

LCLM6002 Design Thinking and Innovation
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Introduction to the chosen organisation

Innovation in businesses is implementation of the new ideas, services, products or processes by the organisation with the aim of improving the company's operations (Kahn, 2018). The companies also undertake innovation in customer journeys thereby focusing on creation of a seamless transition between the channels. Argos, which is one of the UK's leading digital retailers and which has been acquired by Sainsbury's in the year 2016 has also been seen to have undertaken innovation for improving its customer journey after the merger. Established in the year 1973, Argos has been offering more than 60, 000 products (Argos, 2024). The organisation with its range of home and garden, technology, appliances, toys and health and beauty products provide its services through apps, website, stores and convenient Click & Collect points inside the Sainsbury's supermarket (Argos, 2024). The organisation has its physical presence in more than 1000 locations across the UK and around 1 billion customers visit the Argos website every year (Argos, 2024). The Argos after the merger has since been transitioning from a standalone store to being integrated as outlets within Sainsbury's supermarkets. This strategy has been seen to have aimed at changing streamline operations of the company in order to adapt to the changing buying habits of the consumers (Sainsbury's, 2022). This report will be highlighting some of the key industry and consumer trends and data affecting the organisation. The report would also be analysing the approach of Argos for innovation when integrated within Sainsbury's and its application on its customer journey. A new digital transformation initiative would also be proposed in the form of service blueprint, along with evaluating its impact on the value of the organisation.

Key consumer and industry trends and data that affect the organisation

As of the year 2020, the e-commerce sales of the UK had reached a share of 32.5% of all the retail sales. For the year 2025, the estimated e-commerce retail sales as a share of the overall retail sales of the UK is to reach 38.1% (Coppola, 2023). This is a significant increase from the previous years. The shift to online shopping has shown the rise of e-commerce which continues to shape the consumer behaviour. With the increase online purchase system, the consumers have been prioritising convenience especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Gu *et al.*, 2021). Argos with its strong digital presence and being a technology-led retailer, with 70% of its sales originating online has benefitted a lot from this trend (Searles, 2024a). Although the increase in

the shift to online shopping had accounted for significant portion of Argos's revenue, the increasing inflation in the UK and the rising cost of living has greatly impacted the spending of the customers (Francis-Devine *et al.*, 2024). This has negatively impacted the sales of Argos, causing a revenue drop due to the customers having less disposable income for spending on the non-essential or non-food items like that of furniture and electronics, thereby resulting in reduced demand of the company's products (Edser, 2024). Argos sales for its non-food items had dropped by 6.2% with weaker demands for consumer electronics, especially gaming equipment (Edser, 2024). According to Confederation of British Industry (CBI) there has been a decline in the UK retail sales with a four-month decline already observed in the year 2025. The online retail sales of the UK had increased to 28% in the year 2020, but it drastically fell to 28% in the year 2025 (Confederation of British Industry (CBI), 2025). The merger of Argos with that of Sainsbury's has resulted in cost savings, thereby improving profit of the company. The addition of Argos outlets to Sainsbury's stores had resulted in increasing trading intensity of the retailer. Moreover, the integrated shopping experiences as provided by the company has been able to bridge the gap between the physical and digital retail. Argos provides the click-and-collect services which allows its customers to order products online and pick those up in the stores, thereby meeting the convenience demand of the customers (UddinAhmed *et al.*, 2020). The organisation has also adopted various technologies for improving the shopping experiences of its customers. This has also helped in the sales and revenues of Sainsbury's as with the integration of Argos, the company has been able to streamline its shopping experiences by combining general merchandise and groceries in a single location. This has therefore helped the company for reducing its operational costs and remain in the competitive retail market. With the advancements in technology, Argos has introduced services through mobile applications, digital tools and AI driven personalisation for enhancing the customer purchasing journey (Searles, 2024b). Argos has also shown tough competition to its low-cost rivals and Amazon due to its quick delivery network. Sainsbury's has also bought the company as it delivered products to its customers faster than its rivals like Amazon (BBC, 2017). The budget-conscious consumers although turn to the discount retailers, which has always pressured the company to balance the quality of products with that of affordability.

