



JANUARY 4, 2024

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR SME'S

BMSW6104

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Executive Summary

The following discussion in the report has been focused on Cafepod, a UK-based SME brand, and has highlighted the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the brand.

The external and internal business environment can be measured through PESTLE, SWOT, and VRIN analysis.

Based on PESTLE analysis the fall in the rate of currency exchange has had a negative impact on the company.

Moreover, the analysis of internal strength has discovered the efficiency of the quality of offerings of Cafepod influencing brand recognition.

Ansoff Matrix and Porter's Generic Strategies have also been included in the report focusing on the growth choices in the marketplace for the SME.

The study has also indulged in the process of analysis of stakeholders to understand their interests and power.

The discussion has also included a recommendation for the strategy that will enrich the brand in future development.

The supply chain optimisation method can be used by Cafepod which will help enhance the supply chain and relation with suppliers.

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“a) Introduction including brief introduction/overview of the case study based on SMEs context”.

The report will focus on Cafepod, a UK-based SME brand that engages in offering different ranges of coffee products to customers in the marketplace.

The discussion will include the vision, mission, objectives, values, and goals of Cafepod regarding its strategic direction.

The report will also include the business environment tools that will help in understanding the business's external and environmental analysis.

The discussion in the report will highlight the strategic growth choices in the marketplace for the SME business of Cafepod.

Discussion on the major stakeholders of the business in identifying the strategic options will also be included.

The report will also include strategic recommendations based on future developments of the business.

“b) Critically appraise the organization's current strategic direction”.

Cafepod is a UK-based SME that offers different types of coffee products with a great taste to the customers.

The vision of Cafepod is to deliver great and strong coffee to the customers in the marketplace and highlight the importance of coffee among the customers.

The core mission of Cafepod is to assist individuals in making great coffee while using their items at home (CafePod, 2023). This will assist the customers in the marketplace to make and consume their required coffee products from the marketplace.

The value of the organization is determined through their 2 core investors who aim to invest in their business including Angel Investment Network and Blue Wire Capital. As of December 2022, the turnover of Cafepod was estimated to be 3 million, and net assets to be 191.9 thousand.

Cafepod's main goal is to provide high-quality coffee products by acquiring premium beans and running them efficiently.

The company promotes sustainability through eco-friendly procedures, efficient supply chains, and lowering product packaging's impact on coffee (alcircle, 2022).

Cafepod prioritizes client happiness by providing excellent service and feedback on product difficulties. Cafepod also prioritizes innovation by adopting new technologies and following coffee market trends. Cafepod strives to meet client requests with high-quality, consistent coffee.

The company plans to expand into new areas, partner with new firms and shops, and attract new customers (Henry, 2021). Cafepod also focuses on brand positioning and generating amazing market sources to attract consumers.

“c) Provide a critical analysis of the organization's external and internal environment to identify the big picture”.

PESTLE Analysis

Political: The UK government intervenes in the operations and the practices of the coffee industry in the external environment regarding their pattern of imports and exports.

The UK government has initiated the protocol of implementing quality control, food safety, and requirements of product labeling that need effective grants and permission by the government and higher authorities in the coffee sector.

The import of coffee products from other countries requires meeting the standards of the “Food Standards Agency” so that an effective supply of the products is created which creates a positive influence on the coffee industry (GOV.UK, 2023).

The government’s introduction of VAT on coffee products creates a negative impact on the coffee sector as they are subjected to fulfill the requirement by 20%.

Economic: The currency exchange rate in the UK with international trade declined to 1.1% in 2023 which created a negative impact on importing and exporting with the international countries for the coffee sector (Panjwani, 2023).

As of November 2023, the current inflation rate in the UK was estimated to be 3.9% which influences the cost of production in the coffee sector creating a negative influence on the customer’s buying process (Statista, 2023).

The changes in the economic conditions in the country also influence the factor of consumer spending on the products of coffee items that are offered by the coffee sector in the UK. This creates a negative impact on the buying process of the customers.

Social: The factor of changes in the coffee industry influences the customer's buying preferences of the coffee items. This creates a negative influence on the items of premium coffee that are offered by the coffee organizations.

The social factor creates an influence due to the rising demand of health-conscious customers which manages the coffee industry to foster ethical sourcing and sustainability in the coffee products creating a positive influence (Bager and Lambin, 2020).

The different factors of cultural backgrounds might create an impact on the pattern of coffee consumption by customers.

Technological: The advancement in technological usage in the coffee sector creates a high demand for customers in the marketplace.

Technological advancement has led to the enhancement of the process of coffee brewing and the technological processing of coffee items.

