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Unlocking Opportunities: Wielton Group's Sales Strategy for Growth in the African Market

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to evaluate Wielton Group's current sales strategy in the African market, analyse the factors influencing its performance, and identify opportunities for growth, market expansion, and efficiency improvement. Additionally, the study considers the company's potential entry into the Egyptian market and explores strategies for successful expansion. As the third-largest producer and distributor of trailers, semi-trailers, and truck bodies in Europe, Wielton Group seeks to expand its presence into Africa, with a particular focus on Egypt. The research aims to conduct a detailed analysis of the factors influencing Wielton Group's performance and sales opportunities. This includes evaluating the existing sales strategy, considering contemporary trends, and examining the potential of the Egyptian market as a sales channel for Wielton's products, based on valuable and professional insights gathered from Wielton Group's employees. The research was conducted using a qualitative data collection method – semi-structured interviews. In the empirical research phase, diverse perspectives shed light on the company's activities in the African market. The strategic motivations for entering the African market, the challenges encountered, and the adaptive sales strategies were discussed. The decision-making process regarding entry into the Egyptian market was examined, highlighting optimism and flexible strategies. Based on the research findings, various managerial proposals are presented to help the company achieve sustainable and profitable growth in the African market and Egypt.

Keywords: sales strategy, African market, performance improvement, intercontinental expansion

1. Introduction

In the days of rapid global changes, amidst the complexities of geopolitical, economic, technological, and ecological shifts, multinational companies must formulate sales strategies to remain competitive and boost their influence on

customers (Kasych & Vochozka, 2019). However, organizations need to determine the specific type of strategy on which to concentrate. This need is influenced by factors that are the elements of a dynamic and complex business landscape. In navigating these complexities, multinational companies find themselves in a crucial position where strategic decision-making becomes essential. As multinational companies chart their course through the interventions of global business, the role of sales management becomes not only about driving revenue but also about fostering long-term relationships.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate Wielton Group's current sales approach in the African market by analysing performance factors and identifying areas for growth, increased market reach, and operational improvements. Furthermore, the study considers the company's expansion into Egypt, assessing potential entry opportunities and strategic approaches. This problem is particularly relevant for Wielton Group, currently positioned as the third-largest manufacturer and distributor of trailers, semi-trailers, and lorry vehicle bodies in Europe. To conduct a more precise analysis, the Arab Republic of Egypt has been selected as the potential region for expansion and review as a possible sales channel for Wielton's products.

For the situation analysis, primary data was gathered from all accessible sources and reports of Wielton Group, supplemented by secondary data about the market and the industry. Additionally, information was derived from the author's experience and personal observations. Theoretical aspects and frameworks were chosen through an extensive analysis of available scholarly literature, articles, and journals for the literature review.

Furthermore, the conducted empirical research is qualitative and based on semi-structured interviews. The target population comprises key stakeholders within Wielton, including sales managers, marketing experts, executives, and others directly involved in the company's sales strategy in the African market. Additionally, the author concluded interviews with clients or customers in the African market. The received answers were used to interpret and formulate a set of instruments for strengthening the sales strategy and providing recommendations for sales expansion in the Egyptian market.

2. Theoretical Background

Sales Strategy Concept

The effectiveness of the sales process hinges on the ability to interpret and analyse opportunities (Peterson et al., 2011). A sales process encompasses the systematic application of steps or actions necessary for selling a product or service (Eades, 2003). According to McNeese and Klein (1991), adopting a process perspective in sales offers the advantage of leveraging tools from other process-oriented fields to

enhance the outcomes of the sales process. The primary goal of a sales process is to break down the sales cycle into distinct steps, enabling the tracking of progress for each sales opportunity as it advances through these stages. Each step involves various activities and associated measures, demanding specific achievements before progressing to the subsequent stage (McNeese & Klein, 1991). The sales strategy, also known as the 'customer development strategy' describes how a business intends to acquire, retain, and foster its customer base. Considering the traditional business approaches, this method prioritizes extensive planning, customer feedback over intuition, and iterative design in combination with upfront development (Viswanathan & Rosa, 2007). The necessity of having a sales strategy is underscored by its role in addressing common business challenges, including stagnant sales revenues, the merger of sales forces, start-ups of new ventures, new product introductions, the launch of new competitors, and expansion into new markets, as stated in the research of Acquah (2007).

