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**Thesis: A Marketing Plan for “Lancom” company**

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## **1. Summary**

The purpose of this dissertation is the development of a Marketing Plan for “Lancom” company in order that all actions that have to be taken by the company for achieving its goals, be determined and recorded. It is about a case study that includes extensive bibliographic research and personal interviews with the Chief Commercial Officer, Nikos Zachariadis, and two Account Managers, Ioanna Karakosta and Eleni Xanthopoulou.

The content extends to 8 chapters. In the second and third chapters the internal and external environments of the business is analyzed. The next two chapters analyze the strategies and tactics that a business will follow to achieve its business objectives. The final chapter summarizes all the objectives to present a comprehensive picture and to identify the necessary business activities.

## **2. Situational Analysis**

### **2.1 The company**

Lancom is a completely Greek-owned service company that is focused mainly on businesses. It is specialized in high quality IT data center services and cloud computing. It was founded by a group of highly trained young IT professionals with deep expertise and extensive experience in providing internet services. Nowadays, they also offer technical support to their customers relying on the strongest team of certified network engineers and system administrators who are dealing with network-related issues. The Technical Support Team is constantly trained and evaluated with a view to provide the very best solutions even to the most demanding problems. As customers and their needs are in the center of attention an R&D team is organized in order to rise to every challenge with utmost efficiency.

Lancom is the first and the largest cloud service provider in Greece, which owns two proprietary integrated data centers and its offerings cover the entire range of cloud data center service. The company focuses on reliability and credibility and that's why both of the two data centers, one in Thessaloniki and one in Athens, are right across the street from the main building of OTE's (Greek Telecommunications Organization) headquarters, in a location of geo-strategic importance. This choice of location highlights the attention of company's focus on connectivity, security and business continuity.

Quality, reliability and safety of services offered are elements that Lancom emphasizes on. For that reason business has been certified under ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 2700:2013 according to the international standards on information quality and safety. With those two certifications the company promises to customers that possible risks and threats to the business are assessed and managed. An access control system is implemented so that access to physical facilities is restricted. Audits are also conducted regularly including tests of security and the CCTV system, which is a surveillance system comprising cameras, recorders and displays for monitoring activities in the company.

## 2.2 The services

As Lancom is a service company, services that are offered are mainly related to cloud services, telecommunication, data center and high performance computing. The wide range of services it offers fully meet the specialized needs of its customers, mainly offering high quality, cost savings and lightning fast project implementation and delivery times.

**Cloud services** are categorized in Cloud VPS, Cloud server, Cloud storage, Cloud PBX, Cloud Load Balancer, Cloud Streaming, Cloud Monitoring, Disaster Recovery, Cloud Firewall, Private Cloud and Cloud in a Box.

In Cloud VPS servers, autonomous virtual servers, running Linux or Windows in Dedicated Servers are provided and they are responsible for the right management and allocation of the shared resources of the system in each Cloud VPS. By this way they achieve that those resources are fully utilized based on the individual and different needs of each user.

Every business that uses the Cloud Storage service can have access to the cloud system from different PCs, tablets, laptops, smart-phones etc through an easy to use and modern interface with many capabilities in a business level. Enterprise Class storage services are provided, with guaranteed data security and customizable Cloud Backup that is built according to the needs of each partner.

Apart from storage and data sharing in a cloud, Cloud PBX provides network telephony Voice over IP and digital telephone exchanges (PBX / IVR) in the cloud. By this way, communication and collaboration between companies' members get simplified and productivity is increased.

Cloud Load Balancer is a solution for websites with high traffic and demand for rapid response. Lancom provides this service having all the appropriate expertise and equipment from Cisco and HP so that businesses can save money from the cost of the initial investment in load balancing hardware engines.

Through the service of Cloud Streaming Lancom has developed a platform for broadcasting audio and video in the internet. All kinds of customer's needs either only for audio or for a combination of video and audio can be satisfied no matter the load

and the quality that maybe needed each time. Some solutions provided be Lancom are the video or audio on demand, web TV, web radio, video live streaming, e-learning, virtual schools, teleconferences or web conferencing, tele-seminars or live webinars, IP for closed circuit television online and advertising products, services, companies and e-shops.

Cloud monitoring is an integrated platform of software and hardware whose main operations are the 24 hours monitoring, control, action and notification of customer about any malfunctions of the equipment or the service. Through this service Lancom's certified engineers can be informed in real time and based on the severity of the incident they can notify customer or even take action in order to resolve this. Cloud monitoring is a completely customized service that can be available in infrastructures and services in Lancom's data centers or even in any kind accessible system through internet or VPN.

In a world full of technology, systems and computers there is always the danger of a disaster. Lancom's disaster recovery is a high quality security service that protects IT infrastructure from any disaster. Any kind of corporate information which is stored either in physical servers, VMware vSphere, Microsoft Hyper-V or either in an Open Source environment can be protected by the expertise, the credentials, the Enterprise Class equipment and the specialized staff of Lancom.

