

A Critical Evaluation of the Idea of Exporting Baby Food from Canada to Nepal

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AGR1110

November 24, 2014

Word Count: 4,257 (not including the Title Page and Reference List)

Introduction

The Baby Food industry in Canada and worldwide is growing, while Nepal has little to no availability of convenient, nutritious baby food. The time is right to take advantage of the potential baby food market in Nepal. In this paper, I evaluate the potential ability of a specific Canadian company, Baby Gourmet, to succeed in filling that need with a specific product, Organic Grains Cereal. There are benefits to Canadian jobs and the estimated costs make this export a viable idea. Primarily higher income families and tourists will benefit in Nepal, but this is a significant portion of the consumer population, making this idea one that should be considered by Baby Gourmet or other interested baby food producing companies.

Part I.

Product Description

The product I am proposing for export from Canada to Nepal is the varieties of cereal produced by Baby Gourmet; called Organic Grains Cereal. These cereals are marketed as easy to digest and high in iron and vitamins, especially B vitamins (Baby Gourmet, 2014). The whole grain cereals contain no dairy, gluten, or soy and are made exclusively from grains grown in North America (Baby Gourmet, 2014). The packages are light, partially due to the fact that dry material is contained, weighing only 227 grams each (Baby Gourmet, 2014). However, for the purpose of exporting and for increasing the value of the product to the consumer, it would likely be more economical to package and ship in greater bulk. The nutritional value of these cereals is the real selling point. There are no preservatives or additives, no GMOs, and the quality is ensured by high Canadian grain standards. They are non-perishable and do not need to be refrigerated. When preparing the baby food, water or milk is added (Baby Gourmet, 2014), but the resealing package allows the cereal to stay fresh until used. The potential for this product's export does not mean that other products should not be explored as viable options as well, only that

this product caught my attention for the reasons outlined in this evaluation. Furthermore, other companies may be interested in taking the opportunity with one of their own unique products. The Organic Grains Cereal, however, is the item considered for recommendation in this paper. Due to its many quality features, this cereal is a product worth exporting.

The Company: Baby Gourmet

Baby Gourmet is a proudly Canadian company which began in 2006 and has recently been working at expanding past Canadian borders (Baby Gourmet, 2014; Nelson, 2012). The founders, sisters Jennifer Carlson-Broe and Jill Vos, wanted Baby Food products for their children that they themselves wouldn't be afraid to eat (Baby Gourmet, 2014). Jennifer's passion for food combined with her knowledge and experience in business has made for a successful entrepreneurial company that has been growing year by year. They create every Baby Gourmet product recipe in their own kitchens before sending the recipe to the plant and they monitor the production of each carefully (Baby Gourmet, 2014). In the beginning, they sold their 12 home-made Baby Food products at the local farmer's market, in Calgary (Weiss, 2013). Within 2 years of starting the sisters were selling 40 different products and making \$30,000 per month (Weiss, 2013). In order to form a business plan to grow, the sisters retreated from the farmer's market and hired a sales person who landed them a meeting with Walmart Canada (Weiss, 2013). The demand for their products quickly grew from Walmart to Loblaws to regional stores in the United States (Weiss, 2013). In 2011, the company employed about 20 people full time (Bailey, 2012). The projected revenue was 9 million for 2012 (Bailey, 2012). Baby Gourmet projected their 2014 revenue to be 20 million dollars (Weiss, 2013). Baby Gourmet also employs a board of directors which keeps the company vision at the forefront of expansion plans (Market Wired, 2012). The sisters are now looking at producing more products in and for the United States, specifically Florida and North Carolina, because of the company's consistent growth (Nelson, 2012). Not only that, Baby Gourmet has recently been looking into greater international expansion; they have tested the market in Japan with a 50,000

pouch shipment and have now set their interest on the U.K. market (Nelson, 2012). This means that to begin another export project would not require extra costs for licensing. Baby Gourmet is in an ideal situation for considering further exports.