Considering the international perspective, the global economic landscape is undergoing a substantial shift, with a notable transfer of economic activity from industrialized economies in North America and Western Europe to emerging economies (Bruton et al., 2013). Over the past three decades, emerging market firms have significantly influenced scholarly discourse on international sales management. Emerging markets, characterized by recent rapid economic growth despite low incomes, are predominantly situated in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and China, and transition economies of the former Soviet Union and South-Eastern Europe (Hoskisson et al., 2000). Scholarly researches have delved into a limited set of potential analyses shaping the international marketing strategies of emerging market firms. These investigations attracted diversity in their focus, commonly exploring variables such as managerial characteristics, firm behaviour, industry dynamics, and institutional environmental forces, either individually or in tandem, as influential factors in determining international marketing strategies (Dwairi et al., 2007). 'Sales Strategies in Emerging Markets' stands at the leading edge of contemporary business discourse, as organizations strategically position themselves to capitalize on the vast potential inherent in rapidly developing economies (Contractor et al., 2003). The various issues and complexities of these markets require a differentiated approach to sales, demanding a comprehensive understanding of local dynamics, consumer behaviour, and regulatory landscapes that undertakes a detailed examination of the multifaceted strategies deployed by businesses seeking success in emerging markets.

Continent of Opportunities – Africa

Often referred to as the 'continent of opportunity,' Africa presents an expansive and diverse market with substantial global business potential. Egypt offers several attractive opportunities for businesses in the manufacturing and transport

sectors, making it an appealing destination for investment. The report of PwC *Africa Gearing Up* (2013), provided an overview of the challenges faced by Egypt's business environment, particularly the decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) after the 2011 uprising. Despite some positive indicators such as a large, educated population and a diversified economy, Egypt struggles with political instability, economic hurdles, and unfavourable business conditions. Key issues include political unrest, anti-market sentiments, poor ratings on global competitiveness, unstable rule of law, bureaucratic obstacles, and delays in economic policy improvements (Everington, 2023).

The Suez Canal is a significant asset, but disruptions could pose challenges. Infrastructure projects are on hold, affecting the logistics performance index. The transportation sector faces issues like fuel shortages, outdated railway systems, and road congestion (PwC, n.d). Positive measures to improve the trade environment were halted in 2013 with the removal of Morsi. Despite being a member of various trade blocs, Egypt's external position has deteriorated, with widening trade and current account deficits: "To help facilitate international trade, Egypt is a member of several trade blocs including the African Economic Community (AEC), Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)" – wrote Ghanem (2013) in the article *Can Egypt's Transition and Economy Be Saved?* The membership assures a strong attractiveness for investors.

Customising products and services to align with local preferences and cultural nuances is a prior aspect of multinational companies' success in Egypt. Recognising and addressing the specific needs of the Egyptian market goes beyond mere adaptation; it demonstrates a commitment to understanding and integrating with the local consumer base. This approach enhances the acceptance and relevance of products or services, contributing to more seamless integration into the market (CAPA – Centre for Aviation, n.d.).

3. Wielton Group. Operational Overview

General Information

The Wielton SA, located in Wieluń, Poland, is the largest manufacturer of trailers, semi-trailers, and lorry vehicle bodies in the country. Despite its relatively young age, the company's operational growth has been remarkable, positioning it as the third-largest in Europe and among the top 10 globally in the heavy-duty vehicles industry. Its production focuses on road transport, agriculture logistics, and related sectors (Wielton Group, n.d.). Additionally, Wielton has strong partnerships with global truck producers such as Man, Volvo, Iveco, Mercedes-Benz, DAF, and Scania. Wielton's ambitions go beyond excellence – the company aims for dominance. Fuelled by an expansive sales network of 35 countries, its products have traversed

over 75,000 roads bearing the Wielton logo and prove the presence in diverse sectors, from transport and construction to production and agriculture (Wielton Group, 2024).

In the first half of 2023, Wielton Group achieved notable financial performance despite challenges in the European transport sector. Consolidated revenues reached PLN 1,701.2 million, a 4% increase year to year, while volume sales experienced a 10% decline, with 10,762 units sold (Wielton Group, 2023).

The company also determined the possible risks and opportunities that might influence future expansion plans and operations (Wielton Group, 2023).

