

Benihana in Germany- Final Write-Up

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout our research there are a few discrepancies that might deter investors away from investing in a Benihana in Germany. One important problem is that all of the research comes from outside sources like the internet, and there are no primary sources of information to fact check our findings. This creates problems later if Benihana enters the market and fails to meet the cultural norms and folkways of German culture. Another problem is the lack of an established Asian cuisine market in Germany. While the research points to a surging Asian culinary market, there is a lack of established Asian restaurants. This leaves a bit of mystery for how the market will react to a newcomer like Benihana.

I. Political and Legal Risks in Germany

Germany has been a stable parliamentary democracy since a few years after World War II in 1949. Over the past 20 years, Germany has emerged as an economic powerhouse and continues to be a world leader in manufacturing and agriculture. They have been relatively stable in their political sphere, with no major revolutions or riots in the 21st century. As a member of the European Union, Germany contributed 33.157 million Euros to the EU budget, more than any other member of the EU (EU Contributions by Country 2021 | Statista, 2023). Because of this economic alliance, other European Union member countries will not attack or feel threatened by Germany, further lowering their political risk. Over the past few years, Germany has been vying for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, advocating for more power on the international stage (Mandilara & Noyan, 2022). This signals to the world they do not want enemies, and are looking for a larger peace plan. Overall, Germany is not perfect, but holds a stable political environment to conduct business in.

Starting a business means dealing with many challenging legal requirements. Companies need to be aware of licensing and safety rules as well as employment practices. For example, when it comes to employees, the business owner needs to ensure they do not violate issues such as long or harsh working hours and keeping a safe work environment. In addition, protecting intellectual property such as trademarks and patents is also very crucial. Tax laws can be complicated, and contracts with suppliers and partners need to be handled correctly to ensure the interests of all parties involved. Expanding globally adds even more potential legal issues. With Benihana expanding into Germany, they have to understand the different international laws dealing with trading, taxes, and hiring practices. Because each country has its own rules for protecting intellectual property, precautions need to be taken to ensure compliance. Cultural differences can also affect how you do business internationally which brings more obstacles that need careful navigation to secure smooth business negotiations.

The industry in which Benihana participates is the food industry. More specifically the Japanese food industry. Benihana is a hibachi style restaurant where families can come and enjoy Japanese food while also watching the chef put on a show. Benihana also has sushi and other Japanese favorites. The German restaurant industry is very large and has many restaurants and employs many German citizens. Full-service restaurants in Germany lead the consumer food service sales sector (Loeser, 2023). Benihana has more than seventy restaurants in the United States, Caribbean, and Central and South America (Benihana.com, 2021). There is no Benihana in Europe and that is why Germany is an effective place for Benihana to grow outside of North

and South America. Germany has the largest food and beverage product market in the European Union (Loeser). The large market means it is not a risky country to enter with a restaurant. Just like the United States, German citizens drive their car around. Germany has a great infrastructure stated by Research in Germany:

“Germany is one of the countries with the best infrastructure in the world. Around 830,000 kilometers of road (including 13,000 kilometers of motorway), 38,400 kilometers of rail and 23 major airports as well as regular modernisation projects ensure excellent transport links throughout the country.” (Research-in-germany.org).

With great infrastructure and great accessibility to anywhere a German wants to go, Germany is an effective place for Benihana to set up shop. Germany as a whole has a relatively strong industrial base with low structural unemployment. The economic and political environment is unstable at times, which results in erratic changes that can affect corporate payment behavior. The business climate rating is A1, which indicates that there is very low risk in conducting business in relation to other countries, but since 2020 there has been a decline in the working population despite increased immigration rates. This may pose a minor threat to foreign firms looking to hire new employees for business endeavors. Business etiquette is taken very seriously and can increase risks of entering the country if not properly studied and implemented. In addition to this, tax laws are extremely complicated in Germany and failure to understand the system may harm your business. On top of this, the bureaucratic requirements are extensive and require registration with the tax and trade offices among other organizations. Finally, although many businesses have found success in Germany, there are capacity constraints and sometimes insufficient investments which may harm new businesses.