Cloud Firewall is a custom firewall rule set behind customer's virtual or physical machines which contributes to the complete unloading of the software firewalls of the machines as well as their maximum security.

Private cloud service is for critical enterprise applications and Virtual Machines that have some kind of special needs. This service provides to the customer 100% dedicated physical resources, acknowledged virtualization solutions and up to 100% SLA. Customer has also the ability to choose a datacenter among the one in Thessaloniki and the other one in Athens, having the possibility to add the service of Disaster Recovery.

Cloud in a Box is a service for companies where there is lack of suitable telecommunication infrastructure for a reliable interconnection to the Internet and Cloud. Lancom takes over to do a research in order to define the real needs of each

customer and then installs the proprietary Enterprise Class equipment (UPS, Rack, Servers, Storage, switches, Routers) in the server room of the company. All necessary software licenses for the Server and Virtualization operating systems are provided as well.

**Data Center services** are categorized in Dedicated Servers, and Colocation, while **Telecommunications** in Internet leased lines and IP VPN. Dedicated Servers are for companies that need exclusive use of the resources of a physical system. They are established in company's buildings in Thessaloniki and Athens and they can be configured based on the customers' needs. On the other hand, Colocation service is for companies that have their own equipment but need the appropriate environment for it. Lancom provide its datacenters in order that these companies can use their equipment taking over the installation and providing, also, interconnection to its multi-gigabit backbone. Apart from these, Colocation includes security, protection, high availability and high-level technical support by Lancom's engineers at any time. Having developed a proprietary wireless network, which connects to the internet through two independent redundant circuits, by OTE and CYTA Lancom offers Internet Feed solutions. Internet Leased Line is a high quality service, which can provide a wide range of speed even in the most inaccessible regions. In continuation from the previous there are companies that have the need to be connected to their own network even between remote points of presence of the company. Lancom's IP VPN service can satisfy that need, providing closed private networks in which many members of a company can be interconnected, wherever they could be, with full control and protection of data traffic.

Lancom also provide technical support which include **Managed Services**, vDoctor and Managed Services vAdmin. Sometimes natural resources are not the only factor that can determine the performance of a system. Proper configuration of all software is an equally important factor. For that reason Lancom provides services in which certified engineers are available to assist and provide technical support in any possible problem that may be arisen on any system in order to maintain its stability in all critical points. Two different packages are offered according to each customer's needs: vAdmin Basic and vAdmin Premium.

## **2.3 Categories of Customers**

In Lancom's active clientele there is a great number of both large businesses and smaller ones. Many projects have been built and implemented for either private or public organizations. Remarkable is also the fact that company's customers are activating in many various fields.

Indicative there are customers that offer services which are related to information and data, technology and systems such as Data Communication, Pointer, DN Host, Velti, DotSoft, Protonyx, Olympia Electronics etc.

Another one category of customers could be construction or production companies such as Kleeman, Koukaki, Hatzopoulos, Malamatina, BEDA, Isomat, Almeco, Elvial, Unipak Hellas etc.

In a highly competitive and demanding market, it is especially important for Lancom to build relationships of trust with both customers and partners. That is why company is trying to identify the real needs and priorities of customers and is not content to just make a sale. People of Lancom are trying to maintain a more personalized contact with each customer both at pre-sales and at after-sales level. They are mainly focused in Customer Relationship Management system and in Service Level Agreement, which is a commitment between the company as provider and the client, that give to each one them the potential of prioritizing their concerns at any day of the year and at any time. Furthermore, in case of any more difficult situation, managers themselves are able to intervene in order to provide an immediate solution, serving each corporate account. Analyzing needs and recommending the best techno-economic solution for having happier customers belongs to the corporate culture of Lancom.

## **2.4 Collaborations**

In order that Lancom can provide the best quality of services to her customers, she has strategically chosen the partners that with their support will deliver their promise. The company is cooperating with the two largest internet providers in Greece, OTE and Cyta. That is why she has her own multi-Gigabit 2N fiber optic network for 8 years now. This gave company the potential to cover the particular needs of market in the



Balkans, Greece and Cyprus. At the same time, new partnerships not only in Greece but also in other countries (CDN and DR points in the US, Germany, UK, Romania, etc.) are in the company's expanding activities.

Two independent, dual-path and dual-entry fiber optic lines which enter directly into two independent nodes are connecting OTE with Lancom. Company has chosen on purpose the location of both data centers, which are s right across OTE's headquarters on Ermou Street in Thessaloniki, and right across OTE's headquarters in Maroussi, Athens. This fact gives her the competitive advantage as the overhead in terms of latency to Greece and directly beyond the country's borders over OTE's network. Furthermore, company can use optic rings and paths that terminate in OTE's Headquarters building from the entire Northern Greece, the Balkans, as well as from the central nodes in the rest of Europe, such as Germany, France etc, through OTE Globe so as to expand her activities. In the same way company is interconnected with Cyta through two independent optic paths for increased security while with all other providers in Lancom they are connected through e GRInternet Exchange.

