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Abstract

Health is currently a strong trend and self-care is becoming an increasingly important complement to normal visits to a doctor. Particularly the pharmaceutical industry, the food industry and the retail trade are important players in the market. There are differences between countries of how the market is structured and what are the regulations concerning the actual products and their distribution and how the retail trade on health products is structured. In Sweden the case is unique. The challenge is that Sweden's pharmacy market is, at the moment, still dominated by one player, the National Corporation of Swedish Pharmacies, Apoteket Ab. They have the liberty of choosing the selection of health related products, e.g. food supplements, in all of the pharmacies. The pharmacy market is soon to be liberalized, which will initiate some profound changes. The purpose of this study is to describe and find out what are challenges for suppliers when entering the Swedish food supplement market through pharmacy distribution channel.

The theoretical part of the research dealt with description of market characteristics, determinants of distribution channel choices and organisational buying in selection of suppliers. The research was conducted by qualitative approach. In the data collection there were some significant challenges for the author to conduct the research due to unwillingness of different parties. The data was collected by primary sources from four different supplier companies with four theme interviews (personal and telephone) and by secondary sources of three questionnaire answers and Email correspondence. The data analysis was made, first, by categorizing the data by using the themes utilized in the interviews, and second, by grouping the concepts into themes.

There are several factors, which can be seen as critical challenges. These main challenges are related to changes in market characteristics, distribution channel choices, in addition to supplier and product selection criteria. However, these different themes are all partly overlapping each other. Mainly all the main challenges are related to the way of doing business at Apoteket, hence the supplier and product selection criteria can be regarded as the most challenging issue in entering the Swedish food supplement market at the moment. In addition, the changes, which are emerging in the nearest future, can be seen as both challenging as well as initiating opportunities for all parties, particularly for suppliers. The theory mainly supported the empirical findings.

Key words	Market entry, distribution channel, pharmacy, Sweden, supplier, organisational buying behaviour
Further information	

