

DATE-BIX - A SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC
OPPORTUNITY FOR SANITARIUM HEALTH
FOOD COMPANY

Group: VIAR

SAMPLE

Executive Summary

Date-bix, a harmonic combination between Australian cereal and Saudi Arabia dates, will become a thoroughly new creation in Sanitarium's product system. The main purpose of this report is analyzing and demonstrating the potential consumption of Date-bix in Australia market. With the core competency, including a long time prestige and numerous loyal customers, Date-bix will soon be warmly welcome in the food market.

By researching the internal and external elements through analyzing value chain, performance and portfolio, utilizing the Five forced model of Michael Porter and Balance Score card in each part, this project would like to emphasize and affirm the demand of customers in this segment as well as potential market share of Date-bix.

The major findings in this report indicated that Date-bix might become a key product of Sanitarium in the next period due to a huge and potential Australia market and in long-term, Date-bix might be exported and grow to be a popular breakfast cereal product in Saudi Arabia, a place with many kinds of high quality dates. This is a positive opportunity for Sanitarium to get more market share and enlarge the scale of company.

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1. Back ground and idea identification

The Sanitarium Health Food Company began in 1898 with the vision to help people 'learn to stay well'. Our mission is to 'inspire and resource our community to experience happy, healthy lives' (Sanitarium website 2010, 1). Sanitarium has been committed to its mission for over 100 years and it remains the reason that it exists today. Sanitarium has educated people about healthy lifestyle and food. Sanitarium considers two goals in its activities: to provide healthy food that improves the community's health and to offer product information that is easy to understand. One healthy food addition that Sanitarium can add to its existing products is Dates to Weet-Bix which is so-called Date-Bix to be healthier for people, because it contains many of the vitamins and minerals necessary for good health. Dates contain seven vitamins and eleven minerals whose importance as a dietary supplement is appreciated by people. Moreover, benefits of eating Dates with milk include getting your daily required dairy intake (Kasapis, unknown). This new product can help this company develop healthy food products. This report is going to explore the potential to start up a new product that contains Date fruits and will determine if Dates are healthier and give people more happiness in their products. In addition, this report also will analyse the resource audit, value chain, core competencies, performance and portfolio of Sanitarium in terms of internal and external environment.

2. Resource Audit

The resources of Sanitarium come from raw materials that are not genetically modified (GM) crops. People believe that non GM foods are not found in Sanitarium products. The most important resource that Sanitarium has is the full equipment necessary to produce a new product called Date-Bix (Sanitarium Health report, 2010).

There are tangible resources that are available in Sanitarium:

1. Whole grains crops.
2. Factory for product production.
3. Dates that can be offered by its suppliers and are available in Australia
4. Company can generate financial resources from internal funds. Therefore, Sanitarium can add a new product, Date-Bix, which will contribute to their financial statement.

According to Kaplan and Norton (1996) the goal of the balanced score card (BSC) is to describe results and targets. The BSC will be used to develop strategic management processes and Sanitarium will gain feedback about the results of a differentiation strategy. BSC provides that strategic management should focus on the financial, customer, business processes and learning and growth to create their vision and strategy for the future (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). Sanitarium is considered as one of the biggest and fastest growing companies in the country. Sanitarium Health Food Company, which belongs to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has revenues exceeding \$275 million” per year (Adele Ferguson, 2006). Therefore, the BSC approach tells us that Sanitarium should take into account the financial position when setting out its future strategy.

2.1. Value of branch and its position

Value is a belief that is some prefer some products, while others prefer the opposite (Solomon, Dann & Russel, 2007). Since Australia imports over 5,000 tonnes of Dates per year (Gurra Downs website, 2010), it can be assumed that Australians like Dates. The resources inputs of Sanitarium require whole grains crops. The whole grains provide about 70% of vitamins in Weet-Bix, however Dates can provide more vitamins and minerals than presently offered. These mixed materials grant more benefits for people who are seeking healthy food options (Kasapis, 2010). Thus, education on the value of this new products nutritional value should be undertaken by Sanitarium. This product will be of greater value in the community whose concerns about healthy food are:

- Older people are about 13% of population. Most of them are concerned about healthy food so we can consider this value from people in Australia. Australian people believe that healthy food is important thing to keep you healthy (ABS website, 2010)
- Pregnant women: it is preferable when women are having a baby because Dates make the process of birth much easier *as Mary is mentioned in Quran “and the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said, “Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten.” (Quran, 2010,19/23)*
- Children and teens: this product can assist children to reduce eating negative sweets and it can provide children necessary energy. This energy can be put into reserve for use when body needs it because it contains brown sugar (70%) and it has small

amount of fat. Moreover, it consists of dietary fibre polysaccharides such as cellulose and pectin (Kasips, 2010). Thus this new formula with Dates can provide the necessary energy, vitamins and minerals for growing children's needs.

2.2. Value perception

Perception is the process by feeling the quality of sights and smells (Solomon, Dann & Russel, 2007). Value is measured by a product's performance characteristic of Sanitarium and by its attributes which customers of Sanitarium are willing to pay (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2009). For examples, customers of Sanitarium may pay more for having Date-Bix because its value-priced based on having higher quality with wellbeing ingredients.

In addition, as Sanitarium is the leader in the health food industry and a responsible of that Sanitarium remove any artificial colures to its product as responses to its customers concerns about healthy lives (Sanitarium website, 2010). Moreover, Australian community is Christian and Sanitarium is established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is non profit organization and managed under Christian people that trusted brand for Australian people. Sanitarium Company has to keep its customers under perception of healthy food such as:

- Rewarding customers such as cricket town (Weet-Bix).
- Involving community.
- Providing nutrition's food as trustworthy company (Sanitarium health food report, 2007). Thus, the values the customers get from having Weet-Bix a product and costs of obtain the product. For example, Sanitarium customers get a number of benefits such as:
 - Healthy food.
 - Not using GM food.
 - Non artificial colour preservatives.
 - High in quality.
 - High in vitamins and minerals.

(Sanitarium website. 2010).(Kotler, 2009).

3. Value chain analysis

In order to earn above- average returns and gain competitive advantages, it is necessary to understand the part of operations that create value. Date-Bix, which is considered as a

differentiated breakfast cereal products, creates value in both primary and support activities in value chain.