## **2.5 Main objectives of the business**

Lancom is one of the few companies in Greece that in the middle of financial crisis dare to look deeper in the long term, to invest and to rake advantage of the opportunities presented. She emphasizes in evolution and adapts in possible changes of the business environment. Through the proper analysis of changes and the implementation of right strategy, the company maintains a consistent profile of strength and stability to customers, partners and employees.

One of the main goals of the company is the growth in international market. Lancom is interested in further development of resellers in Greece and abroad as well. Furthermore, they are fully committed to expand their infrastructure overseas to meet the ever-growing needs of their customers. Finally, the basic goal that drives Lancom is the offer of maximum security, high performance, reliability and fast service by providing high quality services at low prices.

### **3. External Environment**

#### **3.1 The Branch**

Cloud computing has changed radically the ways that all kind of businesses, small or bigger ones, can utilize the technology for their benefit. The types of applications a modern enterprise can use are related to the transaction, storage and processing of data. They can be divided into four basic categories: Cloud IT Services, Business Applications, Productivity Applications and Social Media Applications.

In Cloud IT Services there are categories such as cloud storage, app development, web hosting, Virtual Private Server etc. Business Applications can be data analytics, asset management, commercial data processing, communication or pricing applications, Cloud ERP & CRM, and everything that is related to e-commerce. To continue with Productivity Applications, here can be project management tools, software that enables collaboration between individuals or groups and content management. Finally, blogs, shared bookmarks, social media tools, photo storage sites and any kind of files accessible to everyone are some examples of social media applications.

Businesses which need to totally control their data and the hardware as well cloud data center can be an ideal solution. One of the biggest benefits offered by the use of cloud applications and services is the cost reduction and the minimization of the initial investment. Companies can save money since they do not have to buy, install and maintain any kind of equipment in order to achieve the appropriate storage and the workload of the data enter they need. Furthermore, security is one other element really important for all companies. Having data in a cloud data center where there are strict methods of security is more safe than having data in a private data center where anyone could have access and probably there would be a need for paying extra for security. They can also, be flexible through implementing the IT infrastructure of their preference very quickly, and applying it to the needs of their customers. Another one advantage of cloud services is that when companies have data in cloud systems, those data are available to them at anytime with just an internet connection. By this way companies can save resources that are related to creating, organizing, hosting and sharing data. Communication and good collaboration among uses are now easier from

everywhere, without the need of a backup, since there is a lot of storage space.

## **3.2 Competition**

### Lamda Hellix

Lamda Hellix has been activating in data center services since 2002, when it was founded. The company provides Data Center Integrated services including the design, consulting, development, installation, operation, technical support maintenance and management of third-party Data Centers. In 2003, the Athens-1 is setting in operation. It is the company's first data center and it is located in Athens Data Center Campus in Attica. Having implemented innovative practices which aim to the protection of the environment and the reduction of the energy footprint Athens-1 is the first data center in the world that has received LEED v4 Gold O+M for its green operation. In 2005 the Integration & Consulting Business Unit is launched, while one year later the company is being certified with the ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management Systems by Lloyds Register and in 2013 with the ISO 27001 Information Security Management Systems. In the meanwhile, two years before, in 2011, Lamda Hellix becomes a founding member of European Data Center Association and in 2015 the new and ultra-green data center of Lamda Hellix starts its operations. It is located in the same region with Athens-1 and it inherits the connectivity, security systems and processes that are already used in the first data center. The difference now is that the second one is ideal for hosting high density systems, it is complied with the USGBC LEED v4 Gold BD+C certification for green buildings and was developed according to Uptime Institute's Tier III standards for data center availability.

Lamda Hellix is one of the most award winning service companies of Data Center Infrastructure Outsourcing and Integration or the housing and operation of main or disaster recovery centers and telecommunications hubs of major public, private organizations and service providers in Greece and Southeast Europe. The company has won many distinctions both in Greece and in Europe. The most recent one during 2019 is the Business Excellence Award that won the silver one as a Cloud service provider, while the previous year had won the gold of the same award in the category

of Significant Investment Activity / Integrated Development Strategy. It has also been repeatedly awarded for its environmental policy.

Lamda Hellix is aimed at all big corporations and organizations of public sector, telecommunications providers and at all companies with critical applications such as e-commerce, e-business, content, media etc. The company's clientele is made up of very large private and public sector organizations, as well as companies with extremely critical operations mainly in the telecommunications and Internet sectors. Some of the customers are: HP Hellas, Alpha Bank, HOL, Eurobank, Attica Bank, Piraeus Bank, PWC, Hellenic Petroleum, etc.

