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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR SMES

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR SMES
A case study of Sahara Women's wear- UK

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Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to examine the strategic management practices applied by Sahara Women's Wear, a prominent SME in the UK fashion industry. An analysis of the company's current strategic direction, external and internal environment, as well as the potential growth options, enable the report to highlight valuable insights, making recommendations for sustainable long-term development of the company.

The Key Findings in the report indicated that Sahara Women's Wear's strategic direction is well aligned with the increasing demand for ethical and sustainable fashion. nonetheless, the company can still benefit from further establishing more clarity and focus on terms of goals and objectives. The PESTEL and SWOT analyses revealed many opportunities and challenges in the UK fashion market, such as an increase competition, change consumer preferences, and demand for sustainable practices.

Potential growth options for Sahara Women's Wear are market penetration and development, product development, as well as diversification. Therefore this report recommended more emphasis be placed on product development , expanding the product line and attracting new customers. Key stakeholders are customers, suppliers, employees, investors, government agencies, as well as local community members. Being able to understand their expectations and interests is key in strong relationships building as well as securing long-term success. The report proposed a strategic plan that emphasizes enhancement of the company's online presence, market reach expansion, sustainability trends leverage, enhancement of the customer experience, inventory management optimization, and mitigation of economic as well as competitive threats.

Implementation of the proposed strategy, requires Sahara Women's Wear to capitalize on its strengths, addressing of its weaknesses, and positioning itself for sustainable growth and success in the dynamic UK fashion market. Sahara Women's Wear's commitment to sustainability and ethical practices strategically aligns with the existing market trends attracting a dedicated customer base.

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STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR SMES:

A case study of Sahara Women's wear- UK

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic management is the process in which the defining and implementation of plans and actions by an organization to achieve its long-term goals and objectives is done. It mainly involves the key components below (Bruton et al., 2004).

1. Setting of Objectives where clearly established measurable goals are set for the organization to achieve.
2. Analysing of the Environment to assess both the internal and external environments identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis).
3. Formulation of Strategy which involves the development of the strategies used in the leveraging of strengths and opportunities at the same time mitigating weaknesses and threats.
4. Implementation of Strategy including the allocation of resources while executing strategies using very coordinated actions across the entire organization.
5. Monitoring and Evaluating which involves the continuously tracking of progress to make the necessary adjustments as to achieve the organization's objectives.

Strategic management enables an organization to gain the necessary competitive advantage, for better resource management and adaptation to the changing environments (Nag et al., 2007).

Sahara: The Company over view

Sahara Women's Wear, a popular SME in the UK fashion industry, which serves as a valuable case study for examining strategic management in a changing and competitive environment. This report analyses the company's current strategic direction, external and internal environment, and potential growth options, to provide specific strategic recommendations for the sustainable long-term development of the company.

2. CRITIQUING ANALYSIS OF SARAHA WOMEN'S WEAR'S CURRENT STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Vision

Saraha women's wear's UK has a vision of being the leading women's fashion brand commonly known for the unique, high-quality, sustainable designs inspiring creativity and individuality of women.

Mission

Saraha women's wear's UK has a vision of creating a contemporary women's clothing offering integrity, through luxurious natural fabrics using ordinary techniques, to promote sustainability as well as ethical practices within the fashion industry.

Values

Saraha women's wear's Uk values.

1. Quality and is committed to high-quality materials as well as craftsmanship.
2. Sustainability by focusing on the use of eco-friendly practices and sustainable materials.
3. Encouraging creativity and individuality in fashion.
4. Integrity by upholding ethical practices in all aspects of their business.
5. Customer-Centric approach by offering exceptional customer care and a more personalized shopping experience.

Goals

Saraha women's wear's Uk goals include the following below.

- a) Market Expansion where the company expands its presence in new regions within the UK and globally.
- b) Sustainability Leadership by providing leadership in the fashion industry as far as sustainable practices and innovation are concerned.
- c) Attain Digital Growth by enhancing their online presence and e-commerce capabilities to reach a global audience.
- d) Maximise their Customer Engagement by increasing customer loyalty and engagement using personalized services and community-building initiatives.

Objectives

Saraha women's wear's Uk objectives include:

1. Increasing Sales to achieve a 20% increase in revenues in the coming two years through market expansion and digital growth.
2. Implementing at least 2 new sustainable practices for example materials in the production process by end of next year.