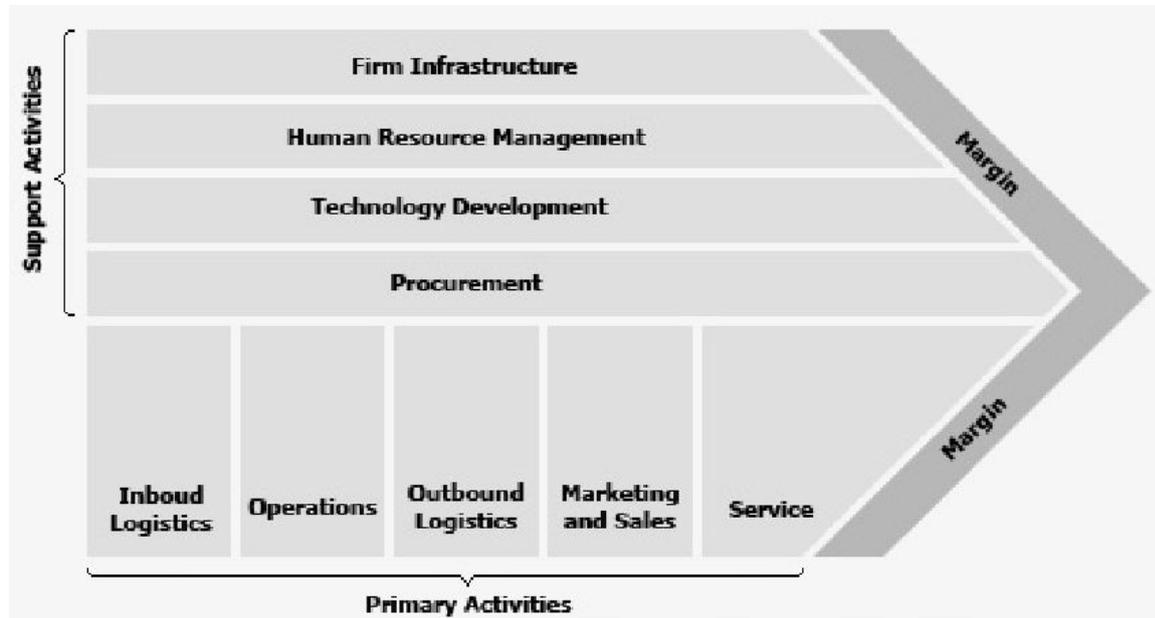


Figure 1. The basic value chain. Source: Hitt et al (2008), *Strategic Management*, 8th Edition, South Western, p. 85

3.1. Value creating in primary activities

Primary activities include a product's physical creation, its sale and distribution to buyers, and its service after sale (Hitt et al, 2008). In term of inbound and logistics, date is raw material which has value-added. Date-Bix has very few and mostly very nutritional ingredients including whole grain, raw sugar, salt, barley malt extract, minerals (zinc gluconate, iron) and date. Date is imported by Al Madina Munawarah Dates Co. (Tomoor), one of the Leading Saudi Companies, specialized in Manufacturing and Exporting Saudi Dates. This guarantees the quality of date, however, Sanitarium has superior handling of dates as well in order to minimize the damage due to transportation and to improve the quality of date.

Distribution of Date-Bix in outbound logistics is conducted by current cooperative convenient stores and supermarkets channels. However, as date is a favourite fruit of Asia and Middle East countries such as India, Saudi Arabica, China and Vietnam, the places where these communities live in should be considered as strategic markets. Therefore, it is worth

considering a wide range of Indian, Saudi Arabian or Chinese retail shops network to distribute.

Marketing and sales activities related to differentiation strategy have extensive personal relationships with buyers (Michael E. Porter, 1985). As date forms a new flavour for morning cereal product, a market survey is extremely necessary to understand the taste and need of Australian customers. Besides, to effectively market and sell products, Sanitarium can develop advertising and promotion campaigns about Date-bix and the benefits of date to people's health. Services after sales to support customers are also considerably performed to enhance or maintain product's value.

3.2. Value creating in support activities

Support activities supply the necessary assistance for the primary activities to take place including the infrastructure of the firm, human resource management, technology development and procurement (Figure 1). In fact, there are many types of dates such as Perny dates, Anbarah dates, Rashodiah dates (Tomoor, 2009); however, it is suggested that the date put in Date-Bix is low at calories and sugar. Procurement activities assist the company to find the highest quality of materials.

As this is a start-up project for a new product, it is necessary to build up a new division which is in charge of products' research and development. The main task is calculating the suitable proportion of dates in cereal biscuit so as to form a healthy and tasty food. The company can also invest in technologies that effectively mix-up date and cereal as well as put some more four B vitamins and iron into the biscuit.

In term of human resource management, a new market development division should be founded to enforce activities involved with superior personnel training and favoured compensation programs so as to encourage worker creativity and productivity. Moreover, the firm infrastructure is developed to understand customers' purchasing preferences and emphasis on the importance of producing high quality Date-Bix product.

4. Core competencies

4.1. Capabilities

Sanitarium is considered as a leader in the health food industry. Because they do research and development of their capabilities, they can generate a new product that meets its customer's demands. "Sanitarium development and innovation (SDI) provides professional, scientific and engineering support in a variety of ways including: packaging specification, product analysis and machine engineering" (Sanitarium website, 2010; Prahalad, 1993; Violina, Rindova and Fombrun, 1999).

Capabilities of any company have been evolving since entering the market and we can add Dates to Weet-Bix Bites to provide more product offerings (Sanitarium website, 2010). Sanitarium has **more** experiences and superior reputation about producing health food as compared to its competitors. The main competitor is Uncle Toby's Vita Bits, and it competes with Sanitarium in this position because Uncle Tobys Vita Bits product includes:

- 99% wholegrain
- No added sugar
- High in fibre
- Low in fat (Uncle Tobys website, 2010)

Therefore, Sanitarium can compete with this company on healthy food products as it has kept its position as a market leader for more than 35 years (Sanitarium website, 2010). We should consider a new product Date-Bix as an aggressive competitor against uncle Toby's because the Date contains:

- High in fibre
- Richness in natural sugar thereby eliminating the raw sugars that aren't as healthy
- Vitamins and minerals
- Easy to digest and provides a lot of energy

4.2.Value-creating competencies

Date-Bix is providing healthy food by not using GM food which can be considered a competitive advantage that can be compete versus its competitors such as Kellogg's and Uncle Tobys. Date-Bix competes as a high-value quality product, whereas Kellogg's derives its profits from cost cutting measures such as buying cheap inputs. Furthermore, Sanitarium

provides what is preferable to customers in health food thus adding value to the Sanitarium products. Thus, according to the five forces model that shape industry competition, in the short-term there is no threat of substitute products for the proposed Sanitarium **Weet-Bix Date Bites** (Solomon, Dann & Russel, 2007).

Core competencies can create a distinction between Sanitarium and its competitors by reflecting its capabilities and personality in the market. Moreover, core competencies in Sanitarium will emerge effectively and efficiently if they implement innovation strategies such as leveraging their core competence by creating a new product like **Weet-Bix Date Bites** (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2009). We can reposition **Weet-Bix Date Bites** as leader in market share. Sanitarium has many healthy food options such as soy milk, rice milk and many kinds of Weet Bix such as Weet Bix kids, Hi-Bran, organic, multigrain Weet, honey Bites and the proposed new product, Date Bites (Sanitarium website, 2010).

4.3. Competitive advantage.

According to Violina, Rindova and Fombrun (1999) who do research on non profit organizations, providing healthy food can create a position as a leader in the health food industry and thus form a competitive advantage to community. In other words, it is difficult for competitors to imitate Sanitarium. Sanitarium has valuable raw materials and organic date production, which is rare and costly to replicate. Moreover, Sanitarium has capabilities to provide these competitive advantages to its customers. Thus, competitive advantage depends not only on resources, but also the ability to use their competitive advantage (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2009).

We can accomplish a differentiation strategy for this product, Date-Bix to obtain a competitive advantage. Sanitarium can produce products such as Date-Bix that customers perceive as different in ways that are important to them. We use a differentiation strategy to target customers whose values for a Sanitarium style Date-bix products differ from other competitor products. In addition, quality Dates require a high cost that we are able to import from Saudi Arabia, and thus it would be a differentiated product versus competitors. Sanitarium can build competitive advantage according to four criteria (Solomon, Dann & Russel, 2007):

- ◆ Valuable capabilities: Sanitarium may take this opportunity in its external environment as Dates have benefits such as fighting cancer diseases effectively and efficiently and provides children with good energy and for all members as mentioned above.
- ◆ Rare capabilities: *it is seen that Sanitarium has faith about health food for people, because this faith came from the church and so, Sanitarium's competitors are unlikely to have these valuable capabilities* (Sanitarium website, 2010).
- ◆ Costly to imitate: competitors such as Kellogg's does not use good resources in their products as there are many complains about problems in its products (Russell, 2010). Sanitarium has the ability to penetrate this market as a leader in providing healthy food and to expand its market share and its reputation for excellence with brand image in healthy food (Randall, Schuler, Susan, Jackson, 2007). It is predicted that Sanitarium can get more advantage by producing a new product that may diminish the market leader in cereal products, Kellogg's. In addition, Sanitarium has a great, unique and valuable culture and brand name that was created by the perception of its parent company, Seventh-Day Adventist Church's trustworthy activities in the community such as donations for poor people and providing services for the community (Sanitarium website, 2010).
- ◆ It is considered that non substitutable capabilities do not have strategic comparability. Date Bites may obtain a sustainable competitive advantage by fulfilling the four criteria.

5. Performance analysis

This part gives measurement methods for analysing the performance of strategic implementing process. It provides decision – makers with the right information about the current position of the implementing plan. Performance analysis, in this strategic plan, was designed composing of two basic steps: the review step which gives a static picture of the position of the company, and the measuring step in which the key measuring factors based on the open balance score card model indicated in the book of Haines (2000) (see Fig.2) would be used.

