



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU ———
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
————— UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

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UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Lecturer: Dr Rexion Nting

Student: Alireza Esmailtabar

ST Number: 1703941

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Introduction

Customer value is a kind of proportion that consists of benefits, which a customer would receive from side of vendor. Value of customer plays an important role in a business organization as the amounts of revenue earned by the company are totally based on the value of customers. There are several strategies that are used for planning in the use of customer satisfaction data and include its measurements that relates to data of customer satisfaction. These data from customer satisfaction can be measured by the perceived data that are valid and reliable in nature along with timely and relevant. As opined by Ordines *et al.* (2014), the actionable data that are present in satisfaction of customers are widely used in link of data for analysing valuation of customers. It also includes experience from customers that helps an organization to implement several strategies for benefits of the company. In this study Marks and Spencer have been used for analysing the customer value so that they can meet the expectations of the customers.

Analysis and implementation

Analysis and implementation of customer satisfaction includes the data that are available throughout the company for its benefits and development purpose. In the viewpoint of Li *et al.* (2015), the data that are collected from customers are to be used by the appointed managers for decision-making purpose along with strategic planning. Value of customers includes that information that would be required for identifying improvement areas in an organization. There are some factors that influence customer value of an organization such as accessibility in which it requires to access their products along with services that are required for preferred organization. Mark and Spencer are one of the well-known UK based retail company that has given importance to the value of customers. As per Simons (2014), the company has focused on navigations of store that are straightforward and simple process, which would be beneficial for both the company as well as for customers. Availability of products in a retail company is important part as it attracts customers that would automatically increase value of customers as well as increase revenue of the company (Shin, 2015). Language plays a vital role in increasing value of customers, as it is the factors that affect the company in both increasing as well as decreasing in its revenue. Marks and Spencer have effectively analysed the customers taste and preferences and has implemented major strategies to enhance their working for the customers.

Background of Marks and Spencer

Marks and Spencer which is currently one of the largest British Multinational retailers with its headquarters in London started its journey as Penny Bazaar on Kirkgate Market, Leeds in 1884 (Marksandspencer.com, 2018). Thus, it was a collaboration of Michael Marks and Thomas Spencer they, over years, transformed into a big supermarket which overnight became famous among the people of UK. It has specialized itself in selling of luxury goods, clothes and food products. At present Marks and Spencer has roughly 979 stores in UK and 428 stores worldwide (Statista.com, 2018). Marks and Spencer is a store that helps the customers to get a wide range of product in together where they can serve and analyse their buying according to their needs and expectations.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is one of the main factors that affect an organization in both financial as well as structural. Customers who are happy with the service of the company influence other customers related to them. This automatically increases their total amount of revenue and would give much importance to customers as the base of an organization. According to Pérez and del Bosque (2015), loyalty of customers plays a major role in a business organization as it is a type of psychological commitment that are made to the customers. Needs of customers are to be analysed by the company for their benefit along with delivery of exact product and services (Businesscasestudies.co.uk, 2018). Furthermore, emotional needs with the customers are also been considered by the company as it relates with the customers with them. Value of customer needs to be given importance as it creates a timeframe that helps in urgent situation of the company. Simons (2014) stated that value of customers includes that information that would be required for identifying improvement areas in an organization. Employees that are involved in sales are totally responsible for building customer value (Marksandspencer.com, 2018).

Quality process of Marks and Spencer

Quality process is a set of procedures that are maintained to ensure the effort made by the employee of many organization to achieve the goals and quality targets

(Businesscasestudies.co.uk, 2018). As Marks and Spencer is the leading retailing store in UK as well as in other countries, they give much priority to the satisfaction of customers and giving them much importance. They found it necessary to make the customers aware of the latest products so that they can buy it. As mentioned earlier, Marks and Spencer being the leading retailing store of UK, mainly focuses on customer satisfaction so as to understand their preferences. Furthermore, being a leading brand, they also put an effort of making them aware of their products that they promise their customers to offer at high price. In order to do so, this retailing company came out with strategies promotions for the people that were cost-effective as well as attractive to the users (Theguardian.com, 2018). They held store announcements that were less expensive than advertising. With their store announcement they tried to engage the media in its activities that would indirectly promote its products. This promotion has also attracted huge customers over years and helped Marks and Spencer to come up with many newer as well as innovative stores.