Such elements put together provide guidance to Sahara Women's Wear to achieving the strategic vision and mission and stay true to its core values.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Regularly conducting a PESTLE analysis helps companies such as Sahara Women's wear UK are able to keep informed of the external factors which affect their business and therefore proactively deal with them.

3.1 PESTEL Analysis

Political

Because the UK has strict labour laws, and trade policies, as well as export/import duties. It is important to comply with the regulations to avoid legal issues as well as maintaining smooth operations (Reynolds, 2003). In addition, Brexit had a big impact the economy of UK. The trade agreements and tariffs that have been made have are affecting the import cost of materials and the cost of exporting final products. This affects pricing and profitability the Sahara women's wear (Chang, 2018).

Economic

The UK's economic stability has a big influence on the consumer's spending power. The economic downturns make people reduce their expenditure on the non-essential items such as fashion. Also, high inflation rates tend to increase the cost of buying raw materials and which affects production, and the profit margins. Whereas, the low inflation rate help to stabilize the costs and pricing of the finished products (Hantzsche et al., 2019).

Sociocultural

The UK's fashion market has a high demand for trendy, sustainable clothing, and therefore making sure that the company understands and adapts to these trends is very important for business success. There is an increasing interest in ethical, sustainable fashion. Consumers today increasingly search for brands aligning with such values (Beard, 2008).

Technological

Online shopping is constantly increasing which shows the number of business expansion opportunities. Therefore, making an investment in a secure online presence as well as digital marketing is very important. Advancement in sustainable and innovative materials can provide a more competitive edge. It is therefore important to keep up with the current technological advancements in terms of fabric and production methods (Jeansson et al., 2017).

Environmental

Currently, a lot of emphasis is placed on sustainability when it comes to manufacture and production in the fashion industry. Being able to implement an eco-friendly practice and through the use of sustainable materials enhances brand reputation. The climate change regulations are highly demanding for more sustainable practices which is impacting the production processes and sourcing of materials (Joy et al., 2012).

Legal

Protection of company designs and brand identity by means of trademarks and patents is very important in the prevention of brand dilution and counterfeiting. Also being able to comply with the current health and safety standards in production and retail environments is mandatory in order to avoid any possible legal penalties and ensuring workers' safety (Klieger, 1996).

3.2 SWOT Analysis



Janis and Zulkipli (2020)

The SWOT analysis below will enable businesses like Sahara Women's Wear in the identification of areas for improvement while capitalizing on opportunities and minimising the potential threats (Janis and Zulkipli, 2020).

Strengths

The strengths of Sahara women's wear UK include the following

Sahara Women's Wear bring to the industry a unique collection of women's wear, catering for the formal and casual wear, as well as accessories, setting it apart from their competitors.

The company is known employing high quality and craftsmanship which enhances both their brand reputation and customer loyalty.

Their strong brand identity has built a loyal customer base for them which has enabled them to establish a strong presence in the UK market. The company delivers an exceptional customer service, such as personalized styling advice and fitting sessions, enhancing the customer's shopping experience.

Weaknesses

The weakness of Sahara women's wear UK includes the following below.

In comparison with larger competitors, Sahara Women's Wear do not have a strong online presence.

The company provides premium pricing which limits their customer base to a small group of potential customers, a broader market and failing to serve the bigger market.

The company is currently facing challenges when it comes to management of the seasonal inventory to ensure a consistent supply of popular items.

Opportunities

The growing online shopping trends in the UK presents an opportunity for Sahara Women's wear to improve its digital marketing efforts and expanding their e-commerce capabilities.

With an increase in consumer demand for sustainable and ethical fashion manufactures an Sahara women's wear UK has the opportunity of showcasing eco-friendly practices and use of materials.

There is room for market expansion into newer markets and regions within the UK and globally.

Threats

There is a lot of economic uncertainty which is impacting the consumer spending on non-essential items such as fashion.

The UK fashion market has become very competitive, with several established and emerging brands fighting for the same market share.

There are so many disruptions in the supply chain, for example, delays or increased costs, which are affecting production and Sahara women's wear UK's inventory levels.