From Field to Plate

When grains are taken from fields they go to a grain elevator to be stored. This involves cleaning the grains, drying them, and storing them until they are sold, usually within the year, often much sooner. The quality is preserved for the length of time but it is usually more economical to purchase the grains soon after they reach the elevator. Baby Gourmet purchases all their produce from North American sources how much of their budget goes into making those purchases and where there purchases are made have not been revealed. Moving the grains from the elevator to the plant certainly has its costs and transportation costs would impact the company directly and affect the price of their product, but it is a minimal amount per unit of product because a single shipment can produce many units. When one of Baby Gourmet's production plants receives the shipment of grains for the cereals, they first look to optimize safety, flavour and nutrients (Baby Gourmet, 2014). The pH is adjusted so that micro-organisms and bacteria have no chance to grow, then specific double pasteurization takes place using heat, hermetically sealed pouches and natural acids to ensure that the product is fresh, tasty and well-preserved without any unnatural or potentially harmful preservatives (Baby Gourmet, 2014). The packaged products are shipped to grocery stores all across Canada, primarily Walmart locations. They are found wherever 80% of all Canadian baby food is available and the company currently owns 15% of the Canadian market share for packaged organic baby foods (Baby Gourmet, 2014). Once the food is on the store shelves, the consumer purchases it, and prepares it for their baby. The current 227 gram package contains 8 servings of cereal which can be prepared with milk or water or even mixed into another meal, such as applesauce (Baby Gourmet, 2014).

Benefits to Canada

Baby Gourmet has a vision. They prioritize tasting the recipes before putting them into production, they believe in selecting the best North American Organic products, they are committed to quality and convenience, and they promise never to give to any baby what they wouldn't provide for their own (Baby Gourmet, 2014). Not only that, they have an enthusiasm for making a difference. They want their quality products to be available to all babies and in order to pursue this challenge they continue to grow but also give back (Baby Gourmet, 2014). In the 8 years since the company's conception, Baby Gourmet has donated over 660,000 meals to food banks and those less fortunate across North America and have committed to continue to provide community support (Baby Gourmet, 2014). They are proud to be known as a family oriented company (Baby Gourmet).

Canada will benefit from Baby Gourmet's choice to use only North American grown grains. The grain farmers rely on continued business and Baby Gourmet purchases a large sum of grains annually. 200 grams per bag, selling 12 million pouches in the States, 50,000 pouches in Japan, donating 90,000 pouches, and, say, 1 million pouches purchased in Canada – that means a minimum of 2,628 metric tonnes of grains are purchased by Baby Gourmet each year. This valued at \$7 (US) per bushel (Index Mundi, 2014) means Baby Gourmet's cereal products alone contribute at minimum \$675,941 to the grain industry in Canada each year, not to mention the fruit and vegetable farmers who are benefiting from Baby Gourmet's purchases. However, the benefit from purchases only goes to the Organic Farmers, but it is supporting a sector which strives to be environmentally sustainable for Canada.

Canadian jobs will be affected if Baby Gourmet takes this opportunity. Likely they have already increased their number from 20 full time jobs in production to allow for export to Japan and the States as well as their plans for the U.K. The exact numbers are impossible to calculate at this point, but it would not be unreasonable to project that the number of jobs will double by exporting to Nepal. This is

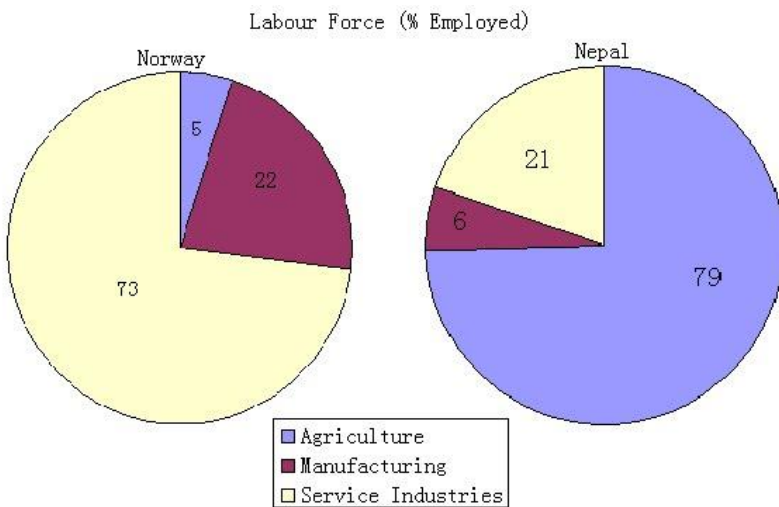
conditional upon the Nepalese market response. The 20 job increase is not solely in the production line, however. There will be transportation jobs, marketing and sales representative openings, and a need for more management positions. These will affect the Canadian employment rate but will have a greater impact where there is greater demand. It is perhaps more realistic to count on 5 or 10 more jobs before the market has been tested and established.

