

MGT 3030 - International Business Management

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CookOut Foreign Market Assessment

## **Executive Summary**

Entering the Swedish fast-food market presents unique challenges and opportunities for CookOut. Major hurdles include stringent labor laws, environmental regulations, and strong competition from established local brands like Max Burgers. Compliance with Sweden's labor laws, including competitive wages and collective bargaining, is essential for employee goodwill and legal alignment. To meet environmental standards, CookOut should adopt reusable packaging and sustainable practices, aligning with the eco-conscious expectations of Swedish consumers.

Cultural adaptation is key—Swedes prioritize health, sustainability, and local flavors. Integrating vegetarian and vegan options, using locally sourced ingredients, and incorporating Swedish-inspired items can attract health-conscious and environmentally aware customers. A strategic pricing model, with promotions during economic challenges and competitive pricing, can help win over cost-conscious consumers. Leveraging technology through mobile payment systems and a dedicated app can enhance convenience and customer loyalty.

CookOut should begin with locations in urban centers like Stockholm and Gothenburg, where purchasing power is higher and consumers are more receptive to new dining experiences. Marketing efforts should emphasize the brand's sustainability and transparent practices to resonate with the local emphasis on eco-friendly initiatives. By understanding the local market dynamics, adapting to cultural preferences, and maintaining competitive pricing, CookOut can successfully establish itself as a strong player in Sweden's fast-food industry.

## **I. Political and Legal Risks in Sweden**

Sweden is known for its stable political environment, high transparency, low corruption, and effective governance. Sweden's neutral stance in international conflicts generally shields it from geopolitical risks, but broader EU dynamics and trade agreements still influence it. Sweden has a mixed economy with elements of capitalism and socialism. The government is a constitutional monarchy. Sweden is known for ease of business, ranking 10 out of 190 jurisdictions according to the World Bank's Doing Business Report.

### **Legal Issues for Doing Business**

Our client, CookOut, would adhere to Swedish labor laws to ensure employees work fair hours and receive fair treatment. This includes receiving overtime compensation after working forty hours weekly. CookOut will gauge a fair and steady payment rate for employees; since Sweden does not have a set "minimum wage" like the United States, our client will have to make collective bargaining agreements. It should also look to consult competitive restaurants in the country and find out the rate they are giving. Workplace safety is another legal factor our client must consider. They would need to follow the Swedish Work Environment Act for guidance to ensure that employees are in a safe and clean environment and their chain is in compliance. Keeping food safety in mind, inspections will occur; not only will the chain keep clean, but so will its waste. With Sweden holding environmental sustainability in the highest regard, CookOut will need to comply with waste disposal and recycling laws. "Sweden boasts the most environmentally conscious population in the world...its citizens are among the highest recyclers (Colonial, 2024). For example, As a member of the European Union, Sweden began adhering to the directive 2019/904 on January 1, 2024. This legislation states that nationwide fast-food companies that sell single-use products must offer customers reusable options. For CookOut, this would include offering reusable cups and trays to replace plastic items they currently use. This law aims to limit the negative impact on people's health and the environment that stems from fast food production and distribution. The law also states that information about reusable items must be easily accessible and available at the point of sale (EC, 2024). That is an interesting law that must be considered, consulting local food options on how they go about this will prove to be helpful. That said, we would advise our client to use eco-friendly materials for packaging to appeal to the values of the Swedish population. Unlike the United States locations that lack the option, I would add recycling in Sweden. Lastly on the legal aspect, The Swedish Competition Authority monitors market competition to ensure that companies are not conducting unfair trading practices in the food supply chain. This can consist of unfair contract terms or unfair behavior in contractual relationships. Significant imbalances in the bargaining power between suppliers and buyers of agricultural and food products are common in the supply chain.

### **Description of Industry and Considerations for Target Country**

Our client, CookOut, is part of the fast food industry. It will be highly competitive because convenient food is popular in Sweden. Our Client must have many considerations, with the main one being a cultural expectation of promoting sustainability as we touched on previously. As well as, adapting the menu to fit local expectations. Changing the entire menu would not be effective, but adding subtle changes and slightly healthier options would go a long way.