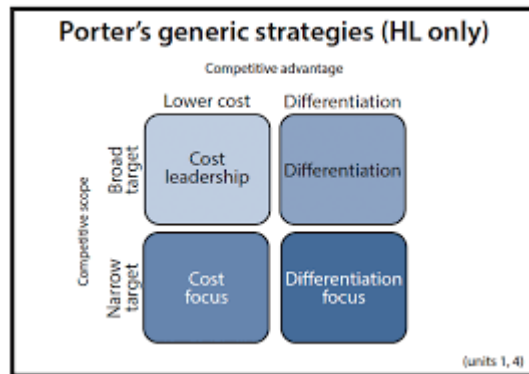
4. STRATEGIC GROWTH CHOICES AND NEW STRATEGY

Analysing strategic growth choices and new strategies is very important for companies like Sahara women's wear UK to optimize resources, remain competitive, make informed

decisions, build stakeholder confidence, achieve sustainable growth, and enhance adaptability and resilience as well as gain a competitive advantage (Kulshrestha and Puri, 2017).

4.1 GROWTH CHOICES

a) Porter's generic strategies



Akan et al. (2006).

Cost Leadership

Following Michael Porter's cost leadership strategy, Sahara Women's Wear should streamline its operations by reducing costs and to offer competitive pricing. This involves supply chain management optimization, to negotiate better deals with suppliers, and adopt efficient production techniques. Lowering these costs, enables Sahara to attract price-sensitive customers, increasing their market share.

Differentiation

By focusing on differentiation, Sahara emphasizes their unique selling points, for example premium quality, handcrafted products are made from sustainable materials. By focusing on exclusivity, the craftsmanship and ethical practices, Sahara women's wear UK can justify premium pricing, attracting consumer with attention to high quality and sustainability. Such strategy involves an investment in the marketing campaigns communicating the brand's unique value proposition.

Focus Strategy

Sahara women's wear needs to adopt a focus strategy which targets a particular market segment. This may involve it concentrating on eco-conscious consumers prioritizing sustainable fashion. Tailoring products and marketing efforts to such a segment enables Sahara women's wear UK in building a loyal base of customers and establishing itself as a market leader.

If Sahara women's wear UK chooses to focus on differentiation and sustainability, it will attract a more dedicated base of customers willing to pay a high price for high-quality, eco-friendly fashion. Such a strategy aligns with current market trends and helps in positioning the brand for long-term success (Iyer et al., 2019).

b) *Ansoff matrix*

		Products	
		Existing	New
Markets	Existing	Market Penetration	Product Development
	New	Market Development	Diversification

Dawes (2018).

Market Penetration

For Market penetration, Sahara Women's Wear should focus on the existing market by enhancing its marketing. This involves making promotions, offering loyalty programs, and advertising campaigns attracting more customers. In addition, Sahara Women's wear UK should improve its customer service and enhance the in-store and online shopping experience to retain existing and attract new customers.

Market Development

To expand into new geographical areas within the UK, Sahara Women's Wear needs to reach new customers. This involves opening new stores in untapped regions. It can also collaborate with international influencers and participate in global fashion events to boost brand its visibility, attracting a wider audience.

Product Development

Sahara Women's Wear should diversify its product line by adding accessories like bags, jewellery, scarves, complementing the existing clothing range. In addition, they should introduce a menswear line attracting a new customer segment and increasing overall sales. Developing seasonal collections and limited-edition items can also create excitement and drive sales.

Diversification

Sahara Women's wear UK should enter new markets or create new products different from the current offerings. For example, Sahara Women's Wear should consider exploring the home decor market where it can offer textiles and home accessories reflecting the unique design. They should also consider venturing into the wellness industry through a line of eco-friendly beauty and skincare products.

The strategic choice for Sahara women's wear UK in this case would be to focus on product development, attracting new customers, increasing sales, and strengthening its brand presence in the UK market (Hussain et al., 2013).

4.2. PROPOSED NEW STRATEGIES

The proposed strategy for Sahara Women's Wear below is based on the critical analysis above.

1. Strengthen Online Presence

Enhancing Sahara women's wear UK's E-commerce platform to enable user-friendly navigation, payment options that are secure, as well as efficient logistics. This way helps Sahara women's wear UK to reach a wider audience, increasing revenues.

Optimization of their digital marketing strategy, by utilizing SEO, social media, and email marketing to boost online visibility. Collaborate with influencers and fashion bloggers to enhance brand awareness.