Part 1

Organisation's approach to innovation

The UK's digital retailer has been seen to have adapted a number of innovations according to the changing consumer behaviour, thereby maintaining its competitiveness in the UK retail market. The following are the innovative approaches undertaken by Argos:

- ***Digital transformation of Argos-*** Argos UK has been seen to have undertaken digital transformation which involved a considerable shift from just a catalogue-based retail model, to that of an online retailer, which provides omnichannel experiences to its customers (Graf and Schneider, 2016). The website and mobile application of Argos has allowed the customers to purchase, browse through digital catalogue and choose their click-and-collect or delivery options. Argos had shown healthy growth in sales after implementation of the click-and-collect online ordering system (UddinAhmed *et al.*, 2020). The success of the system for enhancing the customer experience had also been undertaken by Sainsbury's, which had launched the popular click-and-collect service by Argos in 100 of its stores across the UK (Sainsbury's, 2017). This initiative has allowed the customers to order their Argos products online and collect their orders from closer to where they work or live. More than half of the Argos sales originates online, and nearly 80% of the customers then opted for collecting their purchases from one of the stores that very day or the next day (Rigby, 2019). In 2019, Argos was the first UK retailer for offering shopping services through Google Assistant platform through its launch of Voice Shop (BBC, 2018). This had enabled the customers to reserve the Argos products using voice technology.
- ***Integration with Sainsbury's-*** Sainsbury's has acquired Argos in the year 2016, and following the integration the outlets of the company within Sainsbury's supermarkets, it has helped both Argos and Sainsbury's to streamline their operations, enhance their customer convenience by combining general merchandise and grocery under a single company service (Argos, 2024). This has also helped the organisation to reduce its cost thereby allowing it to offer affordable products and services to its customers. This has been an innovative approach for Argos, as integrating its operations with that of

Sainsbury's it has been able to create a hybrid online-offline purchasing experience for the customers (Rusanen, 2019). Moreover, by placing its collection points with that of Sainsbury's stores, Argos has been able to gain access to larger customer base who already shop for groceries, and would now also be able to buy general merchandise (Argos, 2025). The organisation has opportunity for digital innovation by using the combined customer data of Argos and Sainsbury's and using AI for target marketing and providing personalised suggestions or shopping experiences for its customers.

- ***Fast delivery services-*** Argos had introduced the “Fast Track” service, which involves offering the same-day delivery for the products ordered online. The company has been seen to leverage technology for allowing the customers to choose delivery slots and thereby ensures faster and more flexible shopping experience (Argos, 2017). For ensuring proper delivery, Argos work with its logistics partners for enhancing its delivery network. This has also helped in enhancing the delivery network of Sainsbury's as it also allowed its customers benefit from the Argos's market leading Fast Track delivery and service collection in just four-hour time (Argos,). The customers with the help of the instore service of Sainsbury's and digital service of Argos are able to use tablets in the digital Pay@Browse area, thereby enabling them to purchase and choose what they require in quickly and conveniently instore. This convenient way of paying by Argos has also supported its customers who wish for paying for their purchases through cards or cash (Sainsbury's, 2019). In the year 2019, Argos had launched new visual service in its Argos iOS app. This had since then helped the customers to shop for furniture and homewares using images on their smartphones (Sainsbury's, 2019).
- ***Offering range of products and services-*** Apart from the grocery products as sold by Sainsbury's, integrating Argos had helped in expanding the product range of the company, starting from electronic to homewares. This has ensured meeting the wide range of customer needs for home and garden, appliances, technology and health and beauty products (Sainsbury, 2024).

These innovative approaches have been found to be the core and adjacent part of Argos's strategies for winning and staying in the competitive environment, as shown in the Innovation Ambition Matrix in Figure 1.

