The planning process for marketing a service about to enter a foreign market: a concept case study

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Abstract: Purpose of the article – this case study aims to provide a strategic marketing plan aimed at facilitating a successful deployment of the conceptual "BurKI" SaaS into the highly competitive German market.
Research methodology – the concept is developed based on the analysis of market dynamics, competitor landscape, and cultural nuances of the target consumer base. Drawing from the 7P Marketing Mix framework, we consider product adaptation, pricing strategies, distribution channels, promotional strategies, and organizational structuring.
Findings – this study highlights the importance of localization, the digital nature of its marketing strategy, and alignment of brand values with the target consumer. It expands on the need for flexibility, adaptability, and continuous monitoring to ensure effective implementation, and lastly market penetration.

Keywords: marketing strategy, international expansion, market localization, cultural sensitivity, competitive advantage
JEL: M31

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Načrtovanje procesa trženja storitve, ki vstopa na tuji trg: konceptualna študija primera

Povzetek: Namen članka – študija primera si prizadeva zagotoviti strateški marketinški načrt, namenjen olajšanju uspešne implementacije koncepta "BurKI" SaaS na visoko konkurenčnem nemškem trgu.
Metodologija raziskovanja – koncept je razvit na podlagi analize tržnih dinamik, konkurenčne krajine in kulturnih nians ciljne potrošniške baze. Ob uporabi ogrodja 7P Marketing Mix upoštevamo prilagajanje izdelka, cenovne strategije, distribucijske kanale, promocijske strategije in organizacijsko strukturo.
Ugotovitve – študija poudarja pomembnost lokalizacije, digitalne narave marketinške strategije in usklajenosti vrednot blagovne znamke s ciljnim potrošnikom. Razširja potrebo po prilagodljivosti in stalnem spremljanju, da se zagotovi učinkovita implementacija ter prodor na trg.

Ključne besede: marketinška strategija, mednarodno širjenje, lokalizacija trga, kulturna občutljivost, konkurenčna prednost

Introduction

This case study outlines a specific plan for international marketing tailored to the German market for BurKI, a conceptual web builder software with automated artificial intelligence (AI) features. Based on an in-depth look of market trends, target consumer characteristics, and unique cultural aspects of Germany, this study explores the complex process of developing a fitting, optimized marketing strategy.

Starting with an introduction of the conceptual product itself and a thorough analysis of the competitors already present in the market, the discussion then moves on to a description of a market entry plan designed to take advantage of current trends and target consumer preferences. Utilizing the foundational concept of the 7P Marketing Mix, this study develops a comprehensive marketing strategy involving product adaptability, pricing strategies, distribution channels, promotional strategies, and organizational structuring.

Moreover, the case study explores the definition of brand values and persona, supported by a combination of target consumer behaviour insights and cultural imperatives. The study concludes with a laid out strategic plan, outlining how the organization will be structured, what strategies for implementation are used, and the mechanisms for monitoring performance that are essential for successfully entering and growing in the German market. This study adds to the academic conversation on strategic marketing management by analysing the complexities of international marketing planning in a very dynamic and culturally diverse market, providing practical insights for businesses expanding globally.

1 Foundational analysis

In preparation for building the framework of the conceptual case to be studied, an analysis of the industry branch, targeted market, and existing competition was performed.

1.1 Industry and market branch

In the realm of Software as a Service (SaaS) industry, commercial distribution of software applications via the internet on a subscription basis is ever more prevalent. Users access and utilize such services without installation on their local computers, through web browsers, with the service hosted in the cloud. Unlike traditional software models requiring installation on individual devices, SaaS eliminates the need for complex setups and updates, automatically the application up to date for users. This sector encompasses two types of products: software and cloud services. (Statista, 2023)

Companies operating within this sector vend software both offline and online, catering to B2B, B2C, and B2G segments. Key service indicators include revenue and its fluctuations, average cost per employee, and market shares of key players, which all directly relate to market success. Notably, reseller revenue is excluded, as earnings are generated online directly from the manufacturer.

The SaaS industry boasts leading corporations such as Microsoft, Oracle, Salesforce, SAP, and Google, with revenue projected to reach €12.5 billion by 2023 globally, exhibiting an estimated 8.27% annual growth rate through 2028 and market volume of €17.93 billion. (Statista, 2023)

Among the various SaaS segments lies website builder software, facilitating quick website or e-commerce platform creation without the need for coding know-how, catering to users' preferences through user-friendly interfaces (Stedman, 2022). Statista's April 2022 survey indicated that over a third of small and medium-sized enterprises in Germany utilized in-house developers for website creation, while 24% employed consultants or freelancers,

with only 26% resorting to agencies for comprehensive website design and development. (Statista, 2023).