- Market dynamics. The cooling of demand and customers postponing purchase decisions present high risks, potentially affecting sales volumes and revenue generation.
- Geopolitical uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions, particularly the war in Ukraine and the situation in China pose high risks, leading to potential disruptions in trade, supply chains, and market stability.
- Inflation and wage pressures. Rising inflation and wage pressures introduce high risks, potentially impacting production costs, profitability, and overall financial health.
- Energy and gas price volatility. The volatility of energy and gas prices poses a risk of higher production costs, affecting margins and financial performance.
- Financial risk and customer insolvency. Financial risk, liquidity challenges, and customer insolvency represent medium risks, impacting cash flow, revenue collection, and overall financial stability.
- High financial costs. Persistently high financial costs present medium risks, potentially affecting profitability and the ability to invest in growth initiatives.
- Exchange rate volatility. Exchange rate volatility introduces medium risks, affecting the Group's financial results, particularly in regions with exposure to fluctuating currencies.
- Risk of impairment of eastern assets. The risk of permanent impairment of eastern assets poses medium risks, potentially impacting asset valuation and financial statements.
- Supply chain disruptions. While disruptions in supply chains present low risks, they can still affect production efficiency, timely delivery, and customer satisfaction.

By understanding and addressing these risks, the Group can proactively mitigate threats and capitalize on opportunities in the dynamic business environment.

Wielton Africa

Wielton Africa SARL, headquartered in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), was registered in 2017. Wielton's decision to expand its operations in this region was influenced, among other factors, by favourable legislative changes implemented in the West African Economic and Monetary Union, comprising eight member states. These

changes include, among others, a reduction in the permissible total weight of vehicles operating on local roads, necessitating the replacement of existing fleets. The company sees significant sales potential stemming from investments in the mining industry and infrastructure in the region (Wielton Group, n.d.).

Wielton Africa sold 192 vehicles in Africa in 2022, compared to 298 the previous year (with the total sales of Wielton Group reaching 23,180 units in 2022). Sales revenue on the Ivory Coast in 2022 amounted to PLN 23.1 million, compared to PLN 33.8 million the previous year (a decrease by 31.7%). The total revenue of Wielton Group amounted to PLN 3,433.4 million in 2021 and PLN 2,696.4 million in 2022 (ETK, 2024).

According to the new strategy, by 2027 Wielton intends to expand its operations in the Black Continent to include the markets in Kenya and Egypt. This decision has significant strategic value for Wielton for several reasons. First, the market potential. Both Kenya and Egypt boast growing economies and populations, presenting ample opportunities for the sale of commercial vehicles such as trailers and semi-trailers. Kenya, in particular, serves as an economic hub in East Africa, while Egypt holds a central position in North Africa, providing access to regional markets. Another reason is diversification. Entering new markets allows Wielton to diversify its revenue streams and reduce dependency on specific regions or markets.

Analysis of Wielton Group in Egypt

It is crucial to evaluate the company’s market position by considering its internal resources and external environment. The SWOT framework, recommended by Rahmat et al. (2020), offers an effective method to assess a company’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In response, a SWOT analysis for Wielton Group services is provided (Tab. 1).

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Wielton Group in Egypt

Item	Assessment of the aspect
Strengths	S1. Extensive industry experience and expertise in manufacturing trailers and semi-trailers. S2. Strong reputation for high-quality products and reliability. S3. Established presence in the European market, providing a foundation for global expansion. S4. Robust distribution network and after-sales service capabilities, enhancing customer satisfaction. S5. Ability to offer a diverse range of trailer types and configurations to meet various transportation needs. S6. Capacity for innovation and technological advancements, ensuring competitiveness in the market.

Item	Assessment of the aspect
Weaknesses	W1. Potential challenges in adapting products to meet specific regional requirements in Egypt. W2. Competition from local manufacturers or other international brands with lower pricing. W3. Cultural and regulatory differences that may require adjustments to business strategies and operations in Egypt.
Opportunities	O1. Egypt's growing transportation and logistics industry, providing opportunities for market expansion. O2. Increasing demand for high-quality trailers and semi-trailers due to infrastructure development and trade activities. O3. Potential for partnerships or collaborations with local companies to enhance market penetration and distribution channels.
Threats	T1. Intensifying competition from both local and international manufacturers in the Egyptian market. T2. Economic volatility or political instability in Egypt, affecting consumer confidence and purchasing power. T3. Technological disruptions or shifts in customer preferences that may require rapid adaptation to maintain competitiveness.