### Hyper Hosting

Hyper Hosting was founded in 2001 with main activity the provision of services of web hosting offering to customers tailored to fit packages. Today, after 19 years of operation, the range of the services provided has been developed. The services of the company cover all needs, both professional and amateur. Even in cases where the needs are specific, the Hyper Hosting is able to offer tailored-to-fit solutions that cover the full range of customer's special needs. Through the passing of years, today the company provides a great variety of services. Its main activities are:

- Web Hosting in servers located in Greece and Germany
- Online domain registration
- Cloud Servers in our own infrastructure
- Dedicated Server rental (standalone / clustered)
- Colocation with physical access to the equipment
- Web Design and Development of custom applications and websites
- Radio Streaming
- Reseller packages for our webhosting services
- SSL Certificates
- cPanel/WHM licenses

The company does not own a private data center but she maintains 2 racks in the datacenter of the Athens Stock Exchange through which she is providing her services in Greece. She has invested in the support service that she is offering to customers as the Hyper Hosting team is made up of System Administrators and not just first class technical support. She has her own equipment that have set up from the very beginning, which means that there is knowledge about its structure, whether hardware or software, and can provide immediate and responsible technical support to any problem that may arise.

Hyper Hosting is a company that is paying attention mainly on support services. Having dealt with over 30000 support incidents they have developed a know-how that enables them to identify possible problems that customers are facing without wasting time or money. In order to be able to meet these specific needs they have developed a web-based HelpDesk since 2007 so that they can communicate with customers for solving problems no matter date or time. A support by telephone is also provided for all customers regardless of where they are.

In august of 2019 Hyper Hosting is the first company in Greece that she became “cPanel Certified Partner”. 8 months ago cPartner announced the launching of the cPanel Certified Partner Program in the context of the discrimination of its partners who are able to provide quality support to their customers. This distinction means that an immediate solution to most of the problems reported by users can be provided by a number of people who have excellent knowledge of cPanel. Those certifications are updated regularly, certifying the knowledge in new versions of cPanel.

Hyper hosting is trying to develop a special relationship with each customer individually, gaining the trust of a wide range of clients. Among other customers are included ministries, pension funds, municipalities, politicians, industries, internet service providers, retailers, television and radio stations, non-profit organizations, artists, freelancers, individuals etc.

### Hostmein

Hostmein is a company that is activating in domain name registration or transfer, web hosting and dedicated hosting services. It is a quite big company with 6 data centers

and present points in Europe and America, with the most of the infrastructure to be based in European continent.

Company's mission is to make it possible to access and provide quality, reliable and sophisticated technology services both in Greece and abroad. They are visualizing the introduction of innovative services through satisfying the growing needs of information systems of businesses. Their main priority is their profitability in combination with the immediate adaption to market needs. Their values are very important for Hostmein and they are the motive they need in order to keep moving forward. Quality, credibility, technology, speed, creativity and passion are those values which their identity.

Furthermore, company is focusing in the field of research and development. Specialized people try new technologies in company's labs in order to update the services which are provided. By this way, customers are getting an adding value to the service they buy or they resell to their own customers.

Hostmein is the first company in Greece and one of the few in Europe that provide to her clients web hosting in a network that control the movement in the website (Web Application Filtering). By this way even if customer's site has a security breach for example, the malicious hacker will not be able to bring a successful hit against it.

Finally, the company has a high sense of social responsibility as she tries to have a positive and productive interaction with the social environment in which its operations take place. Respect to customer, respect to the society and respect to the environment is a combination that Hostmein fights for it in order to adopt a strong Corporate Social Responsibility.

### 3.3 PEST Analysis

The adapting of a modern business to changes of the external environment requires the study, the analysis and the treatment of policies, economic, social and technological factors. The analysis of the following parameters is very essential for the development of business strategy within an ever increasing and competitive environment and it is known as PEST analysis. This kind of analysis is a strategic marketing tool that is looking to the Political environment, the Economical environment, the Social environment and finally the Technological environment.

In the Political environment belong laws and interventions of the state that affect the operation of the business. Part of the Economic environment is the economic indicators, such as inflation and unemployment. The social environment includes changes in consumer buying habits and various social phenomena. Finally, in technological environment are mainly the trends of technology.

#### Political Environment

Political factors include the institutional framework within which the business operates locally and internationally. It refers to the laws, government agencies and the various groups that influence modern organizations either directly or indirectly. Adding or removing a government's legislative or regulatory restriction can create significant strategic not only threats but also opportunities for those businesses like Lancom.

Political instability, which exist the last years in Greece, and the constant changes in tax legislation prevent long term planning of business moves. It is essentially about the general political climate of a country, such as politics, stability or instability, creating a positive and negative climate respectively.