The growth of the coffee sector is also increasing with the increase of the accessibility of mobile applications and e-commerce methods that enrich the mode of coffee sales in the online medium.

The coffee sector in the UK has utilized the mode of automation in their process, operations, and production modes which creates a positive impact on the effectiveness of the sector.

Moreover, the advancement in technology might also create the impact of data privacy breaches (Amanullah *et al.*, 2020).

To ensure an effective mode of technological usage, the coffee industry is required to follow the "Data Privacy Act 2018" for the ethical privacy and security of items and customers (Legislation.gov.uk, 2019).

Legal: The coffee industry in the UK is required to follow the regulations of the legal obligations and regulations while following the requirements of the food safety compliances and regulations of effective quality.

The negligence in following the regulation of the “Customers Rights Act 2015” might lead to an adverse negative impact on the coffee sector of the UK (Citizens Advice, 2020).

The legal factor might influence the coffee sector in the external environment by creating an issue regarding intellectual property based on the branding of the items and products.

In coffee production within the coffee industry, the labour laws in the UK might create influence the workforce in delivering effective practices of coffee production.

Environmental: The coffee sector in the UK influenced the environmental factor as it deals with boosting the practice of sustainability within the production and farming of coffee items through ethical sourcing.

This might create a positive impact for Cafepod in following their environmental regulations towards sustainability and ethical sourcing.

The negative impact on the coffee industry might occur due to the concerns in the environment based on the waste and packing of items of the coffee products (Heller *et al.*, 2019).

The adverse change in the climatic conditions might create a negative impact on the production process and quality of the coffee items in the UK.

VRIN Analysis

VRIN Analysis	
Value	Rarity
Cafepod offers your value by creating a product differentiation in the range of items through unique characteristics with great brewing methods that create competitiveness within the marketplace. The strong brand reputation that is possessed by Cafepod in its internal environment and the external market can create a great indicator of the value among the market customers. The contribution of the value and uniqueness of the brand are offered through brand recognition, positive customer reviews, and awards that attract them to buy more coffee products (Evans, 2019). Cafepod positions itself in the marketplace through demographic and geographic ways. The SME brand also focuses on premium segments as well as niche markets which creates a high value and unique quality of their coffee products. Innovation is the other	The rarity of Cafepod in its products and capabilities highlights its effective supply chain management where it offers reliability through supply chain methods by using different sources of sustainable coffee beans. An effective mode of supply chain effect potential contributes to the quality method and effectiveness of the supply chain mode (Foster and Gardner, 2022). The organisation has also initiated exclusive partnerships with other suppliers and producers which is a rarity for the brand. The partnerships with other brands create high accessibility of raw materials and create a competitive advantage within the coffee sector. Cafepod has potentially enhanced its branch structure with great intellectual property as the brand has initiated trademarks and other resources that create the rarity of the brand in the marketplace.

key value that is offered through Cafepod's products which creates an attraction among the market customers. The use of innovation has been done in their packaging ways and sustainable uses that create great value for their unique offering of product innovation. The other strategy that they implement to boost their SME operations is through collaborations and partnerships with other organizations so that it enhances their value in the product items (Gay and Szostak, 2019). The value of the brand by the organization can also be focused on obtaining feedback from them that will improve the quality, taste, and enhancement of the coffee product by Cafepod.	The organization poses a great method of distribution network that creates a rare capability within the SME business (Hill, 2022). The rarity can be developed by the brand by securing a position among the other market retailers with a great online presence that will boost their market capability. The organisation also indulges in talent and expertise methods including team indulgence towards flavour profiling of the coffee items which creates a valuable reality of their skills and resources.
Imitability	Non-substitutability
Cafepod possesses a great uniqueness in their product within the coffee industry which can be a challenging position for the other market. To implement such methods. The competitors of the brand might face	Cafepod possesses a team with special and integrated skills and knowledge regarding the process of coffee blending which can face a tough situation if replicated by the competitors as they might not

a challenge in replicating their innovation and partnership methods.

The Intellectual Property Rights that are initiated by the brand focus on the great blending and bringing process (Bowker, 2020). The brand has ensured its copyrights so that the other market competitors cannot implement their uniqueness. This might create a legal challenge for the major competitors of the brand.

The supply chain method initiated by Cafepod focuses on the ethical sourcing of premium coffee items which might be a challenge for the competitors to replicate the same supply chain method that is sourced by the SME brand. The great reputation of the brand has enhanced in creating a differentiation of Cafepod within the marketplace.

This might create a challenging position for the major market competitors in the coffee market to replicate the brand recognition and the consumer's pattern of engagement and loyalty.