Now on to specific risks for foreign firms in Sweden. Sweden has developed a National Food Strategy to retain competitiveness in the food industry toward 2030. The strategy involves the whole food supply chain throughout the country and is similar to the food strategy of several other countries. The idea is to correspond to their level of food production with consumer demand. This contributes to intensified competition in the Swedish food industry that could make it more difficult for a new restaurant to enter the market.

### **Economic, Social, and Political Circumstances**

Now to touch on Sweden's economic, social, and political circumstances. After Covid-19, Sweden's economy saw a decrease in private consumption and development of housing. Contributions to the country's economic challenges include high inflation and rising interest rates. Sweden has seen uncertainties about income due to the cooling labor and housing markets resulting in restraints on private consumption. (CAG, 2024). According to an official EU website on finance, Sweden saw weak economic growth in 2024, but the economy is projected to recover in 2025 and to maintain momentum in 2026. Falling inflation is set to increase real income and domestic demand. Now these are just projections, and not for certain, so CookOut must take that into consideration. Social culture in Sweden revolves around the environment and sustainability. As of right now, Sweden is the global leader in organic culture, recycling, and renewable energy (AFS-USA,2024). The groupwork of Sweden's society is based on individualism and equality for all citizens. This promotes a strong sense of pride in their nationalism. The prime minister is Ulf Kristersson, representing the Moderate Party. The next election takes place in 2026, so something to possibly dive into as a factor in if our client should enter the market. Global leaders can affect prices, supply chain, and legal factors that can affect a fast dining corporation. After Russia's attack on Ukraine, Sweden left their stance on neutrality and sided with Ukraine. They aided the country with military and humanitarian support, and following they applied to be part of NATO. As of right now, the country has tensions with Turkey and its migrants due to its change in leadership, putting its right-wing party in the majority regarding these specific issues. The US and Sweden have a generally strong relationship, sharing the same values and interests. There is typically trade between Sweden and the US, so establishing a location with similar values and relations will be beneficial.

### **Relationships between Home Country and Target Country**

Other corporations have had their attempts at breaking into the Swedish market. Subway, Burger King, and McDonalds have all successfully done it, and KFC attempted back in 2015. I would

suggest our client to do a deep dive into what worked and what did not for these competitors. Sweden also has their own fast food restaurants; the popular ones are “Max” & “Sibylla.” Max is Sweden’s most successful version of the American Burger Bar. Sibylla has traditional Swedish food in a fast-food concept, which is a big hit among citizens. CookOut will have to study these corporations closely and see how they interact with the locals, and what seems to be the cultural norm. CookOut can bring their exciting new taste to Sweden in a way that is familiar to them.

## **II. Demand for CookOut’s Offerings**

### **Overall population, essential market segments, and purchasing power**

Sweden’s total population is 10.49 million. However, when deciding where to geographically place a CookOut location. Specific demographics should be considered such as age in different populations (GlobalData, n.d.). Larger cities like Stockholm and Gothenburg will be the most ideal due to the popularity of more casual restaurants where customers can receive their food quickly (GlobalData, n.d.).

For assessing the essential market segments students and young adults as well as people who are looking for affordable, quick food at late hours (Dzierlatka Restaurant, n.d.) will be prioritized. This specific chain also prioritizes convenience of the customers, containing a large menu with a diverse selection of food quickly (CookOut statistics, n.d.). CookOut is generally enjoyed by people in the 18 - 34 age range and although does not market towards a specific gender, has a slightly higher male customer percentage due to its outdoor barbeque atmosphere (CookOut, n.d.)

Looking at the target consumers’ purchasing power, depending on the region of Sweden the average household income can range from 30 to 50 thousand SEK a year (Nordic Statistics Database, n.d.). The higher incomes are usually found in larger cities. This and Sweden’s overall economic stability contributes to consumer’s attitude and ability to spend more money on unessential items. However, with the current inflation rate that is affecting the country it may result in the consumer's decision to not eat out (Nordic Statistics Database, n.d.). This may be countered with CookOut’s affordable prices. Statistically it is found that Swedish people eat out 2-3 times a week but during festivals and other large events those numbers rapidly rise (Nordic Statistics Database, n.d.).