Promotional activities adopted by Marks and Spencer

The promotional process and helped them to get quality customers that were loyal to the products of Marks and Spencer (Marksandspencer.com, 2018). With an intension to engage the press in its advertising and promotional process, Marks and Spencer in Spain decided that employing a huge number of people would automatically attract the press and would be great news for them. Therefore, they had undergone several processes to get more and efficient graduate employees. The first process of choosing the applicants was filling up the application forms. Up to 10,000 graduate applicants were attracted and filled their form for the job. The forms were scrutinized by the interviewers and were called for the interview accordingly (Statista.com, 2018).

Employing staffs by Marks and Spencer

The initial selection criteria that the interviewers must possess were leadership, proper planning and organizing the work alone as well in a team, confidence, systematic process and proper job motivation. Keeping mind these criteria, the interview selected the applicants that could benefit this retailing store in future. Marks and Spencer have also engaged themselves in various processes to enhance their profit over time (Marksandspencer.com, 2018). Their service to the customer as

well as the enhanced quality of the product helped them to achieve the total revenue of £ 10,698.2 million by 31st March 2018. Being a UK based company; it managed £ 9,611.0 million by this time and £ 1,087.2 million from the international stores all over the world. This shows that this retailing store has a good grip over the customers in UK market by meeting the quality targets approved by the customers. Marks and Spencer have met the expectations of the customers by hiring staff that are diligent to their work and would give importance to the needs of the customers.

Strategies adopted to attract customers

Marks and Spencer aim to attract and inspire customers through their products and so they try out strategies with more innovative products that would attract the customers. To attract more customers with varying preferences, they come up with products that are mostly expected by them keeping in mind the sustainability of the product's quality (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). They aim to make the experience of the customers better and desirable. To enhance the quality of the products that they serve the customers they first communicate with them to know their expectations and what issues they face with the sustainability of the products. They try to bring changes in their products according to suggestions of the customers and aims to promote more supportable products for the people (Bbc.com, 2018). Not only communicating with the customers, Marks and Spencer also listen to their stakeholders and clarify their doubts so that they can adopt a responsible approach with more diversity.

As it has been discussed earlier in the study that Marks and Spencer being the leading retailing brand in UK, therefore it holds a good grip over the local as well as the international markets. At present, it has 1,463 stores all around the world and serves more than 32 million customers (Marksandspencer.com, 2018). As this retailing store has been serving the customers since ages, the expectation of the customers has increased gradually. The customers expect a better quality of the products at a much more reasonable price with more innovative design and culture. Marks and Spencer satisfy the customers with more classic range products for different age group and gender in an affordable price range.

Understanding the expectation of customers

Marks and Spencer have also understood desires of its potential customers and had come out with plain but fashionable clothes like plain, black t-shirts, white roll-neck sweaters, jackets and jeans. Though offering a wide range of products is enough to attract the customers in large number, Marks and Spencer also uses the different marketing strategies like identifying the marketing and implementing it. This has also helped Marks and Spencer to identify their potential and being innovative development in serving the customers.

In order to make the lives of the people simpler, Marks and Spencer design their clothes and other products more sustainably so that they can be used daily by the customers

(Marksandspencer.com, 2018). The customers are well served by these retailing store employees keeping in mind their buying behaviour. Following the potentiality of themselves, Marks and Spencer have been using its marketing strategies for the people of different social and economic background. This factor of analysing the customers' background and determining the price of their product has helped them to make the customers experience much better. On the other hand, Marks and Spencer have also adopted more convenient methods of communicating with the customers and other people through newspapers, television advertising, radio and most importantly, the internet. Marks and Spencer have taken up the Lasswell's communicative model to communicate with its customers and know what they expect from them.