To enhance the operations and production of Cafepod the

possess a similar form of blending expertise.

The technologies utilized by Cafepod, might not be effectively transferred as they include proprietary methods and equipment that need efficient investment and Finance.

The exclusive partnership that is possessed by Cafepod, might create a difficult situation and relationship in replicating such a partnership.

The suitability of resources is analyzed through understanding the Intellectual Property Rights that are used by the SME brand which might create a tough situation for the competitors to implement the direct substitute of Cafepod (Dratler Jr and McJohn, 2023).

As Cafepod is an SME business and is growing rapidly, might create a situation concerning the major competitors for them to grow as the reputation and recognition which are offered by the brand might not be replicated by the competitors.

The organization possesses a great supply chain method which might be a challenging situation in

organisation implements Technology which might require the major competitors to effectively invest and initial time management so that they can implement technological uses.	possessing alternative methods of supply modes (Frazelle, 2020). The growth in the economies of Cafepod regarding the distribution and production methods might not be replicated by the major competitors as they might face issues regarding the initiation of cost-advantage methods.
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Table No. 1: VRIN Analysis

(Source: Created by the learner)

SWOT Analysis

Strengths: Cafepod possesses great strength in the business as it emphasizes the brand value and reputation among the market customers. The different coffee products and items that are being offered by the brand in the marketplace create great recognition among the customers.

The SME brand emphasizes the strength of its great blending of coffee items and provides the market customers with a high-quality range of coffee beans.

The brand witnesses an effective mode of supply chain management while including suppliers who deal in suppliers' raw materials through ethical sourcing of the product items in the marketplace (CafePod, 2023).

Cafepod also initiated different modes of distribution channels using both their online and offline marketplace which creates great brand recognition among the market customers.

Weaknesses: Cafepod also possesses certain weaknesses in the marketplace that create an implication in their operations.

The organization possesses the major weakness of high dependence towards the market suppliers in specific markets which creates the issues

of analyzing and identifying the other coffee beans and items that are available in the larger markets (Yang and Lin, 2020).

The SME brand also possesses limitations in its market presence in comparison with its major market competitors in the coffee marketplace. The brand also witnesses a marketing gap that influences its strategy of attracting market customers.

The market gap creates an issue in brand visibility that challenges the source of doing business in offering coffee products to the market customers. Cafepod also faces the weakness of fluctuations that are caused due to the changes in the coffee prices that create a vulnerability in customers' buying process and revenue generation of the business.

Opportunities: Cafepod might face the opportunity of market expansion in emerging marketplaces due to the wider increase of coffee consumption in different markets by customers. This will create opportunities to enhance their product range and fulfill the demands of the customers in the marketplace.

The SME brand can also witness the opportunity to introduce new coffee items in the marketplaces with the increase in demand. Brand collaboration in the international market with major organizations including retailers and hotel chains will create a wide opportunity for the organization to grow in its market segment (Green and Keegan, 2020).

The organization can also face the opportunity to boost the consumer's demand for sustainable and eco-friendly items while enriching the consumption of coffee items.

Threats: Cafepod might face the threat of high market competition from major competitors in the marketplace. The major competitors including Costa Coffee and Greggs will create high competition due to their great reputation and offering of coffee products to customers in 1,156 and 2,328 UK outlets (Statista, 2022).

The brand might also face the threat of pricing fluctuations in the coffee prices that might create limitations in the product availability in the marketplace. The change in the demands, trends, and preferences of the market customers might create a shift in the demand for the brand that might create a threat and negative implications for the brand.

“d) Discuss available strategic growth choices for SMEs in markets and propose a new strategy and explain why you think it is a sustainable strategy for the long-term future of the organization”.

Porter's Generic Strategies

Cost leadership: The cost leadership strategy highlights the method which includes offering low prices for the products (Kharub *et al.*, 2019). The strategy aims to obtain scale in the economy and cost-effectiveness of the products. Organizations implement such a mode of cost leadership strategy by streamlining the process of products and initiating technological investment within minimum costs.

Differentiation: The strategy focuses on providing unique services and products to the customers within an appropriate value. Differentiation by the brand in the product ranges is maintained through innovation, brand image, and features that are included in the products (Paley, 2021). The strategy boosts the great identity of the brand, enriching the quality of the products while creating a differentiation from their major market competitors.

Cost focus: The strategy focuses on certain elements of the market segment including demographics and geography (Kharub *et al.*, 2019). The strategy ensures that the SMEs meet the requirements of the services and products based on the needs of the customer segment.