2. Expanding the Market Reach

Sahara women's wear UK should consider penetrating new Markets by exploring opportunities of entering new regions within the UK. The company should use market research to identify the possibility of new markets tailoring their marketing strategies. The company should set up Pop-up Store as well as participating in fashion events to attract new customers.

3. Leverage Sustainability Trends

Ensure sustainable practices highlighting the use of eco-friendly materials with ethical production practices in their marketing campaigns. This attracts the environmentally conscious consumers. Making of sustainable collections by introducing a more dedicated line of fashion items that are sustainable conscious meeting the growing demand for eco-friendly products.

4. Enhance Customer Experience

Providing personalized services such as styling advice and tailoring the fitting sessions.

Implementation of the virtual styling sessions to serve the online shoppers.

Introduce customer loyalty programs rewarding the repeat customers and encouraging the brand loyalty.

5. Optimize Inventory Management

Sahara women's wear UK should invest in an Inventory Management System ensuring that there is a consistent supply of popular items and reducing of stockouts.

There should be some serious seasonal planning to have a better alignment with fashion trends as well as the consumer demand.

6. Mitigate Economic and Competitive Threats

Sahara women's wear UK should apply flexible pricing strategies like seasonal discounts and bundle offers attracting a wider customer base. It is important to ensure diversification of the product offerings at accommodate affordable options while maintaining the quality, for the different income segments.

7. Strengthen Supply Chain

Sahara women's wear UK should build stronger supplier relationships ensuring the timely delivery and negotiation of better terms. The company should invest in its risk management by developing a plan addressing all possible supply chain disruptions.

If Sahara women's wear UK implements this strategy, the company will be able to leverage its strengths, by addressing its weaknesses, capitalizing on opportunities, and mitigating threats, while positioning itself for sustainable growth in the dynamic competitive fashion market as suggested by (Ulza et al., 2017).

4.3. RATIONALE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The long-term sustainability of the proposed strategy for Sahara Women's Wear is based on the factors below:

a) Market Trends

The strategy like this can align with the growing online shopping and sustainability. And through the enhancement of e-commerce capabilities and promotion of eco-friendly practices, Sahara will be attracting a broader, environmentally conscious customer base.

b) Resource Availability

Sahara women's wear UK's investment in the advanced inventory management systems and strong supplier relationship building enables the consistent supply of high-quality materials, reducing stockouts and overstock risks, while optimizing use of resources and minimizing waste.

c) Competitive Landscape

Sahara's unique product range and strong brand identity provide a competitive edge within the highly competitive UK fashion industry. Expansion of the market reach while leveraging digital marketing, can increase brand visibility and capture new market segments for Sahara women's wear UK.

d) Organizational Capabilities

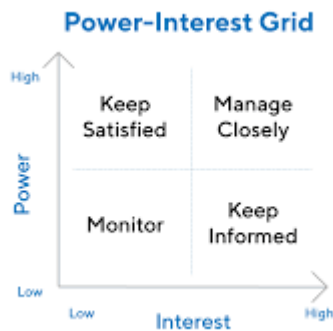
Sahara has strengths in quality craftsmanship, customer service, and brand loyalty can be leveraged in the strategy. This enhances personalized services and implements loyalty programs further strengthening customer relationships and driving repeat business.

e) Economic Resilience

Having that flexibility in pricing strategies and diversification of products will make Sahara more resilient to the fluctuating economic conditions, ensuring that the brand caters to diverse income segments. In a nutshell, such strategy can build on Sahara's existing strengths, address weaknesses, while capitalizing on opportunities, to ensure long-term sustainability and success in the competitive market of the fashion industry in UK (Zhang, 2023).

5. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Conducting a stakeholder analysis, help Sahara Women's Wear to gain a comprehensive understanding of the interests and influences that affect its business. Such analysis helps the company in making informed decisions, building strong relationships, and creating strategies that are aligned with stakeholder expectations, which in the end leads to sustainable growth in the competitive UK fashion market as suggested by Brugha and Varvasovszky, (2000).



Varvasovszky, (2000).

Stakeholder Analysis for Sahara Women's Wear in the UK

1. Customers

These expect a unique high-quality apparel with excellent customer service ensuring more sustainable and ethical fashion practices.