Website builders eliminate infrastructure costs and software maintenance expenses, as well as developer payroll, leading to lower total costs, and thus enabling creators to swiftly prototype and replicate website designs, experimenting with various layouts and styles to align with their brand or message. SaaS website builders handle hosting, security updates, and technical maintenance, allowing creators to focus solely on content and design. (Salesforce, n.d.)

Market dynamics, particularly in Germany, also underscore additional data privacy and protection requirements due to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
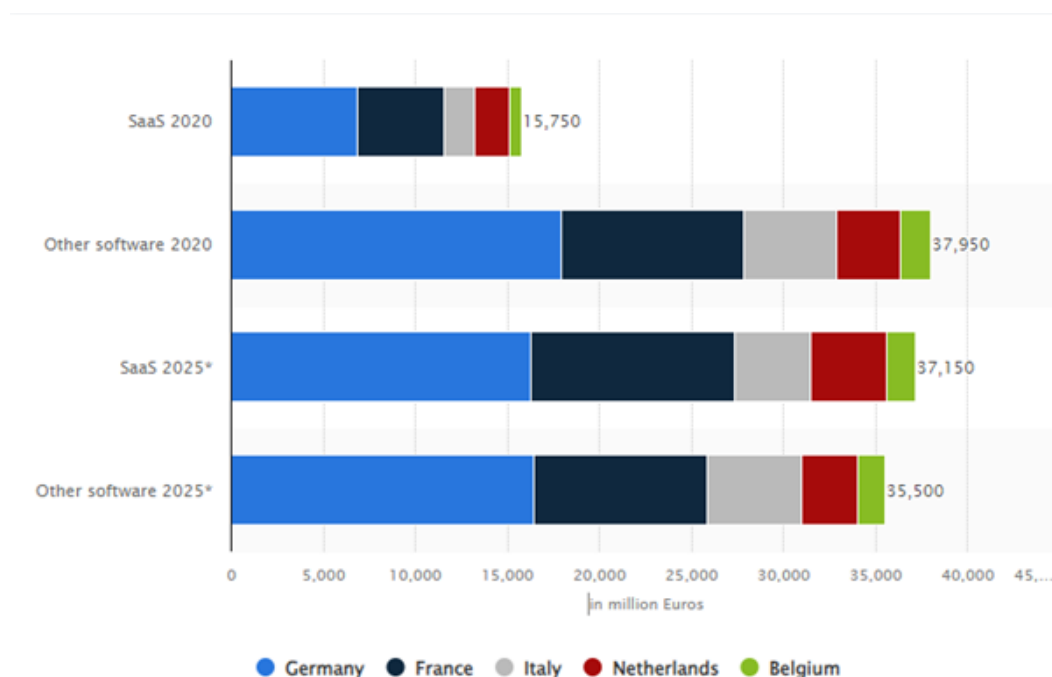

Figure 1. Software as a service (SaaS) vs. other software market revenue in Europe 2020 and 2025, by country, in millions of Euros
(source: Vailshery, 2023; Statista, n.d.)

1.2 Demographic, geographic, and cultural characteristics of the targeted market

Germany, with over 84.5 million inhabitants as of January 2023, exhibits various demographic attributes. Approximately 10% of the population resides in Germany without German citizenship, while 7 million individuals hail from immigrant families (Destatis, 2023). Gender distribution is balanced, with 42.8 million females and 41.7 million males (December 2022). Religious demographics show 60% Christians, 4.4% Muslims, and 35% atheists (Statista, 2021). The unemployment rate stands at 3.03%, and the average life expectancy is 78 years for females and 83 years for males. As of 2022, age-wise, the population is distributed as follows: under 20 (18.8 million), 20-40 (24.5 million), 40-60 (27.3 million), 60-80 (22.2 million), and 80-100 (7.2 million) (Destatis, 2022). Its population is comprised of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Officially the Federal Republic of Germany, it is situated in central Europe, with Berlin as the capital. It shares borders with Austria, Switzerland, France, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Poland, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Covering an area of 357.592 square kilometers, it ranks as the 18th most populated country globally and the second most populated in Europe after Russia. High population density is observed in urban centers

such as Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Cologna, Frankfurt on the Rhine, and the Ruhr region. Despite the reunification, the former East Germany continues to lag in development compared to the former West Germany (DW, 2008).