5.1. Review

5.1.1. Mission statement

The vision and mission statement is very important to a company success. An effective mission statement is concise, to – the – point, realistic, operational, informative and even emotional (Watson D and Smith H, 2009). The mission of Sanitarium, as implied on the official websites, is to help customer enjoy more energy and vitality, as reflected in its core philosophy, which is “a better life through better nutrition”. In each step of implementing the strategic plan, the company compares its current position with its mission statement at the very beginning of the implementing step. Any adjustment if necessary would be applied in order to keep its actions on the right track.

5.1.2. Annual planning

Timing and situational factors have considerable effects in every plan. Each year there might be at least once for the total plan to be re-considered.

5.1.3. Forecasts

The review step, in order to provide a clearest picture of the strategic status, might include market forecasts and recently trends in customer behaviour. This might contribute valuable information for the company in order to consider the next step. For instances, in June 1996, Sanitarium market shares increased from 15% to 70% due to valuable information about the peanut-butter market and instant action of conducting of several advertising campaign at the right time proved to be effective (Clereen et al, 2009).

5.2. Measuring/ Assessment

5.2.1. Current state assessment

Current state assessment includes the assessments below:

- Assessment of customer satisfaction: can be conducted by survey to get the percentage on major customer lost/ acquired.
- Assessment of employee satisfaction: Sanitarium will develop and implement annual surveys for its employees. This is a chance for collecting employee’s ideas and feedbacks and help improving the relationship within manager board/ supervisors and employees.
- Assessment of financial results and operational results: Financial results include revenues, profits, budget etc; information could be acquired through the final financial statement of Sanitarium. In the financial statement there is also the information for operational results,

which could be measured by gross sale margin, profit margin. Another operational result is the number of increased stores and sales per stores.

5.2.2. Key success for measurement of goals

The reason for implementing a balance Scorecard is to help the strategic aligning between the current status and the scopes/ aims of the company's diversified plan. It improves performance by measurable objectives, and helps prioritize projects or initiatives. This model would be used in the current state assessment step in other to give a statistical view of the current position of the company. This was reflected in 3 primary factors:

- Key operational indicators such as sales per year, sales ratios etc
- Customer satisfaction: results for measurement could be collected by conducting small in-store surveys
- Financial viability (cash flow statement, bank accounts, credits)

If necessary other factors depend on the situational variables and timing as found in the annual planning step might be taken into consideration for better measurement.

In addition, measuring scale in this plan might include quality, quantity, time and cost for variables. Although the more scales can be applied the more accurate is the measurement, it is not necessary for a variable to be measured by all the four scales. For example, financial viability factors such as sales might be measured in quantity (the number of products), time (in a period) and cost (cost to complete and sale).

Quality variable is more difficult for measurement but it is very important. As indicated by Porter (1987, p.25), although the common practice in strategic planning is to use market share to describe a business unit's competitive position, the goal that all their business units should be leaders in their industries might be dangerous due to deceptive meanings. The most vital point of industry leadership is more likely to be developed from the core competitive advantages of the firm which originated in the quality of the firm's products.

Quality scale, in general, might be measured in variables other than financial viability and Date-bix will be produced by the modern technology to bring the best products to customers.

6. Portfolio Analysis

6.1.Objectives

6.1.1. Short term objectives:

To complement the product portfolio, Sanitarium has decided to launch a new product, a total new “creation” made from cereals and Arab Saudi dates, called “Date-bix”. In short-term, by huge promotion campaigns and the trust of loyal customers, Date-bix will become the main and key product of Sanitarium Company, which differentiates with old products. Moreover, this product might develop into a core competency of Sanitarium, so as to compete with other competitors in the same industry.

6.1.2. Long term objectives:

As a prestigious healthy food company, Sanitarium intends to utilize this new product to get more market share in Australia, a fastidious but abundant market. Besides, like other highly appreciated Weet-bix products, Date-bix might be exported to other Europe countries, where cereal is considered as one of main foods for breakfast.