### **Cultural values, Consumer tastes, preferences, and behaviors**

The Swedish population values the environment and sustainability. With CookOut typically using styrofoam, consumers will not avoid the company if products are made more environmentally friendly. By adjusting plans to align with the population's values, the company can create a relationship with customers. Soon after, customers will engage with the nightlife, drawing more revenue to the company since most local restaurants close around 10:30 PM.

Though CookOut is a prevalent Southern-US fast food chain, its long-term appeal in Sweden would be questionable. The initial interest would be spiked by the new flavors brought to Sweden, though once they learn nutritional information, sales may begin to decrease Swedish consumers are proven to be very health-conscious. The typical Swedish cuisine is based on local organic produce and nearby farms. With this being said, CookOut's menu does not align with these values, as a large portion of the population is vegetarian or vegan, so the company would have to trade some of the menu items for traditional Swedish dishes. By curating items specific to consumers, an increase in sales should occur, especially within the younger communities looking for a fast and affordable food option.

## **Part 2: Level of competition and any unmet demand in the marketplace**

### **Primary competitors and these competitor's offerings**

The primary competitors for CookOut in the Swedish fast-food landscape are Max Burgers, McDonald's, and local food trucks. Max Burgers offers a diverse menu of various types of burgers, including beef, chicken, vegetarian, and vegan options. Their menu also includes chicken wings, salads, fish, and milkshakes to cater to a broad range of consumers (Max Hamburgers, n.d.). McDonald's provides its classic global menu, including staple items like the Big Mac, Quarter Pounder, Chicken McNuggets, and McFlurry. They also incorporate some locally tailored items such as Swedish beef burgers and seasonal offerings, which are mostly various types of salads (McDonald's, n.d.). Local food trucks in Sweden serve a variety of fast-casual dishes, often containing American-inspired foods such as burgers and sides. Other trucks commonly offer hot dogs and grilled sausages with several toppings for added flavor, as well as falafel and kabobs (Visit Stockholm, n.d.).

### **Their strengths and weaknesses**

Max Burgers is Sweden's oldest burger chain with a loyal customer base and a focus on sustainability that resonates strongly with customers. However, the use of high-quality sustainable ingredients lead to higher prices compared to other fast food chains, which can deter customers on cheaper budgets (Hatchman, 2021). McDonald's benefits from brand recognition throughout Sweden, and its mobile ordering system leads to efficient customer interactions. Weaknesses fall in the perception of food quality and their negative environmental impact. Many health and eco-conscious consumers would rather purchase from local establishments that offer fresher and less processed dining options (Khandelwal, 2020). Local food trucks offer affordable prices and customizable entrees, where many consumers enjoy a unique cultural experience. However, they have limited reach and questionable food quality depending on location and/or time of day (BusinessDojo, n.d.).

### **Potential competitive advantages compare to those already competing in the target market**

Competitors in the market will have a leg up in the Swedish market since they are established and have many years of experience. As a new brand looking to enter, it has to be very diligent on its approach. CookOut will bring a unique taste to Sweden, but existing competitors will have significant advantages in brand loyalty, market understanding, supply chains, and quality of menu items. In order to match competitors it will have to alter the approach with what it offers on our menu, and the pricing we will offer. CookOut can become the most affordable option for Sweden which will draw a lot of attention to the brand. According to Food Chain Magazine Max burgers has been called the "most green" restaurant in the industry and the Swedish highly value that. If CookOut were to come in and undercut their prices, they would take advantage of their sustainability. CookOut will have to find ways to be sustainable without raising our prices( Food Chain Magazine, 2024).