Germany prides itself in being one of the most developed economies globally, attracting numerous foreign companies and entrepreneurs. Digital markets are widely accepted, with 66% of B2C transactions occurring through a combination of offline and online channels, and 6% exclusively online. As much as 94% of all internet users make online purchases annually, translating to approximately 69 million Germans (DW, 2023). Social media usage is comparatively very high, with 78.8% of Germans actively engaging on various platforms, spending an average of 5.5 hours online. The e-commerce market has reached a cap of 99 billion Euro already in 2021 (Statista, 2023).

Key cultural values among German consumers include quality, loyalty, security, trust, and recognizability. Germans prioritize reliability, as evidenced by domain requirements (.de) and adherence to quality certifications. The display of certificates in the footer of a website, alongside the owner's information is paramount for establishing any level of trust. They also uphold legal regulation, notably a 14-day return policy, resulting in higher return rates compared to other EU countries. Mobile phone usage is extensive, with 112 million active smartphones, and 83.8% of the population utilize laptops and desktops. 92% uses Google as their default search engine (Delante, 2023). Online payment methods like PayPal dominate, accounting for 48% of transactions, while debit cards constitute only 19% (Statista, 2022). Popular social media platforms include WhatsApp (79.6%), YouTube (74.8%), Facebook (60%), Instagram (46.9%), and Pinterest (36.8%), with LinkedIn gaining traction in recent years (Kemp, 2021).

Consumption patterns prioritize clothing, followed by electronics, telecommunications, and computer-related products and software (Statista, 2022). German business culture emphasizes diligence, discipline, and meticulousness, characterized by reserved communication, attentive listening, and a preference for honesty and openness in negotiations. Clear positions with clear intentions, respect of set pricing, adhering to stricken deals, as well as agreed upon appointments are all hallmarks of the German business world (Shaw, n.d.).

1.3 Existing competition

Germany ranks fourth globally in the number of registered SaaS companies, reaching as much as 1646 in 2023 (Statista, 2023). The following is an overview of the three major competitors.

Backendless is renowned for its robust data management capabilities, including a graphical browser, SQL-based search, and data relationships, it offers extensive data management options and robust security features crucial for ensuring data integrity and compliance according to Raroque Chris' 2023 evaluation. Real-time data synchronization and customizable cloud-hosted code make Backendless appealing to businesses requiring advanced data control and infrastructure. Its pricing plans include the free Backendless Cloud Plan, aimed at individuals and small businesses, as well as Backendless Pro and Managed Backendless for larger enterprises.

The *Pega Platform* specializing in AI-driven decision-making and workflow automation is ideal for automating business processes and robotic automation (Raroque, 2023). It offers real-time intelligence and enterprise-level capabilities, targeting large enterprises seeking robust solutions in these areas. Pega offers pricing plans including Low-code Factory Edition, Standard Edition, and Enterprise Edition, with special inquiries required for the latter.

Draftbit which is recognized for crafting powerful mobile applications is an excellent choice for businesses focused on sophisticated mobile application development (OmnePresent Technologies, 2023). It offers features such as real-time native code application building, application programming interface (API) access, and other advanced integrations. Draftbit's pricing plans are diverse, including a free plan, Pro plan, Team plan, and Freelancer and Agency plan targeted at individual developers, teams, and agencies.

These platforms offer a range of features and pricing plans catering to various business needs, from individual developers to large enterprises.

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of competing platforms
(source: the authors)

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Backendless	– Advanced data management and security – Ability to adjust using API services and trigger events – Real-time data synchronization – Multipurpose user interface (UI) builder and API services – Various pricing plans including a free plan	– Can be complex for users without technical knowledge – Limited functionality in the free plan
Pega	– AI-powered decision-making and automation of work processes – Oriented at large companies – Supports various industries – Compliant with security standards and regulations	– Can be expensive for small businesses and individuals – Use complexity can be a challenge for less experienced users
Draftbit	– Focused on the development of powerful mobile applications – Access to API's and advanced integration options – Real-time source code construction – Various pricing plans including a free plan	– Focusing primarily on mobile applications may limit the scope of use – Advanced functions come at a higher cost

2 The conceptual product

In a market characterized by a proliferation of innovations and creative digital solutions, automated systems for enhanced customer support and no-code digital platforms emerge as ideal solutions for system development. BurKI differentiates itself by leveraging original artificial intelligence solutions through APIs. The foundational system necessary for crafting digital solutions is drawn from ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence large language model (LLM) developed by OpenAI.