When the law on personal data protection that was passed on April of 2016 and became mandatory for all member states of the European Union on May of 2018, there was a slight disruption to the business world for companies such as Lancom, who are linked to a lot of information and data of both customers and customers of their customers and employees or partners etc. The new law created a single legal framework, without the need for national legislation to be adopted and repealing existing legislation. By this way the obligations of businesses was significantly increased, while the size of the fines made this law one of the top issues of management's agenda. Since everyone had to follow the new data of these changes, Lancom also had to take immediate action in order to assure its customers that they were safe but reinforce its brand name as well for the upcoming customers.

As a consequence, Lancom decides to act and nowadays she has a certified Data Protection Officer on company's staff and on January of 2018 she added at her

portfolio of certifications the certification ISO 27017, providing in this way all of her services compatible with the General Data Protection Regulation.

### Economical environment

The economical environment derives from the economic situation of a country such as the growth rate, the inflation, unemployment and debt indices, tax system, income level, economic and trade relations with other countries. On the other hand, competitive market conditions are concerned and the business relationship with suppliers, customers, banks and stakeholders as well. This means that in order to make important decisions executives must take into account and consider all of the above factors.

It is a fact that the economic level of the country during the last years is not stable at all, which is a big obstacle for businesses. Increasing taxation is a big enough burden for the company its costs rise. A portion of the money that the company could previously have invested to upgrade its equipment and more of its services have been transferred to fixed costs. This means that Lancom should be ready to deal with tax related changes as it is an issue that has been increasing over the last years in Greece.

### Social Environment

The social environment encompasses all social changes, the demographic characteristics and the structure of a society, the perception of inhabitants of a particular community and more generally the whole social organization of a country. The most important social factors which affect a business are income distribution, consumerism, the level of consumer education and their attitude towards work and leisure time.

Today's societies are in the most part multicultural. People of different nationalities and cultures come together in almost every face of daily life. A business could derive a long-term competitive advantage by enhancing diversity within organization. Besides, employing people from different social groups contributes to a better understanding of the coming changes and a significant expansion of the proposed solutions.

Moreover, diversity can help to improve understanding of customer needs. Such as all employees, all clients too come from different social groups. Finally, diversity helps also to improve the reputation and image of the company. This has two main important benefits. On the one hand it contributes to sales growth and on the other hand it contributes to the increase in applications for existing vacancies. By this way company will be able to achieve both its immediate goals such as the market share increase, profits etc and also long term goals as it can attract more executives and



employees who would like to work in an environment of mutual understanding and freedom.

For all the above reasons Lancom is a company that takes into account the importance of combining different social levels even if it is related to educational background. People of Lancom come from different social groups and different specialties. By this way they have managed to organize a team that everyone contributes with their own separate way so they can make a progress together.

### Technological environment

In the technological environment belongs all modern technology which can be used to improve quality of provided services. A company cannot compete with its competitors when it uses old technology and outdated equipment. This last section of this analysis refers to technological trends or achievements that take place outside the market and can have a significant impact on the business and its strategy. These trends can be opportunities for those businesses that are able to exploit them and effectively introduce them into their business. However, the emergence of new technology does not necessarily mean that businesses that stick to the prior technology will face the specter of extinction. Sometimes, it is quite difficult to assess with any certainty the long-term consequences that a new technology will have on a branch.

Technology is a very important factor for Lancom as the changes that it may bring affect its activities both positively and negatively. A typical example is the fact that the birth of data centers came from the evolution of technology. In the beginning there was the personal computing and after that as more and more businesses and organizations started connecting to the internet there were the need for managing IT resources better, the need for systems. Then, microcomputers started to be setting up inside old computer rooms by businesses, which were referring to them as “data centers”. As maintenance and the need for suitable places with proper infrastructure born the need for outsourcing, outsourcing became one of the data center technology trends that transformed computing. Thus, there was an evolution about the way businesses were using and managing data, which finally led to the development of data center technology trends.

## **4. SWOT ANALYSIS**

SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning tool which is usually used by a company when a decision needs to be taken. It is also applied for the assessment of the current situation and readiness of the business. This is done through the analysis of the internal and external environment of a company in the context of short term strategic business planning. On one hand the analysis of “Strengths” and “Weaknesses” mainly concerns the internal environment of the business, while on the other hand the analysis of “Opportunities” and “Threats” mainly concerns the study of the external environment.

The details of those categorized analysis are a substantial perception of the situation of the business at the moment and of what the business has achieved until now. The objective purpose of the company is to take advantage of the strong points, to minimize the impact of the vulnerabilities, to exploit the opportunities of the environment and finally, to be able to face possible threats that may occur.

SWOT analysis is not just a conversion of facts into words. It is a simple but a very useful and productive tool for companies like Lancom as it is a clear reflection of the reality. By this reflection Lancom can draw conclusions and take actions so as to crosscheck if those information taken from the environment refer to something that can help the company to reach her goals or if they refer to any obstacle which must be overcome or minimized in order to achieve the intended results. In that way, company should focus on a strength that is strong as this strength has the ability to evolve to a basic capability. In other words, the most important meaning of SWOT Analysis, is that Lancom must match the strengths and the opportunities from where company’s capabilities will emerge, and then link the strengths with the opportunities from where restrictions will come from and finally, through the connection of the weaknesses and threats company’s passive points will appear, which means that a weakness will be similar to a threat.