Max has created a vegan menu and what they call "green burgers" that are made of chicken and fish to cut back on beef. This caused McDonalds to create their own McVegan menu and Sweden is one of the only countries where McDonald's offers this. This proves that companies are open to change when needed and will react fast to CookOut's entrance into the market. One thing CookOut should take advantage of when the market is talking about their sustainability efforts, one example of this is the biodegradable packaging CookOut uses for their milkshakes. All in all, the competitors will have clear

advantages in the market, but if CookOut focuses on our affordable pricing and unique taste it can make an impact on Swedish fast food.

### **III. Resources and Infrastructure Available in Sweden**

#### **Labor and Natural Resources**

Sweden has a bustling labor market, supported by laws regulating minimum wage to ensure workers are compensated fairly and treated equitably. CookOut would not encounter difficulties in hiring workers, as Sweden has a workforce with experience in the restaurant and fast-food industry. On average, Swedes are highly educated, which may result in higher labor costs; however, their productivity and multilingual abilities make them well-suited for roles in the service industry.

In terms of natural resources, Sweden prioritizes sustainable farming and ranching practices, leading to lower domestic meat production. However, importing meat would be manageable due to Sweden's robust trading networks. Staples like potatoes, integral to CookOut's menu, are abundant, thanks to Sweden's large potato farming industry. Furthermore, Sweden's thriving dairy industry aligns with the demand for high-quality dairy, complementing CookOut's offerings of milkshakes and ice cream.

#### **Raw Materials and Supplies**

Sweden's agricultural productivity and growing meat market, which generated \$7.83 billion in 2024 and is expected to grow by 5.35% annually over the next five years, make it an ideal location for CookOut (Statista, n.d.). With a menu centered around meat and dairy, the availability of these products locally would support CookOut's operations.

For construction materials, Sweden's high-quality steel and concrete are readily available. The country became the first to produce fossil fuel-free steel in 2021, significantly reducing carbon emissions. CookOut can leverage this material to create an environmentally friendly establishment. To address Sweden's cold climate, proper insulation will be a priority to ensure employee comfort. Additionally, CookOut can align with Sweden's sustainability values by installing solar panels. Access to various vendors in Sweden will facilitate procurement of the necessary supplies for a fast-food restaurant .

#### **Transportation and Broader Distribution Considerations**

Efficient operations in Sweden will require careful evaluation of transportation and distribution infrastructure. Sweden's well-maintained road and rail systems in cities like Stockholm,

Gothenburg, and Malmö ensure timely delivery of supplies to CookOut locations. Software like eLogii can optimize delivery routes, reducing both delivery times and fuel consumption.

Centralized distribution can further streamline operations, but strict adherence to Swedish food safety regulations will be essential during the transportation and storage of food items. A potential mobile app could enhance distribution efficiency by providing direct communication with customers.

## **Technology and Communication**

Sweden's fast-food industry has embraced a cashless payment infrastructure, primarily using digital systems like Swish and mobile apps (de Best, n.d.). Adopting these systems at CookOut locations would reduce the risk of theft and improve hygiene by eliminating cash handling.

Developing a mobile app for CookOut in Sweden could enhance customer engagement through loyalty programs and targeted marketing offers. These features could drive business growth by fostering customer retention and differentiating CookOut from competitors (Mammadli, n.d.).

## **IV. Strategic Importance of Sweden for CookOut**

### **Competitiveness and Worldwide Effectiveness**

If CookOut were to expand globally to Sweden, it would experience both opportunities for advancing its global competitiveness and severe limits to its influence due to the fact that it is not currently expanded outside the United States. Currently, fast comfort dining is growing more and more popular in Sweden, with chains like McDonald's and Burger King being the majority of fast food sales. Sweden and Austria hold the highest number of McDonald's per capita of the countries in Europe (Statista Research Department, 2024). A way for the restaurant chain to stand out against its competition and adapt to the local culture is to focus on its menu items and business practices. For example, sustainable practices and health conscious eating are important to a majority of the population when choosing where to eat (Waterton, 2024). CookOut will have to take time to develop menu items to offer that appeal to Swedish citizens.