BurKI is tailored to users lacking programming knowledge required for web programming who seek to self-sufficiently construct a website or platform in a short timeframe. The application features integrated hosting, web security, as well as technical support, residing on the cloud with automatic version updates. BurKI is a no-code application, allowing users to input specific desired parameters such as colours, layout, navigation – with AI then generating the web page itself accordingly. The application facilitates the creation of complex systems such as content management systems (CMS), customer relation management (CRM), and others, with an integrated multi-language translator. To ensure user-friendliness, "drag and drop" solutions are integrated, enabling users to select generated or pre-made elements and drop them into desired positions.

BurKI offers three subscription options for private users, freelancers, and businesses. All subscription options can be paid for either through a one-time annual subscription or monthly payments. Payment methods include digital wallets like Paypal, Alipay; credit cards Visa and MasterCard; debit cards, and the option to pay with the digital currency Bitcoin.

Table 2. Subscription variants for BurKI
(source: the authors)

	Private plan	Freelancer plan	Company plan
Price	10 Euro / month	20 Euro / month	150 Euro / month
Domain	1 included	2 included	5 included
Hosting space	20 GB	50 GB	250 GB
Workspace	2 websites	5 websites	15 websites

The advantages of the BurKI application include:
  − Direct domain and hosting leasing and extension through the application
  − A no-code platform
  − All elements being "drag and drop" design technology
  − Complex solutions (CMS, CMR)
  − Page translation.

3 Strategy for entry into the German market

Success in foreign markets requires thorough research and the adaptation and selection of an entry strategy tailored to local preferences, standards, and regulations. Adapting the product to a specific market demonstrates the willingness and dedication necessary to establish trust with local customers. (Korpi, 2023)

Based on the given analyses of the German market, the BurKI SaaS will employ a rapid penetration strategy. Such a rapid penetration strategy involves launching the product at low prices with high investment in product promotion (Peršić, 2018). It leverages large markets unfamiliar with the product but retains sensitivity to its price when faced with strong competition. A key feature of the rapid penetration strategy is the here applicable

inversely proportional production cost per unit (near zero cost) with the company's production volume (near unlimited) and experience (Katić, 2018).

Previous analyses from Chapters 1.1. and 1.2. of this study have established Germany as one of the most economically developed countries in Europe, and the world, with a high level of digital literacy, a large share of its economy in the digital market, and well-established well-accepted models of online purchasing. Chapter 1.3. identified Germans' inclination towards low prices, product and service quality, fast delivery, and legal rights for product returns. Competition is fierce, and the sales platform and product must have characteristics presenting it in a local, nationally characteristic manner.
These factors substantiate the chosen rapid penetration strategy.

4 7P Marketing Mix

For the successful entry of BurKI into the German market, the dimensions of the rapid international marketing program based on the seven "P" elements of the 7P Marketing Mix will be meticulously shaped, in accordance with Expert Program Management (n.d.):

1. Product
    a. Adaptation: BurKI must cater to the needs of German consumers, which includes multilingual support (especially in German, but also English), the look and feel of the user interface, and the functionalities.
    b. Innovation: Introduction of advanced features such as AI-driven design and customization of user experience.
2. Price
    a. Pricing Models: Diverse pricing models are present, tailored to different market segments, ranging from budget options to premium packages.
    b. Promotional Offers: Introduction of attractive promotional prices or trial periods to attract new users.
3. Place
    a. Digital Distribution: Primary focus lies on online sales and distribution through own website and partnered digital stores.
    b. Local Partnerships: Development of partnerships with local distributors or service providers to expand availability.
4. Promotion
    a. Digital Marketing: Utilization of SEO, PPC campaigns, email marketing, and social media to promote BurKI.
    b. Events and Webinars: Organization of online events and webinars to showcase the product and its capabilities.
    c. Influencer and Content Marketing: Collaboration with well-known individuals in the IT sector and creation of quality content for promotion.
5. People
    a. Support Team: Ensuring high quality customer support in the German language.
    b. Training and Development: Focus on continuous employee training and the development of their skills.
6. Processes
    a. Process Optimization: High efficiency is ensured in customer lifecycle: the processes of purchase, installation, and customer support.
    b. Automation: Introduction of automated processes to increase efficiency and reduce response time.
7. Physical Evidence
    a. Online Presence: Professionally designed website and social media as evidence of quality and reliability, especially regarding Chapter 1.3.
    b. Case Studies and Reviews: Proof of success through case studies and positive

user reviews.