Also, Sanitarium Company will choose Toomor as their partner in Arab Saudi, supplying all kinds of high quality dates to manufacture and develop this new product in Australia. However, in a long term vision, Sanitarium proposes to operate a factory in Arab Saudi to reduce cost of transportation and create a new market here. After an operation year, it is essential for Sanitarium to create and develop another date product in nutrition food portfolio besides Date-bix, for the purpose of differentiating date products.

6.2.Strategic Business Units:

6.2.1. Relative brand and distribution strength:

There are many healthy food brand names in Australia, such as Abe’s Real Food Company, Alfa, Amazin Raisin, Aussie Health Snax Pty Ltd. Most companies like Aussie Health Snax Pty Ltd or Food & Nutrition Australia have focused on nut and fruit foods. However, the most powerful competitor of Sanitarium Company is Kellogg, whose products are frequently arranged nearby Weet-bix in supermarkets or convenient stores. Kellogg Company is the world’s leading producer of cereal and a leading producer of convenience foods, including cookies, crackers, toaster pastries, cereal bar etc. and veggie foods (Kellogg’s website.2010). However, by the strategy of differentiation at first, then using cost leader ship in the next step, Sanitarium is able to compete with Kellogg at Australian market.

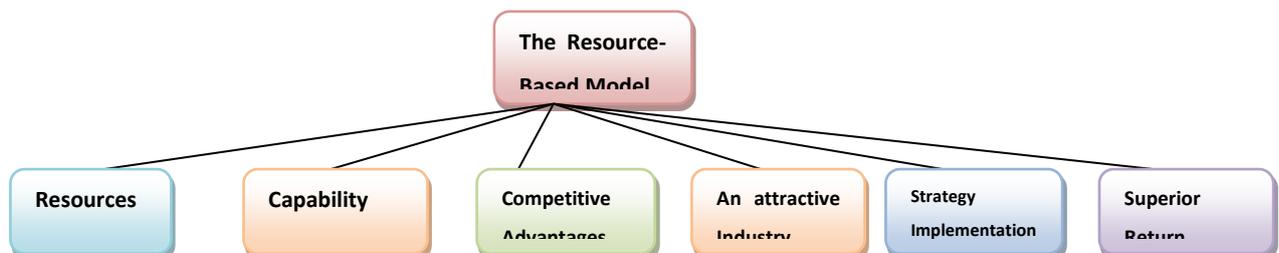
Similar to other healthy food companies in Australia, the major distribution channel of Date-bix is retail in supermarket and convenient stores. There are two main reasons for this strategy. Firstly, the Australian customer behavior is buying stuffs and food in popular supermarkets like Coles, Woolworth or Safeway, thus, Weet-bix might become one of their choices when go shopping. Secondly, the convenient store chains in Australia have rapidly grown, including faraway places or inside the cities. Every petrol station has a store like Coles, 7-Eleven or Safeway. Therefore, Date-bix might straightforwardly come to customer’s hand.

6.2.2. Loyalties of customers:

Due to high quality products since Sanitarium was initially established, majority of Weet-bix products have magnetized a huge number of customers. In its long term strategy, Sanitarium also focuses on children and their parents, who have become the loyal customers of Weet-bix. To implement this goal, Sanitarium has a Good star breakfast club, involved by Australian Red Across, has attracted a large number of children (2008 Community Care report of Sanitarium, Sanitarium website 2010). Moreover, according to recent researches, the more overweight people might be, the more they improving their diets (12 million Australians actively improving their diets, Nutrition Week 14-20 October, Sanitarium website 2010). A variety of Weet-bix products could be the most optimal choice for them and obese community will be Sanitarium’s potential customers.

By using Resource-based model, Sanitarium has used its resources and capabilities in creating and maintaining a good relationship with customers.

Figure 2: The Resources- Based Model of Above-Average Returns



Source: Adapt the resource based model in Strategic Management: competitiveness and globalization, 6th Edition, by Hitt, Ireland, Hoskission.

Weet-bix has gained a trust among customers for a long time through its high quality products and acceptable price. Moreover, with the Date-bix and its promotion campaigns, Sanitarium might achieve a competitive advantage among competitors.