Knowing their demands, it would be easier for the companies like Marks and Spencer to reach their target audience. As it has been discussed earlier that companies like Marks and Spencer have made out many marketing strategies using the marketing mix and this factor benefited them to make the customer's experience much better (Homburg *et al.* 2017). The advertisements used for the promotion of the products of Marks and Spencer also have been based on how the customers expect to get satisfied by them. They use facts like their annual revenue, loyalty towards their customers and new upcoming stores that they are planning. They also use images of their products and the process of making their products that would not only increase the clarity of their service but would also build a trust among them (Martin *et al.* 2015).

Ways of communicating with customers

Marks and Spencer very strategically also attract customers by directly talking to the customers and taking feedback from them who do most of the monthly shopping from them. The customers are asked to share their experience with other customers on public platforms and hence it acts as a major tool for influencing other customers. The customers who get influenced by the feedbacks also try to visit the Marks and Spencer store for their own experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Spencer also focusing on to increase the customer's experience also takes their feedback to see how they can bring more changes to their overall service. Feedbacks are taken in the form of feedback applications, online surveys and face to face interviews. Customers experience not only depends on the products that they purchase from Marks and Spencer but also the advertisements they see, opinions of family and friends and the reputation of the company. These factors together determine the experience of the customers and give Marks and Spencer a scope to bring more development in them (McColl-Kennedy *et al.* 2015).

Rant and Rave, being a leader in real-time customers engagement has come into a partnership with Marks and Spencer so that customer experience is enhanced (Rantandrave.com, 2018). Marks and Spencer in order to enhance their customer experience with more better marketing strategies and to ensure an easy way for getting the feedback of the customers have come into an alliance with the Rant and Rave in 2018 (Marksandspencer.com, 2018). This partnership would help Marks and Spencer to become a digital-first business that would help them to observe the shift of the customer's purchase habits and engage the brands across many processes. This partnership enables the customers to raise their voice and share their feedback and own experience through various channels like emails, feedback forms, online survey, SMS, Wechat and voiced responses with a frontline engagement of the customers (Rantandrave.com, 2018). These would help Marks and Spencer to respond over 11 million customer contacts every year. The direct feedback of the customers would help Marks and Spencer to understand their loopholes and come up with more innovative products for the customers (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The customers also feel important and connected when they find that their opinion is also valued by Marks and Spencer.

Achievements for customer experience

For the excellent customer experience, Marks and Spencer have been awarded many a time for its extraordinary service to the customers and its constant quality of the products. Marks & Spencer have won the *Customer Experience award for International Initiative*. Marks and Spencer have won the prize for the customer experience that they could gather by the *Voice of Customers programme* (Retailtimes.co.uk, 2018). This award highlighted the constant strive of Marks and Spencer to achieve customer experience across the globe, emphasizing on the customers for every marketing strategy that they make. Marks and Spencer have been selected as the winner of *The Loyalty Magazine Award* that was a tribute the creativity and the innovation that Marks and Spencer have brought in their product over time (Retailtimes.co.uk, 2018). The award won by Marks and Spencer was recognition of the worldwide initiative that they took to meet the demands of the customers, collect the feedback from them and analyze their shortcomings with proper strategies to respond the customer's feedback for their better experience (Marinchak *et al.* 2018). This award also highlighted their focus on the cultural background of the places and countries they operate in and also makes their product in such a way that it could meet the needs of people of those countries. The *Loyalty Magazine Awards* body, on Marks and Spencer's winning customer experience, stated that Marks and Spencer had been a good example of implementing strategies to engage the customers to enhance their business workings (Retailtimes.co.uk, 2018). Marks and Spencer also allow the retailer or the third-party product seller to operate and sell their products in multiple countries with a much wider range of customers. Thus, it has been a great experience for the customers as well as for retailers to use the service of Marks and Spencer in an international sphere.