## **4.2 Plan of SWOT Analysis for Lancom**

### **Strengths (S)**

- High quality services
- Experienced and fully qualified personnel
- Presence and cover in both Athens and Thessaloniki
- 2 proprietary data centers
- 100% Greek company
- Location of geo-strategic importance across OTE building
- Offering customized services
- 24/7/365 customer support
- Fast delivery of projects
- Certifications
- Enterprise Class level infrastructures

### **Weaknesses (W)**

- Low level of recognition
- Limited promotion of business
- Limited Marketing actions

### **Opportunities (O)**

- Creation of new products
- Development of new distribution channels
- Expanding abroad

### **Threats (T)**

- Legislation about personal information
- Recession
- High competition
- Possible entry into the markets
- Changes in purchasing/customer's order
- Rapid technology development

### 4.3 Description of SWOT Analysis

The prime feature and strong point of the company is the high quality of services that are offered in combination with the good reputation of the brand the last few years. The name of the business is accompanied by positive feedback and a sense of satisfaction from both customers and partners. Lancom has established a strong and of many years connection with its partners as it is not only limited to dealing with transactions and sales but developing trust and support relationships. Staff is specialized in their area of employment and declares satisfied with environmental, remuneration and participation in decision-making process. Owing two state-of-the-art Cloud Data Centers, in Thessaloniki and Athens gives the company the capability of covering geographically the full range of the needs of each business or organization providing the full range of services. The fact that those buildings is in the property of the company gives them the opportunity to have less expenses which make it easier to invest in infrastructure or in anything else that is necessary in order to be upgraded. Being a totally Greek business is a particular important issue for Greek companies, mainly for reasons of immediate network response and of top Greek technical support. The special feature of those data centers is that they are the first in Greece that consist of 100% virtualized infrastructures, having been built in 2009 and initially designed with specifications to provide exclusively cloud services. The location of Lancom's Data Centers is another one characteristic that gives the company a great advantage. They are located very close to the OTE headquarters, which is the main telecommunications provider in the country, both in two cities. With this choice it is obvious that company is giving focus on connectivity, security and business continuity. From services aspect, many customized services are offered in order to cover the exact and special needs of each customer. As company adopts a customer-centric approach, she has a personalized contact with each customer not only before a deal but also after a sale. This is one of the biggest advantages as customers can have completely support by Lancom whenever it is needed so that technicians can intervene and provide solutions to any problem that may appears on time. As mentioned before, quality, reliability and security of offered services are issues of great importance for Lancom that gives them a strategic advantage. That is why company is certified with ISO 9001:2008 and 27001:2013 following the international standards on information quality and security, being in this way able to guarantee her customers that she is able to deliver her promise.

One basic weakness of the company is that she is not that known in companies and organizations that are not already customers. The level of recognition of the brand is quite low in business world and that is connected with the fact that advertising and promotion of company is in low levels. The only way that company is acquiring customers is through the word of mouth advertising. Due to the high quality of services that Lancom is offering in combination with the importance and attention that she gives to each and every one company or organization, the word of mouth has a

very positive impact on the empowerment and development of company's clientele. However, in any attempt of acquiring new customers is quite difficult in the beginning as the majority of companies do not know much about the brand name. So, there is a gap in marketing department where the marketing actions as far as branding and company's advertising are concerned are limited.

One of the opportunities that the business could exploit is to create new products. As it is well known, technology is growing rapidly day by day. This could be a motivation for the company so that by keeping an eye on the developments will be there to meet new needs that may be arisen concerning data and management of information for companies and organizations. One other great opportunity could be the development of a new distribution channel. As Lancom provides also support services she could collaborate with external technicians who could be the connecting link between the company and the potential new clients. Besides, finding and collaborating with new distribution networks creates expectations for more successful operations. Finally, expanding abroad is always an opportunity for companies that could exploit. Lancom was created with specific specifications, having as one of its main goals the growth in the international markets. Maybe company's approach to foreign markets is quite different from that of the Greek market, but still there is the mentality for extroversion.