Economically and politically, Germany and the United States share a complex cooperative relationship as significant global powers and members of G20 and NATO. While still competing in various sectors economically, the two engage in extensive trade and investment, benefiting from each other's markets and natural resources. Both countries operate under a federal government with a second tier of local government. Both systems are bicameral parliaments, having a House of Representatives and a Senate. Germany operates as a parliamentary democracy with a federal structure, while the US is a federal republic with a presidential structure. The federal government of Germany, led by the Chancellor, is formed through democratic representation and maintains stability through consensus-based decision making, prioritizing welfare programs, labor protections, and environmental sustainability. Contrastly, the US operates with a strong emphasis on checks and balances between the three branches of government, also operating democratically through local governments, but with less ease of policy implementation. The US regulatory framework more-so prioritizes business interests and market competitiveness, while the regulatory framework in Germany more often emphasizes worker protections and environmental standards. This makes for a healthy balance, promoting the collaboration of countries in business operations. In general, the two nations have a positive standing relationship as close allies and strong bilateral trade partners.

II. Demand for Benihana's Offerings

Germany has a substantial population with many great features to offer Benihana. As of 2023, Germany has a population of 83,294,633 and is the most populated country in Western Europe; Germany's population is 42.5% of all Western Europe (Worldometer, n.d.). Germany is a prosperous economic country with Europe's highest purchasing power parity and the

fifth-highest PPP globally (globalEDGE, n.d.). Germany is a perfect match for Benihana due to the country's dominance of the service industry. Regarding the percentage of Germany's GDP, services lead the way at 62.68% (globalEDGE, n.d.). In terms of the overall population, essential segments, and purchasing powers, Germany's market is a perfect match for Benihana.

In addition to these factors, it is important to note that one of the key considerations of entering a new market should be the culture's tastes and preferences. A failure to appease a culture's palette will lead to the failure of even a high-quality restaurant like Benihana. Mitigating these risks before entering a country is essential to a restaurant's survival. One unique aspect of German dining culture is the fact they have a larger lunch as opposed to a large dinner (German Food, 2024.). To accommodate this cultural difference, Benihana needs to hold lunch specials to help draw in different workers from all walks of life. Since its founding, Benihana has always catered to the typical American dining style of large dinners and lighter lunches. This dynamic will need to be flipped to accommodate German culture. One noteworthy cultural facet of German culture is their "low context" culture (Brougham, 2022). This means they prefer an efficient and quick system as opposed to getting all of the information before making a decision. This applies to Benihana for their order process to ensure German customers leave satisfied. Another important aspect of German consumerism is the need to be thrifty and to have a high quality product (Brougham, 2022). For Benihana, this means ensuring there are plenty of deals and specials for the target market to capitalize on, without compromising on quality. One of the up and coming food preferences in Germany is sushi. There has been an increase in the demand for sushi in the German market. The normalization of sushi as a preferred taste has risen in the past few years with the sushi market valued at €424.45 million euros (Businesscoot, 2023). This converges nicely with Benihana's offerings and allows an opportunity to expand the menu with more publicity and traffic. Benihana will need to become a premier Asian cuisine restaurant to compete in the growing and rapid culinary atmosphere in Germany.

As Benihana ventures into the German market, they must be prepared to encounter competition from other well-established restaurants. Benihana will specifically be joining the teppanyaki market in Germany, a style of Japanese cuisine that became popular after World War II (Chatterbuzz, 2024). Teppanyaki restaurants such as Osaka, Kabuki, and other upscale Asian cuisine establishments have already solidified their presence with proven track records and recognizable brands. Benihana must acknowledge these competitors and carve out their own niche in this environment. Osaka, a popular teppanyaki restaurant located in Mannheim, Germany, distinguishes itself with its commitment to delivering authentic Japanese cuisine and interactive dining experiences. Its strengths lie in its attention to detail, offering unique specialties such as premium, fresh ingredients to prepare culinary masterpieces for its customers. Yet, Osaka may face weaknesses in its localized brand recognition when compared to a global brand like Benihana. Given its singular presence in Mannheim, Osaka may face a disparity in brand visibility on a broader scale. In contrast, Kabuki places a stronger emphasis on teppanyaki cooking, a shift from Osaka's menu which encompasses sushi and other dishes not prepared tableside. With locations in both Frankfurt and Berlin, Kabuki is acclaimed for its teppanyaki experience, where dishes are crafted right before the diners' eyes, emphasizing the essence of an interactive meal. Although Kabuki excels in this specialty, like Osaka, they are not as widely known as Benihana. Limited locations are once again an inhibitor for Kabuki to compete on a bigger scale. Additionally, Benihana will face competitors in the upscale Asian cuisine restaurant market. These places strive on drawing people in through their premium Japanese cuisine and ambitious dining experiences. Benihana must combat these challenges and pursue exceptional