6.3.3. Relative cost position (RCP):

RCP Analysis is “a method for estimating the full cost of a company’s product relative to that of its competitors” (Michael E. Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, The Free Press, 1980, New York, 10022). By indentifying and improving the competitive advantages, Sanitarium’s new product may attract more customers and able to compete with other competitors in Australia market. Besides, with Toomor, a largest date supplier in Arab Saudi, date in Date-bix is diversified and the quality could be guaranteed. This is a key core competency of Sanitarium.

6.3.4. Records of technological innovations:

“Sanitarium has always led the market with innovation through technology,” says David Williamson, the company’s IT Systems Manager. (ComOps supplies answer to a Berri complex problem, from ComOps website 2010). According to Saurin Enterprise, a prestigious technology in Australia, breakfast cereals in Sanitarium have always been produced on ovens that are expensive and inefficient (Brochures of Saurin Enterprises from Saurin’s website 2010).

7. Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the strategic plan, which aims at differentiating the products of Sanitarium, not only seeks for more opportunities to increase market shares and the numbers of customers in Australia market but also enhances the domestic market and customers’ belief in Sanitarium. In those times of crisis, it could be seen that the most vital factor for many companies might be to keep customer’s belief in the brands by improving the quality of their products, and to enhance their position in domestic market. As explained in the background and idea identification part, the overall downward trend of the economy gave certain limitation to the companies’ effort to seek for opportunities for expanding. The plan, therefore, focused on improving the companies’ capabilities rather than extending market shares, giving more attention to the internal environment rather than the external environment.

As a matter of facts, however, in the future it was recommended that when there are enough conditions for expanding, Sanitarium could export their products to Saudi Arabia as a result of growing market demands. Moreover, because date is a popular and favourite ingredient in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Arabian market turns to become a prominent market, giving the company more opportunities for growing.

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8. Appendix

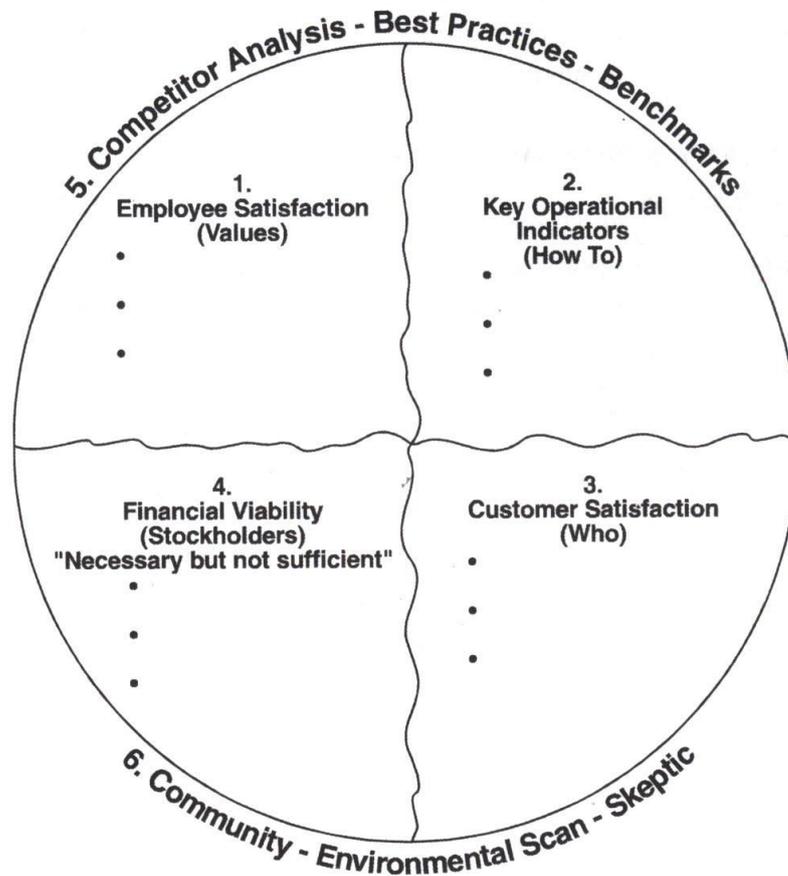


FIGURE 8.1 Holistic view — key success factors.

Appendix 2: The open balance scorecard,

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