Differentiation focus: The strategy entails the competitive advantage that is initiated by the organization to enhance its position over its market competitors through using differentiation and focus strategy. Cafepod can implement this strategy as it will result in offering high-quality premium coffee items within the niche market. The brand can implement quality

differentiation which will help distinguish its image from the major competitors in the market (Gupta *et al.*, 2020). The process will also include quality sourcing with effective control and elevation of taste experience among the market customers. Through this leadership strategy, Cafepod can focus on a certain market segment that effectively values unique and premium items of coffee products which elevates the customer experience. The adaptation of the differentiation focus strategy will also help Cafepod to brand building can enhance their customer loyalty pattern and marketing enrichment of the brand. In the long term, Cafepod can initiate customer loyalty by focusing on the niche market that will enhance the expectations of customers in obtaining premium coffee items. Sustainability for long-term development can be enhanced by reducing the price of the product which will create competition and enhance the quality offering within the coffee items (Bager and Lambin, 2020). The organization can also enrich its quality through brand resilience which can help in economic downturns and offer long-term viability within the marketplace.

Ansoff Matrix

Market penetration: The strategy highlights the involvement of the selling of existing items and products in a certain marketplace by understanding the demands of the market customers in such a market (Ali and Anwar, 2021). This form of strategy creates an increase in the sales and revenue of the brand among the other individuals in the marketplace.

Market Development: Market development strategy focuses on the growth strategy in the business that highlights introducing the products that exist within the new marketplaces (Aliekperov, 2021). Such a form of strategy is often utilized by organizations to boost new forms of opportunities so that product selling is done by the brand.

Product Development: Product development strategy focuses on the development of new types of products innovating the existing products and engaging in offering those products within the new markets. The implementation of such a strategy creates an increase in sales and revenue generation in the marketplace (Cooper, 2019). Cafepod can implement a

product development strategy by introducing innovative ideas for enhancing coffee products. This will also sustain in meeting the demands of the existing customer group and also derive attracting new customers to the brand. The product development strategy will focus on understanding the recent trends within the consumer market by focusing on innovative products. Cafepod can enrich entering and using the emerging market trends which will also make them competitive in the coffee sector. The brand can provide new ranges of products to existing consumers that will enrich customer loyalty and make them buy products from the brand (Diallo *et al.*, 2021). This will create a wider opportunity to enhance their sales and sustain the requirements of the customer base. The implementation of the product development strategy can help the brand to innovate and enhance its forward-thinking approach within the marketplace. This can also create an opportunity for the brand to position its image and attract in boosting the customer loyalty pattern within the market that will also help them in sustaining for the long-term in the business.

Diversification: The strategy focuses on the organization’s involvement in entering a new marketplace with great sources of new items products and services to the market customers (Mendoza-Abarca and Gras, 2019). A diversification strategy also causes a high risk to the brand.

“e) Do a stakeholder analysis and critically evaluate the expectations of the different stakeholders and their relative power to identify the most suitable, feasible, and acceptable strategic option/options”

Stakeholders analysis is defined as a management tool that is incorporated to understand and identify the projects of stakeholders and the issues and to understand the possible impact of these issues (Leeron Hoory, 2022).

“Stakeholder Analysis of Cafepod”

“High power/high interest”	“Low Power/Low interest”
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The likes of high power with the high interest of Cafepod's external and internal stakeholders lies with stakeholders including the owner, shareholders or investors, and board members. The board members of the SMEs include its digital marketing heads, operations directors, and head of retention and loyalty (CafePod, 2023). In the activities of the business, the interest of these members tends which be highly regarded and respected in the formulation of business strategies. Moreover, they hold a high power over the strategies of Cafepod and their plantation which are formulated with their concerns. On the other side, the shareholders are one of the most important stakeholders of the business which focuses and is interested in the growth of the business. Moreover, the interest of the shareholders of the business is to maximize the profit rate of their investment and thus, they are highly interested in the progress of the business. Moreover, the shareholders of Cafepod are highly powered and considered during the activities of the business. In general terms, shareholders of any business have the power to review the	Among the various types of stakeholders of Cafepod, the suppliers are one stakeholder of the business with lower interest towards the business and lower power in the business. As there are various and numerous suppliers around the country or globe available, the suppliers of the business hold a low level of power to influence the activities of the company. On the other hand, their interest in the success of the business is limited as they can get involved with other businesses within the market.
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financial information of a business (Indeed, 2022). In Cafepod, the shareholders are provided with access to different information regarding the financial and operational activities. Considering the owner, their interest and powers are acknowledged above all the stakeholders in a business. The interest of the owner of Cafepod is to enhance the growth of the business to generate the maximum possible revenue. On the other hand, they hold the power to change any plans and procurement within the business.	
“High power/ Low interest”	“High interest/Low power”
The like of stakeholders such as the government and consumers are the ones in a business with high power and influence on the activities, strategies, and operations of a business. Considering the government, their laws and regulations or limitations are highly being followed in the operation of Cafepod. The framework and orders of the government control and guide the operation of the business (Testbook, 2023). Moreover, the notions of government impact and cause	The employees of Cafepod possess a lower level of power but impose a higher interest in the growth of the business. In general terms, employees are highlighted as people who are hired by a business to carry out their services (Indeed, 2023). In the context of Cafepod, the employees' powers are limited which is guided by the norms implemented by the boards of directors. Moreover, like the other stakeholders, the employees of the business are not allowed to be fully involved in the process of making