service. Despite these challenges, the strong brand reputation of Benihana, coupled with their distinctive dining experience and international appeal can position it to thrive with such rigorous competition.

The teppanyaki market in Germany is relatively niche, although it will still present some challenges when bringing a foreign firm into the mix. The competitive advantages that established German businesses possess are those previously mentioned, such as local brand recognition, an established customer base, and operational functionality in the area. Existing restaurants in the German market are familiar with the policies and operational processes necessary to function in the country, which can be difficult to navigate by foreign firms. Beyond the technicalities of entrepreneurship, there is one significant challenge presented by doing business in Germany as a foreigner—the language. Unlike some other European countries, it is essential for business leaders entering the market to not underestimate the importance of German language proficiency. In order to combat this essential comparative advantage, it will be necessary to hire personnel who fully understand the language and culture from a native perspective. It is also important to note that there is an overall decline in the working population among Germany, and this would elevate the response of competitors (globalEDGE, n.d.). Because of this, their reactions to the new entry could be somewhat hostile. Like any competitor in the business industry, a battle for customers and a strong employment team is highly valued. If Benihana promotes a healthy attitude and positive campaign, they likely can minimize these reactions when entering the market. Once Benihana is intentionally operating under German business standards and ethics, the restaurant must identify the ways to challenge the local familiarity that existing restaurants possess. While it is difficult to influence people's routines, Benihana is globally recognized for having a limited menu and exceptionally reliable reputation. In the teppanyaki culture of Germany currently, these restaurants are seen as novelty and flourish in a more urban setting. Benihana must utilize its own differentiation advantage quickly by offering unique services that also balance an adaptation of local preferences. Because local competitors can easily learn about the typical Benihana experience internationally, it's important that the restaurant plans ahead with counter-moves to differentiate the expected service and make it an unequivocal dining experience.

III. Resources and Infrastructure Available in Germany

After analyzing the political and legal risks that Benihana will face when entering Germany, along with estimating the demand for Benihana's offerings, it is important to assess the resources and infrastructure relevant to Benihana in Germany. These factors will surround the business and require much attention to establish a successful venture. Although Benihana may initially face some minor hiccups in the new market, many of these risks and setbacks can be minimized or even eliminated if assessed properly.

Any business cannot succeed without one crucial factor supporting them: labor. As part of our Benihana deployment plan, we need to ensure there is a large labor force available in Germany to keep Benihana open. According to Moody's Analytics, Germany's labor force has increased over the past year to a peak. This is a great signal for Benihana as it means more Germans are seeking work during these past few months than they have in the past year. As a new company entering a foreign market, it is essential that there is a surplus of workers available to work as Benihana starts its new venture.

Moving from the human side to more of the natural resources of Germany, it offers a variety of resources beneficial for any industry. Benihana's focus will be on the numerous natural and man-made waterways in Germany. These waterways like the Rhine and Danube Rivers allow mass transportation of goods and materials to all parts of Germany. Inland water transportation is responsible for 240 million tons of bulk materials every year, helping to fuel Germany's economy (BMDV, 2016). Benihana will benefit from these waterways because the seafood will be fresher, without the need to freeze and preserve goods for a longer period. In addition to seafood, foods such as steak, chicken, and other hibachi menu items will be delivered in a timely manner through boats and transportation services. The downfall of many industries is when they upscale and lose quality, but these waterways will allow for fresh food that will be served with the utmost caliber. Costs for Benihana also may be reduced if importing food is cheaper than domestically purchasing it. Natural resources will also benefit Benihana in Germany because there are vast expanses of fertile agricultural land, particularly in regions like Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg (European Commission, 2021). This land can be utilized for growing fresh produce and raising livestock, providing a sustainable source of high-quality ingredients for Benihana's hibachi-style cuisine.