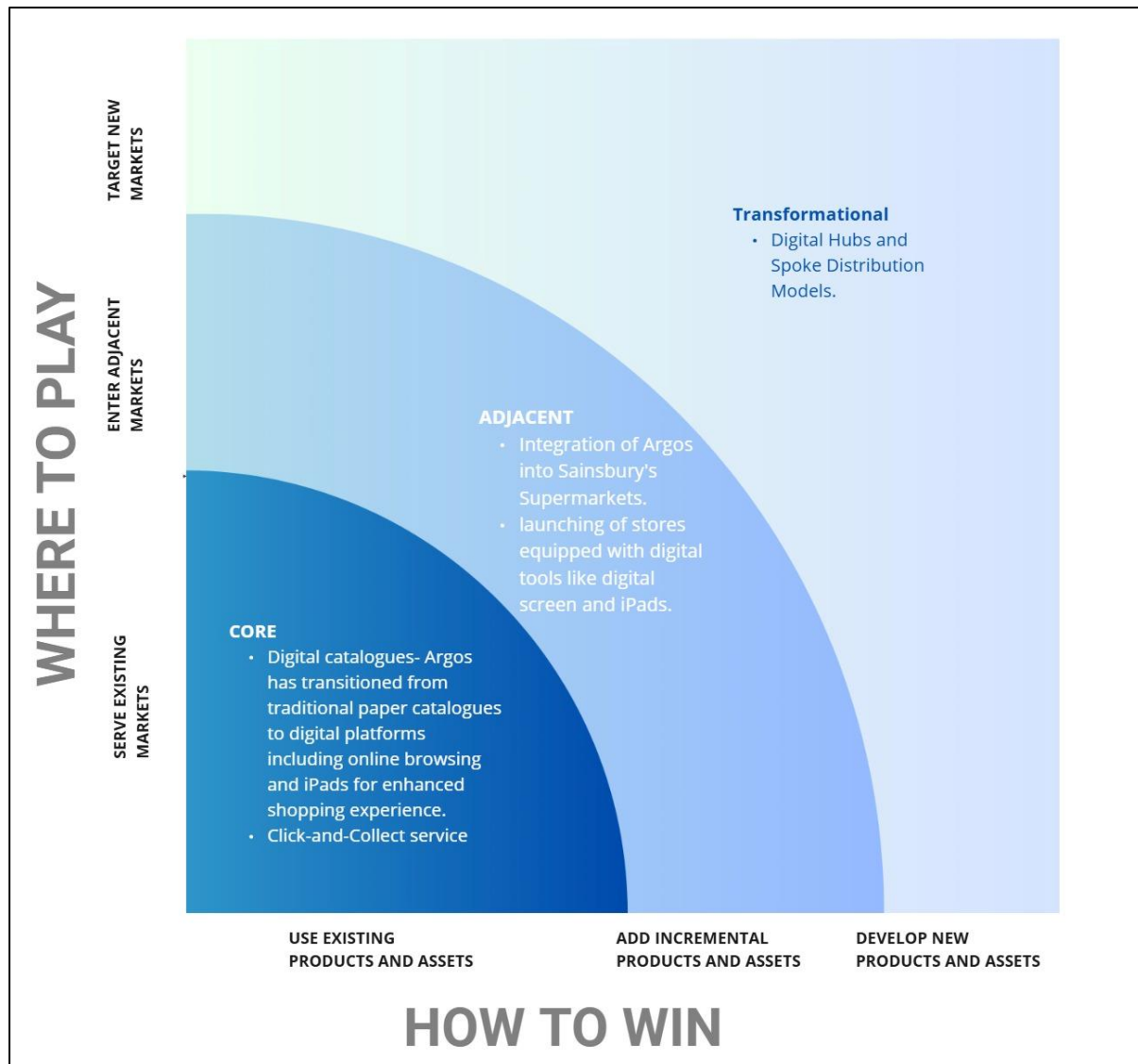


Figure 1: Innovation Ambition Matrix (Self-created)