Environmental threats include first of all, the economic crisis that is prevalent these days both in Greece and globally. The financial crisis is a major threat to all businesses that have to cope with large taxation which have a negative impact on their business. Moreover, not long ago the law on the protection of personal information of both individuals and businesses was passed. This means that any organization handling personal data relating to individuals within the European Union will be required to comply fully with the new EU General Data Protection Regulation by reviewing or revising all procedures for managing its information. The GDPR aims to extend data protection in the era of big data and cloud computing, ensuring that data protection is a fundamental right that will be consistently regulated across Europe. This law is quite a milestone for Lancom as it needs to be able to deal with such threats. On the other hand, competition is quite intense as it a branch with great potential and that is making more attractive for others to enter into the market. May technology development can be an opportunity for further development, but it is a threat as well as it hides risks that company needs to be prepared in order to face them. Changes of technology are connected with changes of customers' needs. As a consequence if Lancom wants to please and have completely satisfied customers, she has to recognize those needs the moment that are arisen and always be there on time in order to provide services that are compatible to her purpose. This means that

company has to be flexible in possible changes so that she can continue to operate effectively.

## **5. Marketing Strategy**

The Marketing Strategy usually relates to the actions to be taken to achieve the objectives of the project. The strategy that Lancom is going to follow will clearly state the way the business needs to operate in order to secure comparative advantages over its competitors and to exploit its potential to maximize customer satisfaction.

The marketing strategy guidelines refer to:

- The direction of the business, namely the choice of markets and products will place to them
- The means that will be used to ensure the competitive operation of the business in the market
- The way that the company will distribute and utilize the resources available to her.

The orientation towards specific market segments must be accompanied by the continuous focus of staff, at all levels of the company on customer needs and competitive environmental conditions. This is achieved by focusing and listening carefully to the needs of each segment, defining and maintaining the capabilities that the reputation of the business already has and of course delivering the quality perceived by the customer in products and services both before and after the sale. There must always be an effort for the continuous improvement and development of partnerships and alliances from behalf of the company. By this way, Lancom will assimilate the features of adaptability and the ability to serve specific needs for different segments of the market.

In general, there are several factors that influence the formulation of strategic marketing. Some of them are the internal and external environment of the business, the operational resources, the competitive environment in which it operates, the opportunities and threats, but also an assessment of its present situation. It is also very important the fact that in order to take advantage of an opportunity it has identified in the market, the company must also have potential to exploit it. Thus, depending on whether the opportunity is large or small combined with its large or small potential, appropriate alternative strategies vary.

## 5.1 Segmentation

Market segmentation according to Smith (1956) refers to the systematic process of dividing an aggregate market into groups of consumers who have similar needs and who respond with similar modifications to the variables of the marketing mix. The market segment could be defined as a recognizable group of consumers with specific requirements which may be or they could be important in defining a separate product strategy. Segmentation by high-end businesses is not just a way of targeting potential customers but it is an inherent part of the structure and culture of the business. All parts of the business are aware that the market is segmented by this way, while they provide a strategic basis for how the business understands its interaction with the business environment. Behind every targeted segment there is a complete infrastructure with its own marketing group, its own buyers and its own administration. All the elements of their infrastructure aim to make the brand survive in that segment of the market.

There are different segmentation processes that a business can implement. For Lancom it is decided to apply segmentation based on customer characteristics, since it is preferable for the business to be customer focused and organizational bound to a particular type of segmentation. This method refers to the case that the company uses customer databases which are often available in the business, such as purchasing plans, location, products or service preference.

Lancom aims to be greatly benefitted from the particular type of segmentation that will follow. Initially, she aims to a more successful harmonious combination of marketing with consumer needs. As customer needs are different marketing offerings for each market segment offers them the best solution. Precisely because consumers differ in sensitivity to services prices, and given the market segmentation the company can increase the average price of its services and thus improve its profits. With this segmentation it is possible to retain customers by offering products in different segments of the market. As customers through the passing of time change they seek to find other products and services that meet their new or changed needs. They change as some of their characteristics are moderated and therefore they are integrated into other segments of the same market. As a result Lancom can retain its customers to the extent that she offers different services in different segments of markets.

Taking all the above into consideration customer segments for Lancom are the following:

- Public organizations
- Companies providing internet and data related services
- Companies which are related with tangible products
- Companies that have e-shop and some kind of online platform

All of these segments have different preferences and they need different products and services in order to please their own customers.

By completing the market segmentation, process Lancom will need to identify the segments that are suitable for targeting. Having analyzed the competition in the market, capabilities of the company and its weaknesses, it can more easily respond to opportunities in specific segments of the market. The development of marketing mix and the decisions of the business regarding each element of the mix determine the strategic placement of services in the market and of course in the mind of the consumer.

## 5.2 The Marketing Mix

The role of the action plan refers to the marketing tactics that will follow that will include the development of the marketing mix in order to effectively implement the strategies that were set by Lancom. The elements of the marketing mix can influence customers in their decisions to buy a product or use a service. According to Kotler and Keller (2010) marketing mix is “the tools and techniques a business has for an organization to implement strategic marketing planning”. There are many definitions but in general, the view is that the marketing mix is a process where four or seven key tools are employed to meet the needs and desires of the customer at the lowest possible cost.