Natural resources are key to the success of a company and waterways effectively enhance the transportation sector, but raw materials and supplies are needed to utilize these activities. These raw materials and supplies being available in a timely fashion are also important, especially when there isn't enough time or barriers to shipments. With the expansion of Benihana into Germany, the assessment of raw materials and supplies is crucial for the restaurant's efficiency. Germany benefits from a strong industrial sector and access to diverse raw materials, which can aid in facilitating Benihana's operations. Fresh, high-quality ingredients such as seafood, vegetables, and meats should be relatively accessible, given Germany's strong agricultural sphere and well-established supply chains (International Trade Administration, 2023). So, not only can natural resources be used to ensure fresh food, but locally there are options available as well. Additionally, Germany's proximity to various European markets offers sourcing opportunities for specialty ingredients to maintain the authenticity of Benihana's cuisine. However, it is essential to keep an eye on pricing fluctuations and potential supply chain disruptions to ensure reliable and affordable sourcing. Establishing partnerships with local suppliers and distributors can help reduce these risks while enhancing efficiency in the supply chain, ultimately supporting Benihana's successful entry into the German market.

Another important factor to consider for Benihana when entering the market in Germany is the country's infrastructure. Infrastructure is a significant factor in opening a business in a new country because it is the basis for how organizational structure and facilities are run and managed. Germany has an excellent infrastructure and is supported by a variety of transportation options. Germany has 830,000 kilometers of roads, 38,400 km of rail, and 23 major airports (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, n.d.). Transportation in Germany is very accessible, and people can drive or ride public transportation wherever they desire. Germany borders many countries, and having a sound transportation system is an advantage for the

entrance of Benihana into Germany's market. Benihana is more than just a restaurant where people stop on the side of the highway, but instead is an experience which provides a night of entertainment for customers. Benihana has the potential to attract many new customers from various places because of the accessible transportation in Germany. The waterways mentioned which aid in the facilitation of goods and in the preservation of natural resources are also a key aspect of Germany's infrastructure. The Rhine and Danube Rivers will serve as a great transportation system for goods and materials which make up the organizational structure of Germany.

Finally, when opening a business in Germany as a foreign company it is also important to assess the country's technological and communication setups. Germany's urban centers have strong tech infrastructure, including reliable internet, effective transportation methods, and modern communication networks. Germany has fully embraced digital tools across all sectors, making operations much smoother for businesses like Benihana. The tech-friendly environment assists with tasks like managing inventory and automating food production, all in an effort to keep up with the fast-paced demand of the German food industry. Within restaurants specifically, technology has been thoroughly adopted. For example, digital menus, online reservation systems, and contactless payment options have become highly utilized. This has developed into a period where German diners expect this tech-integrated dining experience. Incorporating these advancements into the Benihana restaurant would be essential to meet customer expectations and be competitive in the market. German communication systems are also advanced and very reliable, enabling easy connections within the restaurant, as well as with customers and suppliers. It is also important to be aware of local tech-related laws, like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when handling customer information. Overall, Germany's sophisticated technology and communication systems provide a good foundation for Benihana's international expansion.

In conclusion, evaluating the resources and infrastructure of Germany is crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of Benihana's operations. By thoroughly assessing factors such as labor availability, natural resources, and access to raw materials and supplies, we can identify opportunities for cost savings, supply chain efficiency, and competitive advantage. Additionally, analyzing infrastructure elements such as transportation networks, distribution channels, technological capabilities, and communication systems allows us to anticipate and address potential challenges while leveraging opportunities for growth and expansion. Through comprehensive evaluation and strategic planning, Benihana can position themselves for success in Germany, capitalize on available resources, and navigate the complexities of the local business environment with confidence.