Source: own elaboration.

Wielton Group's SWOT analysis in Egypt reveals several key aspects of its market position. The company's strengths include extensive industry experience in trailer manufacturing, a strong reputation for producing high-quality products, and an established presence in the European market. Additionally, Wielton benefits from a robust distribution network and effective after-sales service, a diverse range of trailer types, and a capacity for innovation and technological advancements.

However, the company faces weaknesses such as challenges in adapting products to meet local requirements and competition from local manufacturers and lower-priced brands. Cultural and regulatory differences may also complicate its business strategies in the region.

Opportunities for Wielton Group include the growing transportation and logistics industry in Egypt, increasing demand for high-quality trailers due to infrastructure development, and potential partnerships with local companies to enhance market penetration.

On the threat side, Wielton must contend with intensifying competition from both local and international manufacturers. Economic volatility and political instability in Egypt could affect consumer confidence and purchasing power, while rapid technological changes may necessitate quick adaptations to maintain competitiveness.

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing Wielton Group's potential success in the Egyptian market.

4. Research Design and Findings

Research Design

For this research, a deep understanding of overall sales performance and opportunities in Egypt was obtained through detailed, face-to-face conversations with informants. Despite its simplicity, this method is highly valued by researchers for its ability to provide nuanced insights and personalised perspectives, unlike other data collection techniques. The data for this thesis was collected over a period of two weeks, with a total of four interviews conducted in person.

Research Findings

This section presents the findings from the research conducted regarding the strategic decisions and market experiences of Wielton Group in the African market. The insights gathered from the interviews with informants provide a comprehensive understanding of the company's motivations for entering the African market, the challenges faced, and the specific focus on Egypt as a target market.

Reasons for Entering the African Market

The third question asked why Wielton Group decided to enter the African market. The interviewees noted that the company expanded into Africa in 2017 to boost its presence in logistics and transportation services. The answers emphasized the growth opportunities despite rising competition, while pointed out emerging trends and favourable economic conditions that made Africa an attractive market. This shows that Wielton entered the region for strategic expansion and growth opportunities.

Challenges in the African Market and Sales Strategy Adaptation

The fourth question examined the challenges Wielton faces in Africa. Informants cited infrastructure limitations, political instability, and cultural differences as obstacles, which shaped the company's localised sales strategies. These include building strong relationships, flexible pricing, and brand differentiation. This illustrates how the company adapts to local complexities to maintain a competitive edge.

Egypt as a Target Market

The fourteenth question focused on Wielton's decision to enter the Egyptian market. Informants identified Egypt's growing middle class, rising consumer demand, and diverse industries (e.g., agriculture and manufacturing) as appealing. Strategic

partnerships and product customization were highlighted as key entry strategies, and respondents saw Egypt as a critical step in expanding the company's global footprint.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Sales Strategy

Question 7 was about the KPIs used by the company to assess its sales strategy. Informants focused on metrics such as sales revenue, customer satisfaction, and order fulfilment rates, and also emphasised brand awareness, website traffic, and product penetration. These KPIs reflect a comprehensive approach to evaluating both market penetration and customer engagement.

Recent Initiatives for Market Penetration in Africa

The eleventh question detailed initiatives undertaken by Wielton to enhance sales growth in Africa. These included expanding distribution networks, streamlining sales processes with technology, and improving the company's digital presence. These efforts, supported by the local team in Abidjan, align with Wielton's aim to strengthen its market position across the continent.

Answers to these questions provide a deeper understanding of Wielton Group's strategic decisions, market challenges, and performance measurement in Africa and Egypt.

The research has several limitations: a small sample size of four informants, limiting representativeness; findings specific to Wielton, reducing generalizability; and potential biases from subjective, self-reported data. Lack of external validation, time constraints, and possible language or cultural barriers further affect the depth and reliability of the results.

5. Conclusions

This study focuses on analysing Wielton Group's sales strategy in the African market, with an emphasis on performance evaluation, market development, and efficiency optimization. In addition, it examines the company's potential entry into Egypt, identifying opportunities and strategies for successful market expansion.

The situational analysis revealed several key implications.