They are interested in trendy fashions as well as personalized shopping experiences giving them value for their money.

Customers directly influence sales and brand reputation by using their purchasing decisions and providing feedback on products and services.

2. Employees

As employees, they staff of Sahara women's wear UK are stake holders who expect job security, fair wages, professional development opportunities, in a positive work environment. Their basic interests include job satisfaction, career growth, as well as a good workplace culture. Their power as stake holder is rated at medium to high because of their impact on the customer service quality, operational efficiency, and the general brand image.

3. Suppliers

As stake holders, they expect timely payments, fair business practices and long-term partnerships. With this comes, consistent orders, reliable business relationships, alongside growth opportunities. Their power is rated medium because they mainly affect the inventory levels, product quality, and production timelines.

4. Investors

Investors expect a return on investment, financial transparency and business growth. Their interests' range between profitability, strategic direction and market expansion. Their power

is rated high because they provide the fund expansions and strategic initiatives and influence major business decisions.

5. *Government Agencies*

Government agencies are stake holders who expect Sahara women's wear UK to Comply with regulations, make the necessary tax contributions, and engage in ethical business practices. Their interests are mainly employment rates, economic growth, and industry standards. This give them a high power as they are capable of imposing regulations, penalties and taxes, which significantly impact Sahara Women's wear UK's operations.

6. *Local Community*

Local communities expect the company to engage in corporate social responsibility, create local employment opportunities, and make other community engagements. They are mainly interested in the economic development, environmental sustainability, and the company participating in social initiatives. They have medium power because they tend to influence the brand reputation, and which affects local market success whether they support or oppose the business.

Being able to understand and address the expectations and interests of these key stakeholders, will strategically align Sahara Women's Wear's operations and initiatives to enable growth, a positive brand reputation and sustainability, in the UK market suggested by Brugha and Varvasovszky, (2000).

6. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Sahara Women's wear UK is faced with several challenges for which the following strategic recommendation below are very important for their business sustainability and well as success.

6.1 strategic recommendations implementation Challenges

a) *Limited Resources*

As an SME Shara women's wear UK is faced with budget limitations, which makes it a challenge to invest in new technologies and conduct marketing campaigns. The other issue is a limitation in staffing which often leads to employee burnout and reduces efficiency which impacts the customer service quality.

b) *Lack of Expertise*

As an ordinary women's wear company in the UK, transitioning to a robust e-commerce platform proves to be challenging and later on being able to implement an advanced inventory management systems without the specialized knowledge within the organization. Moreover adaptation to sustainable materials and practices may require a good understanding of the new supply chains and methods of production outside the current expertise of the Sahara women's wear UK team.

c) Resistance to Change

Employees and management sometimes tend to resist a change in technologies, processes, or strategic direction, and prefer sticking to their familiar methods. On the other hand, Long-standing customers can also be hesitant in embracing the new shopping methods, like online purchasing.

d) Market Uncertainty

The market uncertainty is creating a lot of economic downturns impacting consumer spending and make it difficult for the company to predict sales as well as plan their inventory. In addition, the highly competitive UK fashion market need the company to constantly innovate and adapt to remain relevant.

6.2 Recommendations

The existing challenges need to be addressed in order to ensure that Sahara women's wear UK as a company maintains its relevance in the industry. There are several ways of doing this, some of which are included below.

a) Addressing Limited Resources

The company should implement the strategy in phases spreading out costs. Prioritizing high-impact areas like enhancing the e-commerce platform as well as the digital marketing efforts initially. At the same time the company should explore options for funding options such as small business loans, to acquire the necessary capital to implement the strategic initiatives. On the other hand the company should outsource certain functions, like the digital marketing to specialized firms to get access to the necessary expertise without full-time hires.

b) Building Expertise

Sahara Women's wear UK should consider investing in training programs which involve the upskilling of existing employees in programs like digital marketing courses, sustainability practices and e-commerce management. In addition the company should consider recruiting specialists in their core areas like sustainability and digital transformation. Such experts should lead initiatives as well as training of other team members. Moreover partnerships with consultants who have with expertise in areas where the company has limited knowledge would provide support and guidance in the implementation phase.

c) Overcoming Resistance to Change

Sahara Women's wear UK should consider implementing a change management plan that clearly communicates the benefits of applying the new strategy, training and support for employees in the transition. Moreover, Sahara Women's wear UK need to start involving employees in the planning and implementation process. This will increase buy-in as well as reduce resistance as they feel valued and heard.