IV. Strategic Importance of Germany

The strategic importance of choosing Germany now and continuing in the future is explained through many factors such as not previously having a presence in the country. There is excellent growth potential when examining the teppanyaki market in metropolitan cities in

Germany despite Benihana being foreign. This being said, it certainly could be true that not having a presence in the country could reduce Benihana's competitiveness and worldwide effectiveness. Germany has consistently ranked among the top countries in the world for inward and outward foreign direct investment and has a very open economy (International Trade Administration, 2023). As a member of the European Union with a highly developed financial sector, Germany encourages foreign investment without discriminating between German and foreign firms. The United States has been the leading source of non-European FDI in Germany for years, so Benihana's competitiveness will include other foreign firms operating internationally. As Benihana enters the foreign market more extensively, the brand must adapt to local tastes and preferences while maintaining brand distinctiveness. However, Benihana has already proven successful in this, as the brand reported record growth in 2019 related to its international footprint. The company's expansion was highlighted at the International Franchise Show 2019 in London, where they disclosed a 53% increase in restaurant numbers, with new agreements signed in Egypt, Pakistan, and Mexico, adding up to 29 restaurants globally. These franchises feature updated menus and guest experiences catered to the local taste (Benihana, 2019). While it may be a learning curve to franchise internationally and boost overall brand effectiveness, Benihana will inevitably be a worldwide success now and in the future.

Along with the learning curve to franchise internationally, there is substantial reasoning for Benihana's competitiveness and worldwide effectiveness, which have growth potential because of the market's growth and geographic importance. Currently, no Benihana restaurants are located outside the Americas. Two specific trends appeal to Benihana's desire to create a more international presence. First, 82% of European consumers enjoy trying world cuisines they have not cooked at home before (Griffith Foods, 2022). This means that there is undoubtedly consumer interest in trying new menu items, which a teppanyaki restaurant such as Benihana has the opportunity to present. In addition, after American cuisine, Japanese cuisine is the fastest-growing among European restaurants (Griffith Foods, 2022). With this in mind, ignoring how successful a Benihana could be if expanded towards Germany is hard. A strategic playbook is essential because not all companies have the capabilities or resources to enter the international market (Littman, 2019). Smaller brands often expand too early, but as Benihana has developed and remained successful, it will benefit Benihana's competitiveness in pursuing the German market. With strong geographic reasoning, it would be a missed opportunity for Benihana to remain domestically in the U.S. with only a few restaurants in Central and South America.

The global market for sushi is proliferating. This is primarily driven by the dynamism of Japanese restaurants in all world regions, led by Asia and North America (Businesscoot, 2022). The German market specifically shows resilience, which Benihana could lean on with less risk involved. With a sushi market that has grown and continues to do so, especially among the younger generation, Germany's location tends to be one of the safer options for expanding business. Even beyond this, more risky ventures would be made possible if there is success in Germany. Not only would the expansion lead to revenue from one store, but it could also lead to success in neighboring countries such as France. Benihana would make its presence known

across Europe, and the company's popularity could lead to big-time investors. The present and future of Benihana as a company will be impacted by the decision to expand to Germany, and the market's resilience is too prominent to ignore.

As Benihana expands into Germany, it faces the challenge of adapting its renowned Japanese steakhouse concept to a new culture. Securing essential inputs such as premium ingredients that are important to keep the same taste as the other Benihana locations, teppanyaki grills, and a skilled staff that is capable of performing the act of hibachi cooking will be crucial for maintaining Benihana's trademark quality and authenticity. However, with its established global network and reputation for excellence, Benihana is well-positioned to navigate these logistical hurdles successfully. The German market, known for its diverse culinary tastes and a willingness to explore new dining experiences, presents a promising opportunity for Benihana. While Asian cuisine is popular in Germany, the hibachi-style dining experience offered by Benihana remains relatively novel. Despite the presence of a few competitors, they have yet to adapt themselves to a chain business with multiple locations. The market for hibachi-style dining is far from saturated, allowing Benihana to establish itself as a unique and sought-after culinary experience. With Benihana's experience showcasing interactive cooking, theatrical presentation, and high-quality food, Benihana can draw in customers in Germany and become a great addition to the country's well-rounded food scene, offering a new, unique take on Japanese culinary tradition.