### **Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

Entering the Swedish fast-food market could help CookOut attain a sustainable competitive advantage if it focuses on tailoring its business to local consumer preferences. CookOut is known for its diverse menu, affordable pricing, and drive-thru convenience (McDowell, 2022), which align well with the needs of consumers in fast-paced environments like Sweden. However, the fast-food industry in Sweden is competitive with focuses on sustainability and quality of food (López, n.d.). By adapting its offerings to use sustainable packaging and locally sourced



ingredients, CookOut could align with Swedish values and differentiate itself from competitors. These changes would likely foster long-term support from customers and strengthen its position in the market.

### **Adapting to Sweden's Values**

CookOut's adaptations and diverse menus are some of its many strengths. Playing to Sweden's value of sustainability, a new Swedish location could offer vegan selections, which have become very popular. However, doing this will not be enough to win over Sweden's population because large companies like Max Burgers cater to the sustainability values of the country. Therefore, capitalizing on the correct aspects is very important.

### **Tapping into a Growing and Receptive Market**

Expanding into Sweden offers significant opportunities for CookOut to increase its global competitiveness and enhance its worldwide effectiveness. The Swedish market is experiencing steady growth in the fast-food sector, with a projected annual growth rate of nearly 5% over the next five years (Statista, 2024). This growth is driven by increasing urbanization, higher disposable incomes, and a growing demand for convenient dining options. While Swedish consumers are known for their health-conscious choices, there is still a strong appetite for quality, affordable fast food, particularly among younger generations and urban populations. CookOut's value-driven, customizable menu could appeal to this market, offering a unique dining experience that stands apart from local competitors. Additionally, CookOut's 24/7 availability and late-night focus would resonate with Sweden's younger demographic, who often seek late-night food options, a market segment that remains under-served by local chains.

### **Strategic Geographic Position**

If CookOut successfully establishes itself in Sweden, it could easily expand into neighboring Nordic countries and potentially even into broader European markets. While other Nordic countries such as Norway or Denmark are viable options, Sweden stands out due to its population size and strong infrastructure. With over 10.6 million residents and a high concentration of urban centers, Sweden provides a larger customer base than its neighbors (World Population Review, 2024). Sweden also has strong trade and logistical ties with the rest of Europe, and a successful brand launch there could pave the way for a regional brand presence across Scandinavia and beyond. The country offers an efficient system for importing goods, setting up operations, and distributing food across the region, which could reduce operational complexities and costs in the long run.

### **Leveraging Sweden's Trend Towards Sustainability and Innovation**

While Swedish consumers are health-conscious, they are also increasingly concerned with sustainability and food sourcing. CookOut could tap into the trend of consumers seeking fast food that aligns with their values. Sweden is a hub for innovation, with a culture that embraces

new trends, technology, and ideas. This presents an opportunity for CookOut to test a new menu, digital ordering platforms, or delivery models.

### **First-Mover Advantage**

While Sweden has well-established fast-food chains, none offer CookOut's exact combination of late-night service, diverse menu, and affordability. By entering now, CookOut could gain a first-mover advantage by offering something unique in the Swedish fast-food landscape, particularly targeting younger customers who are looking for different late night dining options.

### **V. Final Recommendation**

We recommend that our client enter the Swedish market through an alliance. An effective course of action would be to pursue an alliance with an established Swedish food service operator, such as Max Burgers. Partnering with a well-regarded company like Max Burgers, known for their strong reputations in sustainability and customer satisfaction, would help CookOut get accustomed to local regulations and challenges with operations when first entering a foreign market.

A good starting point for CookOut's first Swedish location would be in Stockholm, targeting urban centers with higher populations of younger customers. Max Burgers already operates there, so this pilot location would work well with that potential alliance. Once established, CookOut could then expand to Gothenburg, which also has high-traffic areas and strong potential for customers. It could gear marketing towards sustainability and commitment to Swedish culture through use of local ingredients.

To overcome the liability of being foreign, CookOut should hire local employees and partner with local suppliers. These actions would resonate with Swedish consumers and establish a successful, lasting presence in the Swedish market. It would also help CookOut as a foreign brand to have employees who are familiar with cultural aspects of the market.

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