Customer Journey Map

	Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Service	Loyalty
Customer actions	Customer identifies product need	Customer explores Argos	Purchase decision making	Checking order status	Raises complaint to Argos customer service
Touchpoints	Through social media platforms, website, mobile app or physical stores	Argos website, mobile app Visiting nearby Argos outlet at Sainsbury's	Via website or Argos app	Phone, email and app	Feedback request Chatbots Argos app
Customer experience					
Pain Points	Lack of information about the product	Not much of personalised suggestions	Out-of-stock items slow checkout process	Delayed delivery time Issues locating click-collect point	Lack of Support
Solutions	Provide clear, concise messaging, highlight unique selling points	Use of technologies for personalised suggestions	Instant stock confirmation Seamless checkout	Ensure timely delivery with regular updates	Personalised follow ups prompt customer support

Figure 2: Customer Journey Map of Argos (Self-created)

According to the existing technological and innovative approaches of Argos, Figure 2 depicts the customer journey that the organisation creates for its core customers. Analysing the pain and gain points, further opportunities for digital innovation for Argos could have been identified. It has been understood that Argos could further work on leveraging new technologies for enhancing its provision of services, thereby boosting their sales, and revenue for Sainsbury's as well. The following are the opportunities for digital innovation for Argos:

- Leveraging recent technologies-** Argos has been seen to lack adequate information about the product online, which includes lack of personalised suggestions and advertisements according to the customer needs. Argos could therefore make use of AI for analysing the customer data and delivering hyper-personalised advertisements and recommendations for products across different channels. Argos could also implement AI-powered visual searches in its iOS app for enhancing customer experience while shopping or searching for its products, thereby improving its digital catalogue interface (Skeldon, 2019). This could allow the customers to simply upload an image or take a photo of the product they are searching for on the Argos app, which eventually searches for the entire Argos catalogue online for similar product homewares, curtains or furniture. Apart from this, AI could also be used by Argos for providing similar products in different styles, colours or

shapes, in providing personalised suggestions to the customers. Use of AI alongside augmented reality (AR) featuring its iOS app, would offer enhanced customer experience while shopping at Argos (Victor, 2018). This could further enhance the shopping experience of the customers and personalisation of the product. The customers would be able to digitally place the products like TVs and sofas into their own homes through their iOS app for assessing the way the product looks, its size and fit even before buying them. Argos could also undertake the use of blockchain technology for provision or real-time updates on its inventory and product availability, so that their items are never out-of-stock (Davenport and Mittal, 2023). Argos also has the opportunity of using innovative AI solutions for enhancing its delivery services. The company could make use of AI for optimising delivery routes and improving its Fast-Track same-day delivery services (Cruijsen, 2020). Lastly, for enhancing its after purchase services and ensuring customer loyalty, Argos could use AI Chatbots for improving its post-purchase support. This would help the company to reduce any delay in customer support service regarding any product or delivery related query (Grewal *et al.*, 2022).

- ***Store Format Innovation-*** Although Argos has introduced the Hub-and-Spoke Model in its smaller store formats and collection points, this has helped the company in reducing its operational cost by ensuring enhanced accessibility for the customers (UddinAhmed *et al.*, 2022). Use of AI-powered forecasting could be used by Argos for analysing historical sales data, and seasonal trends of the company products and services. This would help the company to predict demand for specific products at specific spoke location, as a part of transformational aspect for Argos's innovative approach. This would help the company to reduce under and overstocking of products at the spoke stores of Argos. This digital and innovative approach would also help Argos to ensure that high demand items are always available at its local collection points, thereby minimising markdowns for low-demand products and waste of any product (UddinAhmed *et al.*, 2022).

Part 2

Proposed digital transformation initiative

In the previous part of the study, it has been identified that the main pain points of the customers in Argos are stock availability discrepancies, delayed delivery after purchase, order tracking issues and prolonged waiting time for picking up click and order items. In order to resolve these issues, the organisation needs to implement an integrated real-time personalised system that will use artificial intelligence technologies for real time tracking of inventories, orders of the customers and the operations that can impact the delivery time after purchase. Real time tracking of post purchase operations can help the company to make decisions regarding changing operational processes to enhance customer experience.

