan, a comprehensive competitor analysis could have been made. The competitor analysis in this paper only scratches the surface of the current situation in competition in the field of forwarding in Kotka area. Still, the author is convinced that the main points concerning competitors have been covered in this thesis. However, as stated before, the author believes that this thesis includes good and important information that will guide Wim Bosman to make the right decisions to tackle and succeed in competition.

The qualitative research was conducted by face-to-face interviews and several consultations during the author's internship in the company and during the thesis process. These interviews with the branch manager and consultations with other employees formed the basis of this paper and helped the author to understand several

points concerning the company. The number of participants in this qualitative study is sufficient and thus makes the study reliable. If another researcher would re-create the same study, the tools and analyses would be the same. However, the results could differ slightly. The professional backgrounds and experience in the field of the interviewees and the precise notes taken by the author ensures that the information collected is accurate and trustworthy. In this thesis the findings correspond to what was supposed to be found, which ensures the validity. The research question was answered and the set objective to create a comprehensive, successful and actionable marketing plan - was conducted.

A possible further research idea concerning this topic could be carrying out a comprehensive market analysis. According to Jobber (2010, p.41) external marketing audit focuses on areas that are not controlled by the management. The microenvironmental analysis could be conducted by using PEST –analysis which includes political/legal, economic, ecological, social/cultural and technological aspects. Even though the company has been operating in the Finnish market since 2012 there is still a lot to learn. This could develop the company and also be an asset to gain more visibility in the market. The market research would determine the company's objectives and shape their strategies to grow their presence in the market. It could also be helpful in terms of creating a competitive advantage and differentiate the company from the competition.

The entire process of writing this thesis has taken quite a lot of time and effort but on the contrary it has taught a lot to the author. Things like planning, time-management, decision-making, research and writing skills have all been tested throughout this project. The author feels that she has done well in several points e.g. planning and decision-making. The parts she feels could have been done better includes e.g. time-management. Overall, the author is convinced that this experience will be a valuable asset in her future projects and workplaces.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview framework

1. Mission

What is the main purpose of Wim Bosman C.E.E.B.V.?

2. Objective

What are the objectives for Wim Bosman?

3. SWOT

What are the internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats for Wim Bosman?

4. Competitors

Who do you consider to be biggest competitors for Wim Bosman?

5. Target group

What are the main / target customers for Wim Bosman?

6. Positioning

What kind of business image does Wim Bosman to gain in the minds of their customers?

7. Marketing mix

What services does Wim Bosman offer?

What does the customers have to pay for using Wim Bosman's services?

How is Wim Bosman promoted?

Where do customers find Wim Bosman?

8. Competitive advantage

What differentiates Wim Bosman from its competitors?

9. CRM

How are current and potential customers taken care of at Wim Bosman?

Appendix 2. Companies offering forwarding services in Port of HaminaKotka

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|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alea Oy • Alsalink Oy • AP Transit Oy • Beweship Oy/Hamina • Oy Hacklin Bulk Boys Ltd • BWS International Oy • Car Trans Service Finland Oy • CasCont Oy/Ltd • Centos Central Logistics • CHS Arealog Oy • Crofin Oy • Dahlberg's Agency • Damco Finland • DHL Freight (Finland) Oy • DHL Global Forwarding (Finland) Oy • Dial-Trans Oy Ltd • DSV Road Oy • East Light Oy • Finn-Mica Oy • Finneast Logistics & Forwarding Oy • Four Trans Oy • Gate Line Ltd Oy • Global Cargo Oy • GSK Umiat Logistics Finland Oy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oy Hacklin Hamiko Ltd • Hamina Cargonet Logistics Oy • ILP-Group Ltd Oy • Levkatrans Oy • Maxi-Trans Oy • Mirang Oy • Multi-Link Terminals Oy • NET Logistic JVM Oy • Niakom Oy • Nordic Forwarder Oy • Northern Logistics Oy • NS Scorp Oy • Nurminen Logistics Oyj • NYK Logistis (Scandinavia) • Oiltanking Sonmarin Oy • Omega-Trans Oy • P.I.S –Navigator Oy • PP Maritime Oy • Pynnönen International Ltd Oy • RP Logistics Oy • SA-TU Logistics Oy • Sea Element Oy • Sealogic Oy • Solid Way Oy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed Oy • Stella Corona Oy Ltd • Steveco Oy • SV-Trans Oy • OY TF Transport Finland Ltd • Timber-box Oy • Tiralana Oy • Transmare Logistics Oy • Transport Logistics Finland Oy • TVA Logistics Oy • Univers Logistics Finland Oy • Urartu Oy • Oy Vaer Log Ltd • WCargo Oy • Oy West-Orient Lines Ltd • Viamex Oy • Viborg-Trans Expe Oy • Oy Viktor Ek Ab • Wim Bosman C.E.E.B.V. • Vopak Chemicals Logistics Finland Oy • VR-Yhtymä Oy, VR Cargo • VTN-Group Oy Ltd |
|---|--|--|

(Port of HaminaKotka n.d.)