Part II.

Market Opportunity

Nepal is a land-locked country between China and India of approximately 147,000 square kilometers with a population of 29 million (World Facts, 2008). The capital is Kathmandu (World Facts,

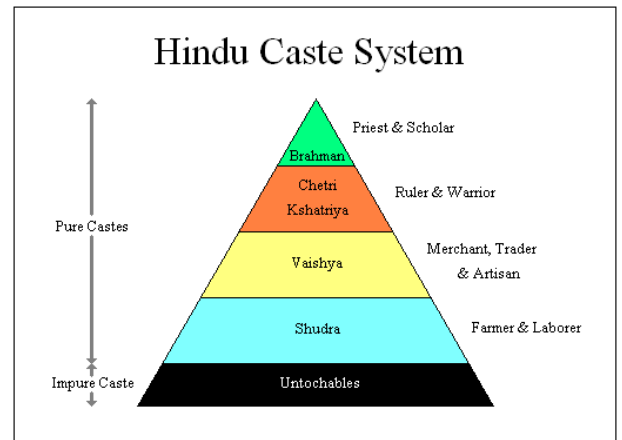
2008). 80% of the population is Hindu, and there are many ethnic groups represented throughout the country (World Facts, 2008). The currency is the Nepalese Rupee, the GDP \$29 billion, 38% of which is composed by the agriculture sector (World Facts, 2008). The graph to the left compares Nepal, a developing



country, and Norway, a developed country with respect to their labour forces. Note the difference in the percentages involved in agriculture with respect to the level of the country's development. This affects their ability to create their own commercial baby food. (Picture retrieved from: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_wTtcaae1cw0/TTM9d54i__I/AAAAAAAAANA/povtVivpVx0/s1600/Labour%2BForce.bmp)

Initially, the consumer population would be quite small because of the cost and the unfamiliarity with this particular product. The Canadian dollar converts to 55 rupees (Currency, 2014). The low

income earners such as housekeepers or construction workers earn about 100 rupees per day, the middle class such as waiters, taxi drivers, or teachers make 500-1000 rupees per day, and the high class jobs such as parliament member or bank manager makes 1500-3000+ rupees per day (The Longest Way Home, 2013). Minimum wage is set as 6100 rupees per month, but many people earn less than that because they are subsistence farmers living off the land, growing enough for themselves to eat, without much leftover to sell (The Longest Way Home, 2013). To put this in perspective, the average Canadian teacher makes \$51,750 per year (Harris, 2014), which translates to \$142 per day, more than 7,000 rupees every day. This is about as much as the Nepali Prime Minister, who makes a wage of 1000 rupees per day plus 8000 rupees per day for team expenses (The Longest Way Home, 2013). These income



statuses and the amount of people in a given status tend to follow the Hindu caste system shown.

(Picture retrieved from: <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/sp/0708/eunmo/figure%2013.PNG>) The current product line for Baby Gourmet is extensive. Exporting a wide variety would likely be too expensive and initially ineffective; it would be more useful to test the market with a single product and introduce more if and when demand increases. The potential consumers would primarily be tourists and relatively wealthy Nepalese. Ideally, the exported cereals would be within price range for all families because it could benefit children of all statuses.

The Organic Grains cereal packages are \$5.50 in Canada (Babies R Us, 2014). This translates to 34 rupees per day, if the cereal was fed once a day to the Nepalese baby (Currency, 2014). Realistically, even the Nepalese who would purchase baby food would supplement the diet with more foods than just cereal. Let's look at the example of the middle class teacher again. If she has a child at home while she is making 1500 rupees per day, 2.3% of her earnings would go to feeding her baby this cereal once a day.

This is not unreasonable. The average Canadian household spends 14% of their income on food (CCCSC Inc., 2014), but the average Nepal household would spend a much greater percentage simply because they are living in a developing country. 23% of Nepalese are middle class, this means there are 6 million people, plus the upper class, able to afford this product. If only half of the middle class actually had babies of the age to eat these cereals and only half of them actually chose to purchase this particular product, there would be 1.5 million people purchasing Organic Grains Cereal by Baby Gourmet in Nepal. Thus, Baby Gourmet makes a profit, the transporters and producers are getting a wage and a substantial number of Nepalese are able to afford the product.