- Wielton Group has identified promising opportunities in the African market, particularly in countries like Kenya and Egypt, despite challenges such as regulatory hurdles and infrastructure limitations. The entering strategy aligns with the long-term strategic objectives of the company, which serves as the foundation of the 'Own Way' strategy 2023-2027.
- The Egyptian market, while competitive, offers significant potential for Wielton Group due to its diverse industry sectors and growing demand for transportation and logistics solutions.

With the research objectives in mind, the following aspects were discussed in the empirical research:

- The research highlighted the diverse range of perspectives from informants representing various roles within the company. Each individual brought unique expertise and experiences to the table, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the company's operations in the African market.
- Informants emphasised strategic reasons for entering the African market, such as market expansion, business growth opportunities, and the increasing demand for transportation and logistics services. They also discussed specific challenges faced and adaptive sales strategies employed to overcome these challenges.
- The analysis delved into the decision-making process behind the company's plans to enter the Egyptian market. Informants expressed optimism about the opportunities presented by Egypt's market size, economic growth, and diverse industry sectors. Entry strategies, including strategic partnerships, local presence establishment, and product customization, were explored, highlighting the company's adaptability and commitment to market entry success.

With primary research taken into consideration, the recommendations were emphasised:

- The strategic recommendations emphasize the importance of conducting differentiated research and analysis to understand the unique characteristics, consumer behaviour, and competitive landscape of the Egyptian market. This involves commissioning various types of research reports and analyses, including market analysis, consumer behaviour study, competitive intelligence, regulatory compliance assessment, and digital market research.
- Another key highlight is the need for Wielton Group to address the gap in marketing involvement in Africa by developing comprehensive marketing campaigns to increase brand awareness and customer engagement. This involves prioritising digital marketing initiatives and e-commerce capabilities to reach a broader audience and streamline sales processes.
- The recommendations stress the significance of conducting a thorough regulatory compliance assessment to understand the legal and regulatory framework governing the Egyptian market. This involves analysing aspects such as import/export regulations, taxation policies, labour laws, and industry-specific regulations to ensure compliance, mitigate legal risks, and identify potential barriers to market entry or operation.

This paper may be beneficial to stakeholders within the Wielton Group involved in sales and market expansion efforts, providing them with valuable insights and strategic recommendations for enhancing performance in the African market, particularly in Egypt. Additionally, professionals in the transportation and logistics industry, as well as researchers interested in international business expansion, may find value in understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by companies

like Wielton Group as they navigate new markets. Overall, the thesis adds value by offering actionable recommendations grounded in empirical research, aimed at driving sustainable growth and profitability in the African market.

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Otwieranie możliwości: strategia sprzedaży Wielton Group na rzecz wzrostu na rynku afrykańskim

Streszczenie: Praca ma na celu zbadanie aktualnej strategii sprzedaży Wielton Group na rynku afrykańskim oraz zidentyfikowanie sposobów zwiększenia wzrostu sprzedaży, powiększenia zasięgu rynkowego i poprawy ogólnej wydajności w regionie. Jako trzeci co do wielkości producent i dystrybutor przyczep, naczip i nadwozi samochodów ciężarowych w Europie Wielton Group dąży do rozszerzenia swojej działalności na Afrykę, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Egiptu. Badania mają na celu przeprowadzenie szczegółowej analizy czynników wpływających na wydajność Wielton Group i możliwości sprzedaży. Obejmuje to ocenę istniejącej strategii sprzedaży, uwzględnienie współczesnych trendów i zbadanie potencjału egipskiego rynku jako kanału sprzedaży dla produktów Wielton, opartego na cennych i profesjonalnych spostrzeżeniach zgromadzonych od pracowników Wielton Group. Badania przeprowadzono przy użyciu metody zbierania danych jakościowych – wywiadu półstrukturalnego. W fazie badań empirycznych różnorodne perspektywy rzucają światło na działania na rynku afrykańskim. Omówiono strategiczne motywacje wejścia na rynek afrykański, napotkane wyzwania i adaptacyjne strategie sprzedaży. Zbadano proces podejmowania decyzji o wejściu na rynek egipski, podkreślając optymizm i elastyczne strategie. Biorąc pod uwagę wyniki badania, przedstawiono różne propozycje zarządcze, które mają pomóc firmie osiągnąć zrównoważony i optymalny wzrost na rynku afrykańskim i w Egipcie.

Słowa kluczowe: strategia sprzedaży, rynek afrykański, poprawa wydajności, ekspansja międzykontynentalna