As it is most commonly being referred the 4p's of the original marketing Mix are:

- Product
- Price
- Place
- Promotion

## **Product**

It refers not only to the natural product but also to the intangible services that accompany it such as the brand name and meaning of the product, warranties, varieties, the experience this product or service offer to customer etc. I would suggest that the company should retain its range or services as it has been proved that they worked with positive results in the market. However, there should always be the rationale for new services or upgrade to existing ones because as it was mentioned earlier technology is rapidly growing and if someone wants to continue to maintain the competitive advantage he has only to follow the developments.

## **Price**

Price is a very important factor as several conclusions can be drawn from different options. It refers to the price which is paid by the consumer in order to benefit from the service offered. Some times, the service prices are a little more complicated than the product ones. So, Lancom is trying to be very careful about pricing. The prices are the ones that often act as identities for some services or products. Besides, there are many consumers who value price as a key criterion for a specific purchase. Many of them identify the price with the quality of a service or product. So, may an expensive service imply superior quality, while a relatively low price may indicate a moderate quality of service.

In particular, Lancom has chosen not to publish and disclose the prices of the offered services. In addition, there is a more customer-centric pricing system, preferring not to have standard prices but to adjust prices to each individual customer. Personally, I would recommend continuing this tactic as it has been proven to deliver positive results, with satisfied customers who feel they receive a unique service, which fact gives Lancom the relevant prestige and professionalism.

## **Place**

For services place usually means where they will be based and where their clients will have access. In Lancom both in Thessaloniki and in Athens the location plays a very important role and is one the advantages of the company. The locations of the data centers have a geostrategic importance as they are located exactly opposite the

building of OTE. The choice of location highlights the attention, the company's focus on connectivity, security and business continuity.

## **Promotion**

Promotion refers to the different ways the company communicates, describe and advertise its services or products. It also addresses the sales process and other areas such as public relations and advertising. The fact is that for services which are not tangible and in particular for business-oriented ones it is more difficult than products, which are tangible, to promote. The main purpose of promotion is to give potential customers the reason they need this service and how they will benefit from it.

The only tool that Lancom has used so far to promote its services and the brand name is the word of mouth. Judging from the results until now it is a method that works positively for the company. Due to the high quality but also the good relationship she develops with her clients she has created a very good reputation from her own clients who have attract the interest of other customers by spreading this well worked reputation. However, the company wants to expand the promotion part a little further and to use other methods to increase its customer base and its sales.

## **6. Actions-Implementation**

### **5.1 Goals**

As the company wants to increase the percentage of her sales she estimates to achieve this by increasing its promotion and advertising methods. With this amendment she wishes to spread her reputation further and make her brand name known to the market.

To sum up, the goals set by Lancom are the following:

- To increase public awareness,
- To arouse the interest of the purchasing public,
- To arouse positive public sentiment about the company
- To spread information about the use and the quality of services
- To motivate potential customers to reach out to the company so as to make use of any of the offered services
- To build trust relationships and consequently loyal customers.

## 5.2 Ways to achieve goals

After discussion with the people of Lanom we came up with ways out which were considered appropriate to achieve the above goals that were set:

Social Media: Social networking is a very popular way for companies to advertise their work. LinkedIn in particular is the preferred social platform so as to create a more active profile. LinkedIn is a purely professional website that is used by many businesses not only to find a prospective employee but also to enhance the image of the company in the professional world.

Exhibitions: participating in business exhibition is yet another way for potential customers to get to know the company and services that she offers. Many are the entrepreneurs who visit such exhibitions so that they can keep up with the developments and get to know potential new partners. Therefore, it is a very good opportunity for Lancom to participate actively in such exhibitions in order to attract new collaborations.

Attend universities: one of the most important ways for Lancom to achieve the goals that she has set is to get into universities. Many times universities are the means of connecting prospective employees with the job market. I personally think it is a very helpful for young people to get to know to the company. This will also enhance the word of mouth that already is taking place. There are also many students who are young business candidates. Getting to know Lancom and communicating with her for their startup is very important for young entrepreneurship.

Sponsorships: Sponsoring is another way that can attract new collaborations. Participating as a sponsor in different events enhances the image of the business. One step further is the offer of a service as a gift in many competitions for startups.

## 6. Summary

To summarize, Lancom has a vision for the future and wants to maintain her successful history record setting two key goals for expansion:

1. The growth of the percentage of sales made directly to end customers
2. To make known her brand name to the business world

In relation to the achievement of the first objective, the processes that Lancom will follow will entail the imposition of strategies for attracting new customers but also the implementation of a strong communication policy.

As far the second objective is concerned, innovative means of promoting the company were chosen. More traditional ways of advertising such as television, radio or press

have been dismissed as they are incompatible with the culture of the business and they do not promote its value.

It is important that the action plan is understood by all involved in its implementation, both directly and indirectly. There should be informed all employees as the project is implemented by everyone and not just those involved in its design,

Finally, the way in which company will monitor the implementation of the project as well as the procedures to be followed in case of revisions or changes should be agreed.

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