All this is assuming the cereal would still cost \$5.50 on the other side of the ocean and this does not factor in the recommendation for change in package size. Realistically, each product will take on some of the shipping costs and could end up costing about \$8 by the time it reaches the consumers in Nepal. If it was \$8 off the Nepal store shelf, the example of the Nepali teacher would be paying 49 rupees per day, which is 3.2% of her daily earnings, so though it would make a difference it is not too extreme. However, even these numbers are assumptions; the exact export cost of such a specific product was not found. It would make a difference whether it was flown in or ocean-lined then trucked. It would also make a difference whether China or India was the middle mark. Nepal, being a land-locked country, faces some slightly different challenges in importation. There are variables that were not factored into the cost because of limited research which still must be researched and considered by any company looking to export to Nepal.

Baby Gourmet started with Baby Food. Other brands such as Heinz or Gerber have very similar products but lack the passion behind them that can be seen in the production of Baby Gourmet and may not be as strictly Canadian. They tend to have the same size of package and similar prices, but they are not certified Organic, which may be a major selling point for the Nepalese because it is more of what

they are used to (Alibaba.com, 2014). This is not to say that these options should not be explored further, but there is definitely potential in Baby Gourmet and their Canadian products.

Needs and Benefits to the Importing Nation: Nepal

Based on the costs outlined above, Nepal would welcome importing Baby Gourmet's Organic Grains Cereals. Many other factors come into play in this section of the evaluation, however. First, Nepal is a developing country and many of its residents are undernourished due to lack of education surrounding proper nutrition, especially education of women and girls (Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, 2013). Thus, children are very at risk for anemia and stunted growth. Baby Gourmet's Organic Grains Cereal products are all fortified with iron, b-vitamins, niacin, riboflavin, and thiamine (Baby Gourmet, 2014). This diet would help alleviate the prominence of anemia in young children by providing a healthy start during infancy. They are also easy to digest (Baby Gourmet, 2014), which means babies' diets could be switched over without interrupting their body's abilities to digest food and grow. This could also benefit mothers who are looking for a first non-breast-milk food for their babies. If the popularity of Baby Gourmet's products in Canada was reciprocated in Nepal, babies of the middle and high income levels could be better cared for and could be an example for lower income families who may be inspired to watch more carefully what they are feeding their babies. This would just be the start of promoting better nutrition for all Nepalese.

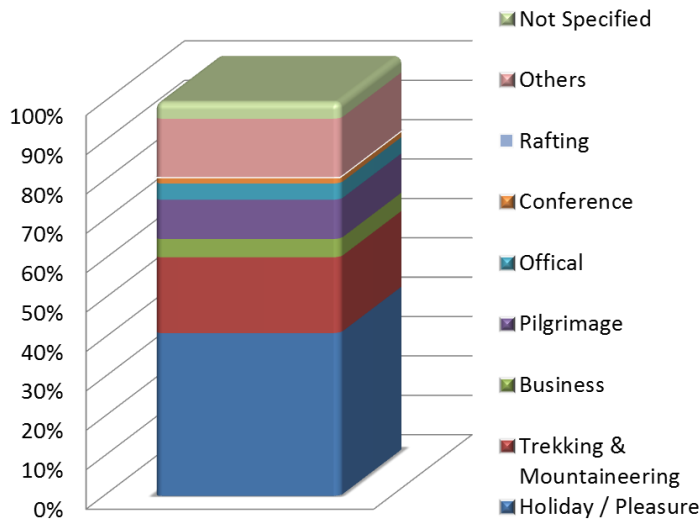
Family sizes in Nepal are somewhat larger than in Canada (Index Mundi, 2014). This doesn't necessarily mean babies are overlooked but it likely does mean many Nepalese mothers may be looking for a hassle-free option to feed their children and infants. The convenience of dry cereal to which is added only milk or water is a huge advantage to the busy mother, in any country. Since the current availability of Baby Food for sale in Nepal is close to nothing (Bhat-Bhateni, 2014), there isn't many options for these households looking for that convenient option. Baby Gourmet has a chance to fill that

need. The ease of purchasing affordable packages of pre-made baby food, with the added benefit of commonly used ingredients and no foreign additives, will allow the women time that was spent preparing raw food for their baby to spend doing other productive things for themselves and their families, guilt free. These cereals, as mentioned before, are dried and pasteurized in such a way that they are non-perishable (Baby Gourmet, 2014). Many households do not have refrigerators or are using it for other necessary things. Thus, there is an added convenience for the Nepalese mothers that can reseal and set aside these packages without worrying about it spoiling. This may also save them money compared to their perishable home-made option. Nepal lacks some of the resources many nations have, which has put them behind internationally for its food regulation, so importing Canadian quality food is a good start for increasing health consciousness, knowledge of sanitation of food, and convenience (Bajagai, 2012).