Education of customers on Sahara Women's wear UK's new services and shopping methods using targeted marketing, tutorials, campaigns as well as customer support highlighting the benefits as well as ease of use to boost adoption.

d) Navigating Market Uncertainty

Sahara Women's wear UK should focus on developing more flexible business plans making them capable of adapting to the changing market conditions. This would include making contingency plans for handling economic downturns or disruptions in the supply chain.

Sahara Women's wear UK should engage in conducting regular market research for purposes of staying informed about customer preferences, industry trends, and competitor activities. Such information guides the company's strategic adjustments. By continuously innovating and differentiating the brand to stay ahead of competitors Sahara Women's wear UK should introduce new product lines with unique marketing campaigns.

e) Enhancing Communication with Stakeholders

Sahara Women's wear UK needs to Maintain open and transparent communication with all its stakeholders, such as employees, suppliers, customers, and investors. Regularly updating these strategic initiatives and progress will build trust and support. The company needs to maintain feedback mechanisms to gather input from stakeholders. Such employee customer feedback forms, surveys, and supplier meetings provide this feedback to make informed decisions and adjustments. Sahara Women's wear UK needs to actively engage stakeholders in the strategic process.

f) Investing in Technology

Sahara Women's wear UK need to start investing in a secure, user-friendly, and scalable e-commerce platform. Ensuring its integration with inventory management systems and provision of a seamless shopping experience. Implementation of an advanced inventory management systems optimizing stock levels, reducing waste, and improving supply chain efficiency. Sahara Women's wear UK should use CRM systems in the management of customer interactions, personalization of marketing efforts, and enhancement of customer service.

To implement the proposed strategy for Sahara Women's Wear UK, the company must navigate many challenges, such as limited resources, limited expertise, resistance to change, as well as market uncertainty. Addressing such challenges using a phased investments, expertise building, effective change management, remaining adaptable, communication enhancement, and technology enhancements, will enable the company (Sahara women's wear UK) to successfully implement its desired strategic direction. Such an approach is important in positioning the brand for increased market share, sustainable growth, as well as long-term success in the dynamic UK fashion market as per Claxton, S. and Kent (2020)'s suggestion.

7. CONCLUSION

Inclusion, Strategic management is a key process in defining and implementing plans that enable the organization to achieve its long-term goals and objectives. This involves objectives setting, environmental analysis, strategies formulation, implementing plans, and progress monitoring. For an SME like Sahara Women's Wear, strategic management is key in the ability gaining a competitive advantage, effective resources management, and adaptation to changes in the market conditions.

Sahara Women's Wear's strategic direction would best be guided by its vision to become the leading women's fashion brand in the UK , in terms of quality, sustainability, as well as creativity. Sahara Women's Wear 's mission, values, goals, and objectives offer a more a clear framework in guiding its strategic initiatives.

However environmental analysis is very important in highlighting the external factors affecting the business. Conducting a PESTEL analysis, Sahara Women's Wear helps them identification of opportunities as well as threats in the political, economic, sociocultural, technological, environmental, and legal aspects of the company. A SWOT analysis was used in the evaluation of the company's internal strengths and weaknesses and identification of potential areas for improvement.

Strategic growth choices for SMEs including market development, and penetration, as well as product development, and diversification. Sahara Women's Wear could possibly explore such options to expand its market reach product offerings as well.

Stakeholder analysis remains a very important tool in highlighting the expectations and interests of various stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, employees, investors, government agencies, as well as the local community where Sahara Women's wear UK is concerned. Addressing such needs and concerns, will enable Sahara Women's Wear to create positive relationships and trust building.

Implementation of the strategic recommendations necessitates overcoming challenges such as lack of expertise, limited resources, resistance to change, as well as market uncertainty. Addressing such challenges using targeted strategies, can help the company to successfully implement the set strategic direction.

In conclusion strategic management remains a very important component of Sahara Women's Wear's success. Careful analysis of its environment, formulation of a sustainable strategy, being able to address stakeholder concerns, as well as overcome implementation challenges, can enable the company attain its long-term goals, establishing itself as one of key players in the fashion industry in the UK.

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