Step by step blueprint

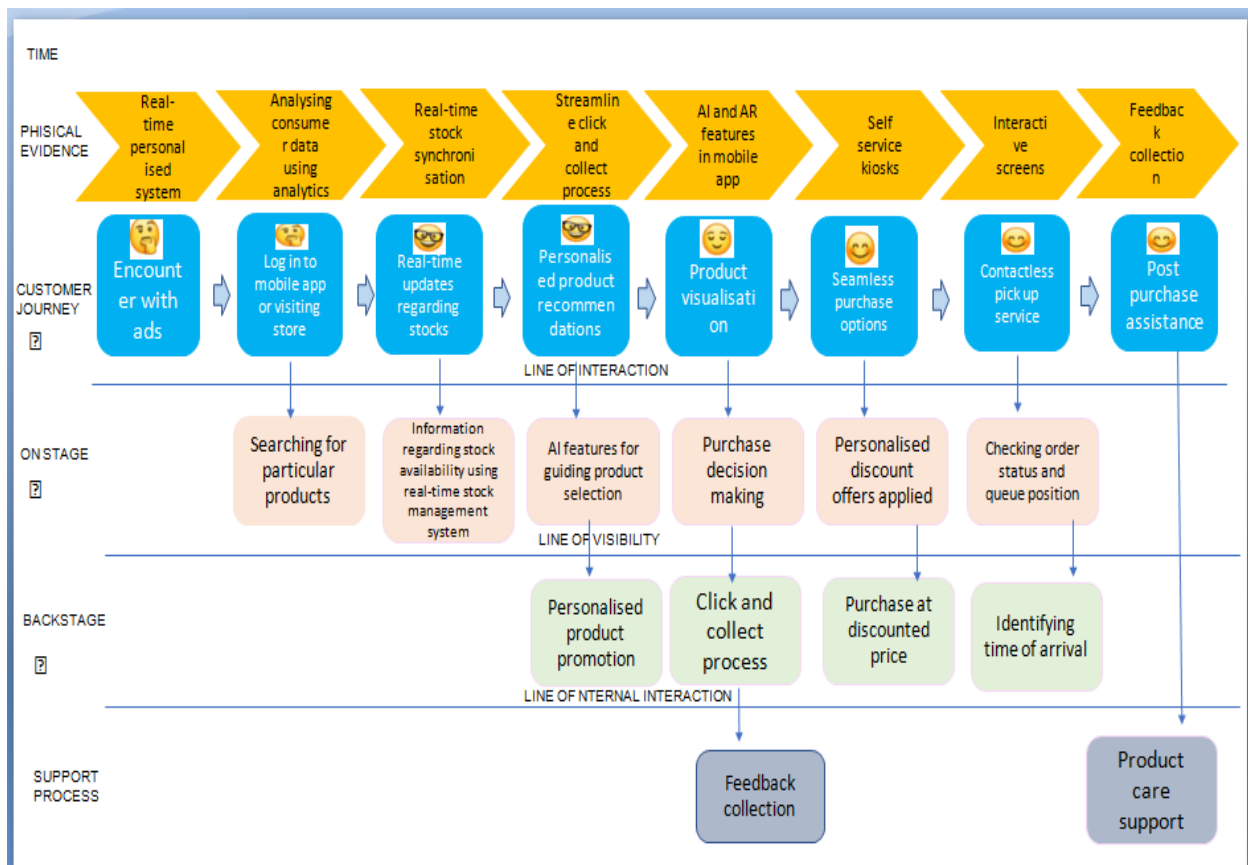


Figure 3: Step by step blueprint

(Source: Created by the learner)

Analysing consumer behaviour using data

AI technologies and advanced analytics need to be used by the company to track the purchase behaviour, search history and other details of the customers so that they can develop insights regarding the preferences of customers along with the issues that they face while accessing the service of the company (Pan *et al.*, 2017). The insights can help the company to provide personalised product recommendations to the customers.

Real-time stock synchronisation

Artificial intelligence can also be used for real-time tracking of stocks and inventories. The effective use of artificial intelligence technologies can also help forecast the stock availability and sales and in this process, it can become easier to dynamically adjust the product visibility online. Adjustment of stock visibility considering stock availability can help avoid issues like late delivery after purchase or prolonged waiting time for picking up the click and order products (Kureshi and Thomas, 2019). Real-time stock synchronisation can also help avoid issues like surplus stocks and can also help the company to manage stocks of products that have high demands.