Grocery stores will benefit from selling Baby Gourmet's baby food, though not on a very large scale. Bhat-Bhateni, a departmental store chain in Nepal is found in Kathmandu, Pokhara, and 7 other locations across the country. It currently has 120,000 products from 1000 local and international suppliers (Bhat-Bhateni, 2014). More than 40,000 people visit the stores daily and 2,500 people are employed across these 9 locations (Bhat-Bhateni, 2014). Any one product wouldn't create much of a benefit, however, this product does not have much competition currently. It isn't just another brand of baby food like it is in Canada; it is a novelty that doesn't really have a local equal. Interest will likely be peaked and these stores will have more business. I don't expect that more jobs will be created in this particular sector, however, there will likely be more jobs in transportation in Nepal. If the baby food is flown in, trucks will still be needed to bring the cereal from the airport to the store locations. If the baby food is brought in by ship, transportation from India's coast to Nepal's stores will be necessary. Both ways, jobs are made and Nepal is benefitted. Since the demand may not increase right away, these jobs

may just be supplementary incomes for the Nepalese, but if and when the demand does increase the influx of imported products will increase and the need for more transport along with it.

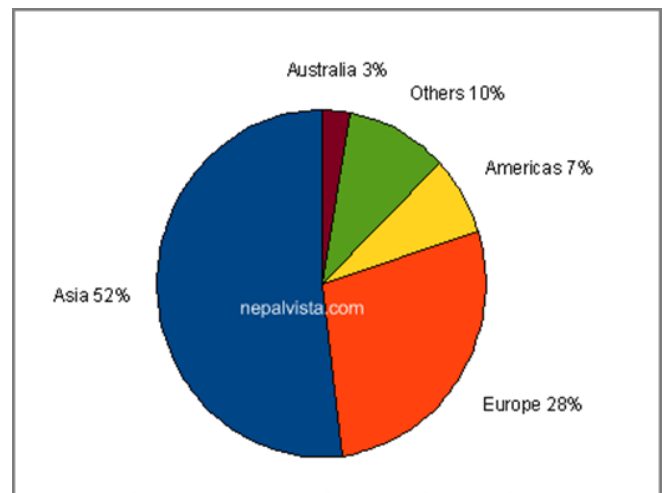
Tourist arrivals in Nepal, by type (2007)



Tourists will be greatly affected by this export idea. 40% of tourists to Nepal are visiting for pleasure or for a holiday, as the graph to the left indicates. This is significantly more than trekkers, who are less likely to bring small children or babies along. Holiday tourists may be more willing to visit with their babies or children and it will be

more welcoming for them to have access to Canadian quality baby food during their stay, not to mention convenient. Tourism in Nepal has been increasing steadily; having doubled in the last 10 years and currently sitting around 800,000 international visitors per year (Index Mundi, 2014). Tourism is the largest industry in Nepal (Index Mundi, 2014) so Nepal would do well to cater to more of the varieties of people that come. (Graph retrieved from blogspot.com (tourist+type+nepal+stacked.png))

Of these 800,000 international tourists that visit Nepal it has been observed that 80% of these (640,000 tourists) are from Asia or Europe, as the graph to the right shows. Baby Gourmet has already taken advantage of Asia's interest in Japan and they are next looking at exporting to the U.K. which is part of Europe. Thus, the vast majority of the tourists that travel to



Nepal will very likely welcome the availability of familiar products. (Graph retrieved from blog.nepalvista.com (2006-continental-share.gif))

Other Canadian Companies that could be involved:

PFS International. www.privatefleetsales.com 3153 Steeles Ave, Milton, ON, L9T 2V4

Marbro Group Inc. www.marbrogroup.com 13-348 Bronte Street South, Milton, ON, L9T5B6

Garry Mercer Trucking Inc. www.gmercercor.com 1140 Midway Blvd., Mississauga, ON, L5T2C1

OK Transportation Ltd. www.oktransportation.com 130 Belfield Road, Etobicoke, ON, M9W1G1

Elgin Motor Freight www.elginmotorfreight.com 1497 Wilton Grove Road, London, ON N6N1M3

Agility Logistics Co. www.agilitylogistics.com 410 Admiral Boulevard, Mississauga, ON, L5T2N6

This is a selection of Canadian transport companies in close proximity to the large Baby Gourmet plant in Ontario. These are just a few from an extensive list (canadatransportation.com, 2012).