change in the policies of the business. On the other hand, the customers are regarded as the most crucial aspects of any business and their satisfaction, needs, and interests are major priorities (Prystowsky, 2022). Thus they hold a high power in the activities of a business but being surrounded by other alternatives they possess a low level of interest in the success and growth of the business. In businesses such as Cafepod, the needs and tastes of the customer determine the changes in the processes of the business.	decisions and framing decisions. Moreover, their interests in the business are limited by the policies and regulations crafted by the upper management. As per employees' interest, they work hard and contribute to the growth and success of the business through their services and hardship. The employees are even deployed as one of the most interested stakeholders towards the business success and effectively help in the process. Moreover, the interest of Cafepod employees towards growth can also be highlighted by the study of achievements and accomplishments achieved by the business in the past years.
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Table No. 2: Stakeholder Analysis

(Source: Created by the learner)

“f) Provide key strategic recommendations for the organization for future developments and implementation, considering the challenges SMEs encounter to implement strategic direction”.

In the SME market, certain challenges create an implication within the strategic direction of the organizations. Cafepod can work in enhancing the digital market presence in the business. the brand can enrich its digital presence by implementing user-friendly approaches and websites that will enrich the active engagement of customers on different social media

platforms the brand. The organization can initiate an e-commerce platform so that their increase in online sales is effectively enriched, which will also enhance the brand to streamline the process of coffee ordering by the customers (Hasiloglu and Kaya, 2021). This will ensure solving the issue that is faced by the market clients and the wholesale businesses. Cafepod can indulge in market analysis so that it can identify the ongoing trends in the marketplace preferences of the customers and market segments that are high in demand within the coffee sector (Akim and Imran, 2020). The organization can also identify the USP of the brand that might create differentiation from their major competitors in the marketplace and also highlight targeting the audiences that prefer buying coffee items. Cafepod to improve their strategic direction from the challenges in the marketplace can work towards initiating supply chain optimisation methods. The brand can enhance its relationship with the suppliers so that ethical sourcing and cost-effective product supply are necessitated. The brand can utilize technology so that it can manage the inventory process, reduce lead generation, and enrich its supply chain method more appropriately. The organization can enhance its strategies and operations by implementing sustainability initiatives.

Cafepod can utilize sustainability through ethically promoting eco-friendly and environmentally delivered practices which will create great recognition among the market customers. The brand is required to effectively communicate regarding their sustainability commitment that will create engagement among the customers regarding the practices of ethical consuming of items and make them socially responsible. To announce their growth Cafepod is also required to implement effective financial management that will enhance their sustainable growth and development. The process can be managed by the brand by maintaining expenses, managing cash flow, and cost-saving methods through maintaining product quality and value among the market customers (Eun *et al.*, 2021). Cafepod can also collaborate with key partners and businesses including retail organisations and restaurants so that an effective increase of their distribution network is mandated. The marketing of the business can also be effective and reached through collaborating with influencers that will boost their brand visibility and attract the market audience. The

organization can also focus on implementing employee training and development programs to enrich the skills and capabilities of staff working within the business. Cafepod can invest in different training activities to ensure in enrichment of employees' skills that will offer a great capability of the brand to the market customers.

g) Conclusion

The following report has highlighted the strategic direction of Cafepod in the marketplace that leads to the effective growth of the brand. The discussion has highlighted the vision, mission, objectives, and goals of the brand including offering quality coffee products to the customers. The report has also included the external environment analysis including PESTLE Analysis and the internal environment of the business through VRIN Analysis and SWOT Analysis which helps in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. The discussion has also followed in highlighting the strategic growth choices in the SME market that have been discussed through Porter's Generic Strategy and Ansoff Matix. The organization can implement a differentiation focus strategy through premium quality coffee items in the niche market. The product development strategy will be initiated to enhance innovation and product enrichment. The report also included a recommendation focusing on the improvement of the strategies through financial management, collaboration, marketing, sustainability, and other methods.

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