Streamlining of click and collect process

The click and collect service of the company can be improvised by implementing a digital queue management system. Using the digital queue management system, the customers can easily identify their queue position and therefore, they will not become worried about when they get the delivery of their ordered products (Singh, 2019). In addition to this, the digital queue management system can also help provide push notifications to the customers so that they can understand their ordered product is ready for pickup and delivery. All these processes can help enhance the customer experience and can help retain customers for the long term.

Modifying the functions of mobile app with AI features

The features of the mobile app of Argos should be modified and some AI features like answering FAQs using AI features, guiding the customers to select appropriate products considering their

needs and others can be included in the application to enhance the shopping experience of the customer. The AI technologies will automatically analyse the purchase behaviour of the customers and will help the customers to select appropriate products. Augmented reality can also be used in the app for enabling the customers to visualise products in their homes before purchasing those products (Reinartz *et al.*, 2019). This process will help improve buyer experience and will also help the company to differentiate its mobile app from the app[s] of its competitors. From this perspective, it can be said that the modification of the mobile app with AI features can help enhance customer loyalty and can also help improve the competitiveness of the company.

Self service stores

Besides improving online customer journey, the organisation needs to use advanced digital technologies in their physical stores also to enhance the experience of offline customers. Self-service kiosks can be installed in the physical stores. Along with that, interactive screens that promote personalised products also need to be there in the stores to guide the customers regarding product selection as per their own preferences (Singh and Söderlund, 2020). The staff members of the retail stores also need to be provided with computers or tablets that are connected with a real-time inventory management system so that the staff member can provide information to the customers regarding stock availability and can also take initiatives for stock management.

Feedback and continuous improvement

The company also needs to integrate survey forms and feedback forms with the mobile apps so that the customers can provide feedback regarding their shopping experience and the company can use those feedbacks or continuously improve the customer journey.

Enhanced customer journey map

Customer Journey Map

	Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Service	Loyalty
Customer actions	Click on ad, ask for recommendations, read reviews	Log in to app or visiting website	Purchase decision making	Checking order status	Recommending company to others
Touchpoints	Social media ads, personalised product promotions	Realtime information about stock availability	Click and Order	Getting push notifications	Personalised product protection
Customer experience					
Pain Points	Post purchase late deliveries, prolonged waiting time	No pain point	Selecting products from many recommended products	No pain point	No pain point
Solutions	digital queue management system, checking order status, post purchase assistance	Personalised product recommendations	AI powered assistance regarding product selection	Contactless delivery	Repeating purchase

Figure 4: Enhanced customer journey map

(Source: Created by the learner)

- The first step in the customer journey map is encounter with personalised ads which enhance awareness of the customers regarding relevant products that can satisfy the needs of the customers.
- After encountering the ads, the customers login to the Argos mobile app or use the website of Argos.
- Here, the customer receives real-time updates regarding stocks and stock prices.
- The customers also get personalised product recommendations based on their preferences and previous purchases.
- Here, the customers can use augmented reality for visualising products to get a better idea regarding how the product can create value for the customer.
- The customer makes a decision regarding purchasing any product.
- The customers can be provided seamless purchase options through the mobile app of Argos, its website or the self service kiosks in the stores.

- In all these cases, personalised discount offers and promotions are applied automatically.
- The customers provide orders of specific products
- After providing orders of specific products the customer gets information regarding their order status and queue position.
- Contactless pickup services are received by the customers during the click and collect process
- At this point, the customer can track deliveries to estimate the possible arrival time of products.
- After delivery, the AI powered post purchase assistant tool guides the customers regarding storing the purchased products, using it, product care tips and additional support regarding purchase, return, refund and other things.
- Customers can provide feedback and suggestions using the feedback forms.

