Walker-Winkle Mills, Ltd.

# Summary

Valerie Boudreau is the marketing manager of Walker-Winkle Mills, a subsidiary of a large U.S. based consumer packaged Food Company headquartered in Toronto. For the past four years as marketing manager the company’s sales have grown, and the company’s market share has increased regularly in each of the product categories in which it competes. There is much brand preference due to their high quality products, which include cake mixes, puddings, pie fillings, prepared foods, and frozen dinners. Every year for the past five years the company introduces at least six new products.

Even though Walker-Winkle Mills has experienced consistent increase in sales, the Quebec market’s total sales growth has fallen behind the past two years. Therefore, Valerie is being urged to accept the creation of a separate marketing plan for Quebec. To discuss developments in local markets, Valerie meets with her product managers on a monthly basis to better coordinate all phases of the business. One of the product managers, Jackie Provence, has shown her concern for the company’s performance in the Quebec market. Although the rise in inflation and threat of job losses seems to be the main causes for most people, Jackie believes it is due to the company’s lack of knowledge in the Quebec market. She insists that there is inadequate managerial time and money being dedicated to the market, largely due to the company’s movement towards having one global strategy. Jackie strongly believes that an improper marketing plan is responsible for the decline in sales for the Quebec market, and that the company should reevaluate their marketing approach. With Quebec having a majority of French-speaking people, she suggests a separate plan that would better suit their differences in brand attitudes, lifestyles, and usage rates. She emphasizes the need for a different brand image in order to slow down and eventually stop the decline in sales for the French market.

1. Evaluate Walker-Winkle Mills, Ltd.'s present strategy.

Walker-Winkle Mills’ present strategy is to use a single target market. Valerie has pointed out that the present advertising approach encourages a unified brand across Canada. The company uses the same products for each audience, the same pricing strategy, and the same promotional strategy. This current marketing strategy is not suited to address the multicultural populations in Canada. Even though Quebec is currently the only city experiencing a sales decline, this problem can easily spread to other parts of Canada, further hurting the company's performance. They are trying to satisfy different cultures with one marketing strategy, with the hopes that it will appeal to all consumers.

1. What should Valerie Boudreau do now? Explain.

It is easy to understand why Quebec would shy away from the advertising used, as it is translated straight from the English-language to Canadian-French language. This does not ensure that the messages in advertisements are communicating the same brand image. The new marketing strategy should take geographic dimensions into consideration and tailor the advertisement and brand name to the French consumers.

Since it is evident that the independent mom-and-pop food stores hold a great portion of the market share, it would be in the best interest of the company to aggressively penetrate the market in Quebec. The major supermarket chains in the province have the lowest market shares, while the independent stores are staying strong and stocking their shelves with much more national brands. This is an advantage for the company, and an attempt to increase the sales by improving service and brand familiarity can be beneficial to the company's performance in Quebec. Research projects have even proven that there are apparent issues regarding discount policies, pricing structures, and sales promotion. This further validates the need for the company to develop multiple target markets in order to improve customer satisfaction. A separate target market approach that is customized with unique goals for the product, price, place, and promotion would make the company superior to any other competitor. Not only should the company aim to target more than one segment, but they should also position their brand to make it more appealing to their chosen market. Since Valerie is aware that regional differences existed in brand purchases, a strong brand position is necessary because it is important what customers think of a proposed or present brand in a market. Experimenting with a few brands specifically in Quebec would not violate any company policy. This region along with Ontario accounts for 69 percent of the company's Canadian sales. Therefore, any change in policy to increase sales would only benefit the company's future growth. Valerie should identify growth opportunities in different regions of Canada by using SWOT analysis. Successful marketing managers aim to satisfy all aspects of a multicultural market, since all cultures do not have the same qualifying and determining dimensions. If she strategically presented the benefits of adapting a unique marketing strategy and brand image for Quebec, she will more than likely obtain approval from top management.

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