Other Nepalese Companies that could be involved:

Rakesh Road Carriers www.rakeshroadcarriers.com Plot No.3, 1st Floor, Sangam Tower, Main Shopping Complex Savita Vihar, New Delhi - 110092

Nepal has some railway connections with its neighbouring country, India. (Raxaul (India) to Amlekhganj (Nepal), Raxaul (India) to Janakpur (Nepal)) However, these do not go straight to Kathmandu, so it may be more effective to use air travel.

Gandaki Freight International Pvt. Ltd. www.cargonepal.com G.P.O. Box 24884 Satghumti Road, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal

Bhat-Bhateni: Supermarket and Departmental Store. Head of Operation: Mr. Panu Poudel. Email:

panu@bbsm.com.np

Marketing Strategy

Marketing must start with stores, particularly Kathmandu's Bhat-Bhateni in order to promote the product. It can be advertised as 'new' or 'Canadian' for a time. This will entice some to try it, but the Nepalese must realize the health benefits so it may be profitable to have a Canadian representative do some sampling or promotion displays. Shoppers' and mom's word of mouth will take it from there.

Competition (regional and global)

There are many globally known brands of baby food cereal available. Alibaba.com offers nearly 400 different cereal products from around the world (Alibaba.com, 2014). There is potential competition for this idea, but, as I have mentioned, there is little to no baby food available currently in Nepal. Any brand could be the first to thrive there. Many of these can be shipped at a reasonable cost in bulk. The packaging must be taken into consideration, as some of the products featured on Alibaba.com come in jars or other inconvenient travel packages. Others do not have the shelf life that bulk sales to the Nepalese may require, or cannot be resealed, or require refrigeration. A few are marketed as Halal, which may appeal to the large Hindu population. A substantial amount of companies from China are involved in baby food production, as well, but none were found to be exclusively makers of baby food; most were selling machinery for processing cereals (Alibaba.com, 2014). In the future, Nepal may find it more economical to purchase from there instead, however, it does not seem to be what the Nepalese need right now. This may be the direction that the Nepalese baby food industry takes, though, so it should be kept in mind. Baby Gourmet is still a viable option, though further research would surely surface other equally viable options, in Canada or globally. Many brands are already on the global market, though not very many originate in Canada (Alibaba.com, 2014). If another baby food company

were to take advantage of the Nepal Baby Food market, Baby Gourmet may not stand a chance because of their smaller size, but their dedication to Canadian quality makes them stand out as an export idea worth exploring in further depth.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Baby Gourmet may not be the only viable option. It is this company that has been researched for this evaluation but there are so many businesses that are in similar places of expansion and product promotion that may wish to take advantage of the opportunity Nepal offers with the export of baby food products. Some other options may include Heinz, Earth's Best Organic, Nestle, SweetPea, Gerber, Ella's Kitchen, BeechNut, and countless others. Sprouting entrepreneurs are on the same playing field as established brands, as Baby Gourmet has shown. Baby Gourmet would do well to continue to expand and make their brand known in other countries.

It is possible that problems will arise. Though it is not likely, the Nepalese may become dependent on imported food and lose the valuable techniques of making their own. If then the prices of grains in North America were to soar, these people would be left in a very vulnerable state. However, it may also happen that more global brands are introduced which would such a situation of inconsequential probability. There does not appear to be any immediate significant disadvantages to exporting baby food from Canada to Nepal.

A specific recommendation I would make for Baby Gourmet is that they increase the size of their packages. It seems to me that value would be added if the baby food is available in great bulk. Because they are resealable, this would not affect the use of the cereal, but it would very likely decrease the cost, which would be beneficial to the Nepalese consumers as well as the tourists.

My research has shown that there is need and very likely interest or demand in the baby food market in Nepal. Baby Gourmet is the company I chose to evaluate for potential export and I still

recommend that it take on this export, however I would not limit the idea to the one brand. I do recommend that companies who produce baby food products consider Nepal as a potential consumer market, do their own research, and take action if it is found to be a profitable idea.

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