OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS IN FOREST FRUIT TRADE

OPORTUNITĂȚI ŞI AMENINȚĂRI ÎN COMERȚUL CU FRUCTE DE PĂDURE

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Abstract: *The present paper aims to present the opportunities and threats in forest fruit trade based on the analysis of marketing environment and on a research conducted in Cluj Napoca. The results of the study could be used by investors in developing their businesses with forest fruits.*

Key words: *forest fruits, marketing environment, consumers*

INTRODUCTION

Forest fruit rely on forest for their production, although on the market are present cultivated forms too characterized by a more commercial aspect and higher yields on surface.

In the EU the trend for berries consumption is increasing because people became more aware about healthy eating and about the beneficial proprieties of berries [3]. Also it was observed that the best opportunity to market the berries is off-season [3].

Romania is well-known abroad for the large variety of traded forest fruit. Each year high quantities of fresh, refrigerated, or frozen forest fruit are exported [7]. However these exports are row material exports with no value added. Consequently to the massive export, the quantities sold in Romania for fresh consumption or for processing are very small.

Therefore an analysis of opportunities and threats in this sector is needed to try to find out why the Romanian market is not attractive for sellers.

Consequently the aim of the paper is to realize a short analysis of the external environment of the wild forest fruits business in Romania.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For every business it is important to know the market opportunities and to determine future threats.

To determine the opportunities and threats of forest fruits trade a short analysis of marketing environment was applied. The opportunities and threats are external factors of an economic entity.

The external analysis is defined as the process of scanning and evaluating an organization's various external sectors impacting on performance [1].

The marketing environment is structured in the micro-environment and the macro-environment.

The microenvironment comprises the company's suppliers, customers, marketing intermediaries and competitors. The marketing macro-environment is made up of factors that affect demand for a company's goods and company's activity. These forces are common and influence all the actors on the market and include politics, economics, demographics, nature, technology, and culture.

In addition urban consumer opinions were analyzed using results of a PhD thesis [4] conducted in Cluj Napoca city during 2008-2010. Data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0 and MS Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The main features of the macro-environment of a Romanian company trading forest fruits are characterized in the following paragraphs.

Political factors:

- According to the law in Romania the forest products wood and non-wood are the property of the forest owner and the gatherers of non-wood forest products (fruits, plants etc.) need approval for gathering [6].

- Investors can access EU funds to increase the added value for agricultural and forest products
- Non-wood forest products (especially fruits, mushrooms, medicinal and aromatic plants) are secondary forest products and at national level forests owners not give much importance to them when about planning. These products are rarely mentioned in rapports and plans. These can be observed

Economical factors

- 68% of the forestry fund is in state property while 32% is private [8]
- Romania is confronting the economical crisis
- Salaries are among the lowest in EU
- Prices have an increasing trend
- Unemployment rate is increasing

Socio-cultural factors

- The price is the most important criterion for selection of food for over 75% of Romanian because of low purchasing power and lack of education in terms of shopping [2].

Demographical factors

- In 2010 48.7% of population were male and 51.3 female, while 55.1% of population lives in urban and 44.9% in rural area [5]
- Population is decreasing and aging

Technology

- Forest fruit are gathered manually and are carried in stores where are frozen or refrigerated.
- However where the stores are missing the forest berries are exported fresh.

Nature

- Forestry fund represent 27.2% form country's surface, from which 97.5% are forests [8]
- In Romanian forests there are large variety of forest fruits and in high quantities
- Generally Romanian forests are not chemically treated against diseases and pests and could easy receive the sustainable certification
- Yields depend on weather

As about the micro-environment the main characteristics are presented in the following.

Suppliers

- The forests from where the forest fruits are gathered are mainly state properties.
- Wild fruit is gathered with help from seasonal workers which are paid per kilogram of fruit picked

Customers

According to a study in 2009 on urban consumers of forest fruits, there is interest and demand for these fresh fruits [4].

Urban consumers prefer to consume forest fruits fresh, and the most consumed forest fruit is raspberry. Raspberries seem to be the most imported in The Netherlands too [3].

Urban consumers consider about forest fruit that are safe, good for health, have good taste and are ecological.

The main barrier in consumption is the seasonality. The wild forest fruits cannot be found all year round on the market. However in the last years in the supermarkets can be found local and imported cultivated berries, however high prices and also off-season.

The customers prefer to find forest products packaged in plastic.

And an interesting finding is that almost half of the respondents said that they go to pick non-wood forest products (fruit, mushrooms, medicinal plants) for personal use.

Intermediaries

- The forest owners sell the berries to national or foreign companies which resell the products or process them.
- Foreign owners pay better and local companies are less interested.

Competitors

- As it was mentioned earlier the biggest forest owner in Romania is the Romanian state
- Cultivated berries from Romania exist on market with higher price
- Imported fresh berries exist on market usually off-season

CONCLUSIONS

Even if the economical factors are not the most favorable for trade in this moment, the opportunities on the market of forest fruits exist.

The biggest forest owner in Romania is the Romanian state. The forests are rich in wild berries such as quantity, quality and variety. The wild berries could easy increase their economical value on the market if the forests receive the sustainable certification. On the other hand this will lead maybe to a decrease in demand on the Romanian market.

Romanian urban consumers have o good opinion about forest fruits and are interested to buy.

The biggest threats come from economical situation, technology lack, and environment. Also the imported products especially off-season are not neglected.

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