Marks and Spencer's strategies

Marks and Spencer have very well made out strategies to meet the busy lifestyle of its customers. Based on the views of Homburg *et al.* (2017), it can be mentioned that this organization have noticed that internet has been an excellent forum for the people in their daily life and most of the people are now availing the online stores more than the retail markets (Marinchak *et al.* 2018). Marks and Spencer have also made an approach to meet the pace with the online retail stores like eBay, Apple and is planning to help the customers with online websites and stores. In order to

enhance the customer's experience, Marks and Spencer are planning to shut down 100 of its stores by 2022 and shift one-third of its sale to online marketing (Bbc.com, 2018). They have also planned that to serve the customers the most; they would come up with few but larger outlets at highly demanded places that would give a better and a luxurious service to the customers. Larger clothing and home ware stores in one of the most important location would also help them to reduce their cost and make the products highly beneficial (Bbc.com, 2018). The only problem that Marks and Spencer would face is that more than 872 employees would be unemployed. Sacha Berendji, the retail operations director of Marks and Spencer, stated that closing of the store might hamper the working and the customer's experience but it would be beneficial for the long run. He also stated that places where Marks and Spencer have shut down, the customers instead of switching to other competitive stores are now finding other Marks and Spencer nearby (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The constant customer's experience has benefited Marks and Spencer to meet these critical situations.

Many customers who availed the online shopping of Marks and Spencer were disappointed by the service that they received. Many loyal customers have lost their trust over Marks and Spencer and have now switched on to other retailing stores (McColl-Kennedy *et al.* 2015). Many customers commented that they were happy with the retail stores where they could visit and check the products of their use. But as they are now availing the service of the online stores, they are more prone to get a low quality of products and service from Marks and Spencer. This had a negative impact on the customer's experience. Over the past few months, these factors have been more in number and have decreased the number of loyal customers. Many customers have also given feedback that on their purchase of products online they have been delivering wrong products time and again and low quality (Blázquez, 2014). Many a time, the customers did not even receive their delivery on time and the delay was not updated by Marks and Spencer to the customers. The people were disappointed with the service that they got, and their feedback was not even checked. Some of the customers have also gone through more severe experiences that made them choose other online retailing stores (Wu *et al.* 2014). Many people who raised a complaint about the product never received the refund of the product and any prior intimation was given to them. Some of the people were frustrated with the customer service and this greatly hampered the customer's experience of Marks and Spencer.

Marks and Spencer, being the leading retail store in UK, have maintained its relationship with its customers. This benefited Marks and Spencer to cope up with their critical situation when they started shutting down their outlets. Their good relationship with the customers helped them to overcome the situations where customers started going to other Marks and Spencer outlets nearby. On the basis of the views of Martin *et al.* (2015), it can be concluded that a proper customer relationship would enable this retailing company to enhance their own service to the customers meet their expectations. A well-built relation would also help Marks and Spencer to get better suggestions and feedback from the customers and hence this would help them to meet customer's expectations. By keeping a close contact with the customers, Marks and Spencer are much able to understand are potential and loyal customers. This helps Marks and Spencer to meet their expectations by understanding their demands and coming up with much more innovative products (Ren *et al.* 2016).

Customer analysis of Marks and Spencer

By keeping a close contact with the customers, Marks and Spencer analysed that online marketing would benefit their business more and would be able to get hold of more customers than the offline retail stores. This made them come up with an online sale and helped the people to get their products at their doorstep. A proper and reliable relation with the customers also helped Marks and Spencer to experiment new products in the market with the fear of losing the customers. As influenced by Shaw and Hamilton (2016), it can be said that to ensure proper reliability on the customers, Marks and Spencer has maintained a trustworthy relation with its customers where they can experiment with the ongoing trends in the market and the customers would readily accept it. Another important advantage of maintaining a good relationship with customers is it helps to maximize the sales revenue. Marks and Spencer have well understood that more the customers are satisfied with the products, more is the sales revenue. They focused on to maintain a good relationship with the customers so that they customers buy their products more and their revenue automatically increased. This process made them to be one of the leading retail stores in UK. The good and cordial relation of Marks and Spencer with its customers also helped the third-party retailers to get more customer coverage and smooth flow of the revenue (Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). Thus, it not only benefited Marks and Spencer and the customers, but also the other retailers who sell their product to customers through Marks and Spencer. The customer loyalty has been

one of the most important factors that helped Marks and Spencer to build up a good relationship with the customers.