Impact of the initiative

Enhanced customer experience and customer loyalty

Implementation of the above mentioned initiatives can help enhance the overall shopping experience of the customers. Specially, the personalised recommendations, product visualisation using augmented reality can improve the experience of the customers (Reinartz *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, effective stock management and inventory management can help reduce the waiting time for purchasing and getting delivery of products. Enhancement of customer experience can help increase customer loyalty and the customers can be retained for the long term.

Sales growth and revenue growth

Personalised promotion of products and personalised discount offers encourage the customers to purchase products repeatedly. Moreover, seamless customer journey using mobile apps also enhance user experience and can help attract more customers to avail products using the website or mobile app of the company. In this process, the implementation of the digital transformation initiative can help facilitate revenue and sales growth of the organisation.

Enhanced operational efficiency

The use of self service kiosks in the store, interactive screens for personalised product promotions, real-time stock synchronisation can help reduce the labour cost behind performing these tasks and can also help improve the efficiency of stores (Belavina *et al.*, 2017). AI powered inventory management systems also help reduce inventory discrepancies and improve efficiency in terms of stock management.

Competitive advantage

Implementation of the digital transformation initiative can help Argos to differentiate itself from other companies operating in the grocery retailing sector of the UK. Specially, the inclusion of the augmented reality feature for visualising product, AI features in the mobile app for providing guidance to the customers regarding selecting specific products as per their needs can help the company to differentiate its services from other companies and in this way, the implementation of the proposed digital transformation initiative can also help Argos to achieve a competitive advantage over other online grocery retailers (Gupta, 2018).

Measuring impact and success

The impact and success of the digital transformation initiative can be measured by analysing net promoter score and the results of customer surveys. In this context, the customer survey results prior to implementing the proposed initiative should be compared with the results of customer survey after implementation of the initiative. This can help analyse how far the initiative has helped enhance customer experience and how satisfied the customers are because of the modification of customer journey (Omol, 2024). Operational metrics can be used for measuring the percentage of reduction in inventory discrepancies. In case, it is found that after the implementation of the initiative the percentage of inventory discrepancy has reduced considerably, then it can be identified that the initiative has been successful in improving operational efficiency and reducing inventory discrepancy (Singh and Söderlund, 2020). Sales metrics also can be used to identify how far the implementation of the initiative has helped enhance the sales of the company (Loonam *et al.*, 2018). In case, it is found that the sales of the company have increased after the implementation of the digital transformation initiative, it can be said that the initiative has a significant positive impact on the organisation and it can facilitate sales and revenue growth. The adoption of new mobile app features like augmented reality for

product visualisation also determines the success of the initiative. The organisation needs to use AI technology for analysing how far the customers have adopted the new features of the mobile app. In case, the majority of the customers are using the new features, the initiative can be considered highly successful (Gupta, 2018). The feedback of the customers also can be analysed to identify if the majority of the customers are satisfied with the new initiatives and the improvement of the service delivery process.

Conclusion

The shift to online shopping has shown the rise of e-commerce which continues to shape the consumer behaviour. Argos with its strong digital presence and being a technology-led retailer, with 70% of its sales originating online has benefitted a lot from this trend. With the advancements in technology, Argos has introduced services through mobile applications, digital tools and AI driven personalisation for enhancing the customer purchasing journey. Argos had shown healthy growth in sales after implementation of the click-and-collect online ordering system. By integrating its operations with that of Sainsbury's Argos been able to create a hybrid online-offline purchasing experience for the customers. Argos had introduced the "Fast Track" service, which involves offering the same-day delivery for the products ordered online. The use of tablets in the digital Pay@Browse area, thereby enabling them to purchase and choose what they require in quickly and conveniently instore. Through the Innovation Ambition Matrix and customer journey map of Argos, it has been understood that Argos has the opportunities of leveraging recent technologies like AI and AR for enhancing its services and improving personalisation of products according to the preferences of the customers. Use of AI could also be used for improving Argos's Hub-and-Spoke Model stores. Real time tracking of post purchase operations can help the company to make decisions regarding changing operational processes to enhance customer experience. The innovation initiatives would impact the Argos by enhanced customer experience and customer loyalty, sales growth and revenue growth, enhanced operational efficiency and enhanced competitive advantage.

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