With a low overall market size for Asian cuisine, Germany is a fantastic landing space for Benihana. The lack of competition allows Benihana to utilize the first-mover advantage when setting up its locations. One of the added benefits of Benihana moving into Germany is that there are no large Asian franchises in Germany yet. This allows Benihana to create more brand awareness and establish itself as a core franchise for Asian cuisine in Germany. Although there are not many other large Asian restaurants in Germany, Benihana has the benefit of knowing there is a large potential existing market. According to a report published by Market Business Insights, Asian food is set to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 8.7% in the next six years, with revenues exceeding 690 million dollars (MBINew, 2023). This growth shows that the next few years will be significant for Asian cuisine, and Benihana will do exceptionally well if it can get involved internationally as soon as possible. This will ensure revenues are recovered from waiting too long to decide if they should enter Germany.

Germany's geographic importance is essential as its rivers lead to the sea. Additionally, they are at the center of Europe, which allows them to receive exports and other goods more rapidly than other nations. It is at the center of nine other European nations, all of whom are members of the European Union. This frequent flow of supplies will help Benihana maintain its quality food as it enters the German market. As stated above, the potential of the surrounding countries around Germany makes the opportunity more enticing. Numerous food critics call for the Asian cuisine gap to be filled in Europe. Will Odwarka notes that Asian cuisines' compound annual growth rate of over 7% exceeds the European Fast Food and Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) market forecast (Odwarka, 2023). These forecasts all point towards an enormous opportunity that would

be detrimental if Benihana missed out. Once they establish themselves in Germany, Benihana will be able to expand into the rest of Europe with relative ease once consumers have become more accustomed to the brand.

Considering all of these factors, Benihana will have a distinct advantage over other Asian cuisine restaurants if they can enter early and grow their brand awareness. With enough time, they can compete with any new or existing Asian restaurants that threaten Benihana. Benihana's most significant competitive advantage will be entering the market earlier than its competitors. This allows Benihana to get accustomed to the laws and regulations of Germany while still building their brand. Looking towards the future, Benihana will quickly expand into other countries like Austria and France as it establishes itself in Germany and its brand awareness increases.

V. Final Recommendation

Entering the German market presents a strategic opportunity for Benihana, the popular Japanese restaurant chain, but requires careful planning to ensure success. Firstly, a thorough examination of the market potential is important, diving into the demand for Japanese cuisine in Germany and learning the consumer preferences and dining habits. Understanding the competitive landscape is equally necessary to identify gaps that Benihana can fill with its unique dining experience and innovative menu. On a traveler blog page one person who traveled to Germany shared, "The only decent Chinese I've found in Germany is in Berlin. In general, Asian food tends to be disappointing here. Most Asian restaurants are 'Thai-Chinese-Vietnamese-Japanese,' meaning they do none of the cuisines well." (Susan, 2013) This statement shows the importance of cultural considerations and the need for more authentic, quality Asian cuisine. Localizing the menu and service to resonate with German consumers will be helpful in gaining acceptance and loyalty when first opening in Germany. Making sure Benihana follows all the rules for running a restaurant in Germany is very important. This includes keeping up with food safety regulations, acquiring the right licenses, and following employment laws.

Moreover, economic factors must be assessed, including income levels, consumer spending patterns, and potential economic risks affecting the restaurant industry. Given the challenges involved, I recommend Benihana adopt a wholly owned subsidiary strategy for its entry into the German market. This approach lets Benihana fully own and control operations in Germany, allowing them to create customer relationships and be able to brand themselves in this new location. Benihana must prioritize localizing its brand and operations, adapting to German culture while preserving its unique identity.

Important steps for implementation include identifying strategic locations in major cities, forming partnerships with local suppliers, and developing targeted marketing campaigns to showcase Benihana's unique offerings. Berlin stands out as a great city for Benihana's first move in Germany. As the capital city, it has a large population and attracts a lot of tourists. This makes

Berlin a destination for both locals and visitors seeking new cuisines and experiences, which would benefit Benihana.

Lastly, investing in training for staff, engaging with customers, and building relationships with locals is crucial for success. It's important to keep food quality and customer experience consistent. Benihana should focus on adjusting to local preferences for part of their menu, understand cultural differences, and be ready to adapt to changes in the market. With this approach, Benihana can establish itself in Germany and grow substantially.

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