The Marketing-Communications framework for the BurKI brand integrates modern communication technologies, including chatbots and AI for personalized communication. In addition, utilization of social media platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook specifically target professionals and businesses. The use of video content to demonstrate the product and its features greatly demystifies the product for the end-user. Lastly, the implementation of email campaigns to build customer relationships and provide relevant product information to maintain the staple of modern-day communication.

By applying such a detailed approach, BurKI can successfully enter the German market, standing out in a competitive environment and build a strong relationship with local users.

5   Values and traits of the brand

Prof. Vukasović (2023) identifies three groups of brand values that significantly influence consumer behaviour.

Table 3. Brand value groups
(source: Vukasović, 2023)

Values Directed Towards Others	Values Directed Towards the Environment	Values Directed Towards Oneself
– Individualism/Collectivism: Reflects the preference for individual expression or group cohesion. – Adulthood/Childhood: Pertains to the perception of maturity or innocence. – Masculinity/Femininity: Describes the adherence to traditional gender roles. – Rivalry/Cooperation: Indicates the inclination towards competition or collaboration. – Youthfulness/Age: Represents the appreciation for youthful vigour or wisdom gained with age.	– Tradition/Change: Reflects the balance between preserving heritage and embracing innovation. – Risk Acceptance/Security: Pertains to the willingness to take risks versus the desire for safety and stability. – Problem-Solving/Faith in Fate: Describes the reliance on proactive problem-solving versus trusting in fate.	– Activity/Passivity: Reflects the preference for action or inaction. – Materialism/Non-Materialism: Indicates the emphasis on material possessions or non-material experiences. – Hard Work/Indolence: Pertains to the appreciation for diligence and effort versus laziness.

The goal of the brand is to embody and promote the specific values, mentality, and cultural habits of the German population. This includes fostering security/trust (Germans highly

value trust and reliability in products and services), perseverance/work ethic (diligence and discipline are fundamental national traits), and orderliness (Germans are known for their appreciation of precision and adherence to rules).

Brand personality encompasses a range of human characteristics attributed to the brand. Marketing professionals emphasize the importance of brand personality due to its psychological impact on consumers, who tend to gravitate towards brands with appealing traits that align with their own (Sinčić et al, 2015). Therefore, brand managers should cultivate and maintain a brand personality that resonates with their target audience (Sinčić et al, 2015).

The following traits are therefore attributed to the brand:
- Honesty: Kindness, helpfulness, optimism, and family values.
- Inspiration: Boldness, carefreeness, humour, modernity, and originality.
- Activity: Originality, resilience, natural qualities, and sportsmanship.
- Competence: Success, ability, influence, and assertiveness.
- Sophistication: Elegance, prestige, and charm.
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By embodying these values and traits, the concept brand aims to establish a strong connection with the German market, appealing to their cultural preferences and fostering a sense of trust and reliability among consumers.

6   Organisation, implementation, and supervision

Drawing inspiration from Kotler, P., and Keller, K. L. (2016), it is concluded that the organization, implementation, and supervision of marketing activities for BurKI in the German market should be structured yet flexible to be able to adapt quickly to changes in the market. The key to success lies in the combination of strategic planning, knowledge and expertise on the local environment, and effective monitoring and analysis of results.

6.1 Organisational model

To ensure effective organizational structure for BurKI's entry into the German market, the following strategies will be implemented:
1. Centralized Leadership with Local Teams
   a. Establishment of a central team in BurKI's home country to coordinate international marketing activities, with a specific focus on brand strategy and global brand coherence.
   b. Formation of a local team in Germany comprising of marketing experts, sales representatives, and customer support staff. The local team should possess in-depth knowledge of the German market, culture, and language.
2. Integration with Sales and Product Development Departments
   a. Close collaboration between the marketing team and the sales and product development departments is crucial to align marketing strategies with sales objectives and product characteristics.
3. Utilization of External Agencies
   a. Engagement of local marketing and PR agencies that can provide additional expertise and support in implementing target specific marketing campaigns.

By adopting these organizational measures, BurKI can ensure efficient coordination and alignment across various departments and external partners, facilitating a successful entry into the German market.