While developing a good relationship with the customers, Marks and Spencer have faced many challenges to win the trust of the customers. The most important challenge that Marks and Spencer often faces is the lack of convincing the customers. Many customers are loyal as they have been using their products for years, but many a time, Marks and Spencer faced problem to make the new customers aware of their goals and objective and had often been less convincing to the people (Brochado *et al.* 2017). Lack proper channel to convey the organizational goals and objectives have been a challenge for Marks and Spencer to maintain a good customer relation. Other retailing competitions and took the advantage of this problem of Marks and Spencer and attracted those potential customers who could have benefited Marks and Spencer.

Another challenge faced by Marks and Spencer was to manage the feedbacks that they got from its customers. Marks and Spencer have made a channel for its customers to share their feedback about the service and products but the often fail to respond to their feedback and hence this created a negative impact on the customer behaviour of Marks and Spencer (Shin, 2015). The customers often found it difficult for them to cope up with the product and acted as a barrier to customer relation. Marks and Spencer also faced the problem of understanding the customers' expectations and this weakened their relationship with the customers. Marks and Spencer have been always in to a process of coming up with new and innovative products and services for the customers, but at times they failed to understand what the customers require and what they expect (Marinchak *et al.* 2018). This acted as the biggest challenge in maintaining a customer relation for Marks and Spencer.

Threats for customer experience

Low quality of their products and services also poses a threat in maintaining the customer relation with Marks and Spencer. This retailing store often get complaints from their customers regarding their low quality of products, wrong delivery delaying refunds and incorrect information and updates. These are the basic things that customers look forward from Marks and Spencer (Kandampully *et al.* 2018). When the customers face these types of problems, they gradually lose faith and trust from the organization. Marks and Spencer have many a time faced these issues with the customers and this has made the customers switch to other competitive retailing stores. Marks

and Spencer, due to lack of proper customer relationship have witnessed a decline in its overall customers. Marks and Spencer use its customer to be the most important aspect that has to be maintained for better revenue (Ordenes *et al.* 2014). Many of time problems with the retailers can also affect the customer relation and hence it brings down the overall working pattern. Conflicts between the employees of Marks and Spencer can also create a negative impact on serving the customers and therefore posing a threat.

Conclusion

For any retailing organization, it is essential to maintain a good relationship with the customers so that they can increase revenue of the company. Marks and Spencer have been one of the largest British Multinational retailers with its headquarters in London. Customers that are satisfied with the service attract more customers for Marks and Spencer, which automatically increases their total amount of revenue as customers are the base of an organization. Loyalty of customers plays a major role in a business organization as it is a type of psychological commitment that is made to the customers. Marks and Spencer also make different strategies for the people of different background and this factor of analysing the customers' background have helped them to make the customers experience much better. Marks & Spencer have won the *Customer Experience award for International Initiative*. After winning the *Loyalty Magazine Awards*, they commented that Marks and Spencer had been a good example of implementing strategies to engage the customers to enhance their business workings While developing a cordial relation with the customers, Marks and Spencer have faced many challenges to win the trust of the customers. The most important challenge that Marks and Spencer often faces the lack of convincing the customers. Lack proper channel to convey the organizational goals and objectives have been a challenge for Marks and Spencer to maintain a good customer relation. Low quality of their products and services also poses a threat in maintaining the customer relation with Marks and Spencer.

The End

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