6.2 Implementation

To ensure effective implementation of BurKI's marketing strategy in the German market, the following steps will be taken:

1. Rapid Market Penetration
   a. An aggressive marketing campaign is to be launched on digital platforms to create initial brand awareness. This involves targeted advertising to reach the German audience.
   b. Partnerships are to be established with local influencers and IT experts to endorse and promote BurKI's products, leveraging their credibility and reach within the target market.
   c. Organization of events and webinars aimed at raising awareness and generating interest in BurKI's offerings among potential customers.
2. Focus on Digital Marketing
   a. Extensive use of Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising, email marketing, and social media platforms to engage with the targeted German audience.
   b. Content and messaging will be tailored to resonate with the German language and culture, ensuring that marketing efforts are culturally relevant and appealing to the target audience.
3. Collaboration with Local Partners
   a. Building relationships with German distribution partners and sales channels to expand BurKI's reach and availability in the market. This will involve identifying and collaborating with reputable local partners who can facilitate the distribution and sale of BurKI's products effectively.

By implementing these strategies, BurKI can effectively establish its presence in the German market, drive brand awareness, and engage with potential customers, laying a solid foundation for future growth and success.

6.3 Supervision and its' tools

To effectively supervise the marketing activities and ensure their alignment with the objectives in the German market, the following approaches and tools will be employed:

1. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Tracking
   a. Establishing of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of marketing campaigns, sales performance, and customer support activities.
   b. Regular reporting and analysis of data to track progress against KPIs, identify trends, and make informed decisions for strategy adjustment and optimization.
2. Feedback from Local Teams
   a. Implementing a feedback loop to gather insights from local teams and clients, enabling the adaptation of strategies based on real-time market needs and responses.
   b. Encouraging open communication channels between the central team and local teams to facilitate the exchange of valuable insights and feedback.
3. Continuous Adaptation and Flexibility
   a. Embracing flexibility in approach to allow for swift adaptation of strategies and tactics in response to feedback and evolving market trends. This agility is crucial for rapid market penetration, as market dynamics can change rapidly.
4. Regular Reviews and Strategic Meetings
   a. Organizing regular meetings between the central and local teams to review performance, share ideas, and plan future activities collaboratively.
   b. Conducting strategic meetings to assess the effectiveness of current

strategies, discuss challenges, and align on adjustments needed to achieve marketing objectives.

Analytical Tools: Utilizing digital analytics tools such as Google Analytics, CRM systems, and social media monitoring tools to collect data and gain insights into user behaviour, campaign performance, and market trends.

Project Management Systems: Implementing project management systems like Asana or Trello to ensure efficient organization, task management, and tracking of activities across teams, facilitating smooth asynchronous coordination and oversight of marketing initiatives.

By employing these supervisory approaches and utilizing relevant tools, BurKI can effectively monitor and manage its marketing activities in the German market, enabling the organization to adapt swiftly to market dynamics and optimize performance towards achieving its objectives.

Conclusion

The successful planning and execution of international marketing strategies, particularly for such an entry of the conceptual BurKI into the German market, demand a meticulous approach driven by empirical analysis, strategic adaptation, and efficient implementation. The BurKI application, characterized by its comprehensive feature set mirroring industry competitors, also distinguishes itself with unique offerings such as domain extension, hosting capabilities, and a user-friendly no-code platform, *catering directly* to the demands of the German consumer base.

Integration of marketing activities through the comprehensive 7P Marketing Mix underscores the imperative understanding of the in many ways specific demographic, geographic, and cultural dynamics prevalent within the German market. The chosen strategy of *rapid market penetration* underscores the strategic imperative of swiftly cultivating brand awareness through assertive digital campaigns and strategic alliances with local opinion leaders.

By leaning into digital marketing strategies, cultural adaptation, and collaborative partnerships with local stakeholders, BurKI aims to cultivate a distinctive competitive advantage within the targeted German marketplace. The characterization of the BurKI brand accentuates its user-centric design, reliability, simplicity, and originality, thus enhancing its appeal to German consumers.

The *organizational model* adopted for pursuing marketing initiatives combines centralized leadership structures with decentralized operational units, assisted by collaborative engagements with external marketing agencies to foster optimal operational efficiency. Critical *monitoring mechanisms*, encompassing the delineation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), solicitation of feedback from localized operational teams, and the conduct of periodic performance evaluations and strategic strategy adjustments, serve as indispensable tools for ensuring the *alignment of marketing activities with overarching business objectives*.

In conclusion, the specifics of the German market, characterized by strict standards of quality and reliability, call for a continuous cycle of targeted marketing efforts upheld by methodical monitoring, adaptive agility, and quick market responsiveness. Through the

consistent and measured application of analytical tools and project management methodologies, the conceptual BurKI aims to maintain its competitive edge and establish a formidable presence within its' new German market landscape.

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