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MARKETING MANAGEMENT

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1. Introduction

This report's main goal is to evaluate Next plc, a renowned UK clothing manufacturer, critically. The purpose of the report is to assess the marketing department of Next plc's effectiveness and its capacity to manage the customer journey. Print, online, and social media are just a few of the marketing strategies that Next plc uses to interact with its target market. Next plc needs to closely examine its customer journey management procedures and assess its marketing strategies in order to maintain its performance. This might make it possible for the business to spot any issues with or difficulties with its current processes and come up with creative solutions. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of Next plc's marketing management practises and offers doable suggestions to enhance its marketing strategies. The outcomes of this study should improve marketing management best practises in the apparel sector and provide marketing managers and professionals at Next plc and other comparable companies with useful information.



Figure 1: Company Logo

(Source: Nextplc.co.uk, 2023)

2. Communication

This section of the report looks at and evaluates Next plc's marketing initiatives, assesses the impact of the marketing division on the business, and explains the theoretical framework that guides this evaluation. Next plc is well known for its innovative marketing campaigns and uses a variety of marketing channels to reach its target audience.

Indirect communication: In order to reach its target audience, Next Plc uses a variety of marketing channels, such as television advertising, print advertising, and others. The company is renowned for its innovative marketing strategies and ability to draw in clients. The company's yearly Christmas advertising campaign is one instance; it is eagerly anticipated by customers and frequently goes viral on social media. The marketing efforts of Next plc could, however, be enhanced in some areas.

Direct communication: The business may take more steps to interact directly with clients on social media or electronic sites like Twitter and Instagram. Social media is a fantastic platform for businesses to engage with their audience, foster brand loyalty and gather client feedback on their goods and services (Vinerean and Opreana, 2021). Although Next plc has a significant social media following, the business may do more to promote customer participation and engagement.

2.1 Shannon-Weaver communication model

Sender: A sender is referred to as the primary source of a specific message or piece of information.

Encoder: As a transmitter with the ability to transform a message into a signal, an encoder can be characterised as such. The message sent by the centre is converted into signals like binary data or waves, which are highly compatible with sending messages through satellites or cables, and this must be taken into consideration in this context (Vinerean and Opreana, 2021). For instance, in the telephone case, the human voice is translated into wave signals and transmitted through a cable line.

Decoder: A decoder can be thought of as the location where a signal is received and converted into a specific message. In more precise terms, the decoder is the encoder's exact opposite process.

Channel: A channel is a specific medium that allows for the transmission of data and information from sender to receiver. Email, films, phones, and a number of other channels are some examples of effective ones.

Noise: The message is transferred from the encoder to the decoder via a specific channel. Physical noise, such as horn sounds, crowd noise, thunder, and other sounds, can divert attention from or otherwise affect the messages while this specific process is occurring. The term "noise" refers to this type of destruction, which can impair communication flow quality, hinder data transmission, and ultimately result in the receiver receiving the incorrect message from the sender.

Receiver: The receiver can be thought of as the place where the message sent from the centre will ultimately land. The receiver usually responds to each sender according to the message that has been decoded (Vinerean and Opreana, 2021). The entire flow of communication between the receiver and the sender will be impacted if the message has been misused by the sender or the receiver has become distracted by some noise.

Additionally, it should be kept in mind that the model is more successful when used for one-on-one communication as opposed to communication with a large or diverse audience.

3. Integrated market communication

There are several areas where Next plc's marketing efforts may be improved. For instance, the company can put more effort into engaging with customers on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. Social networking is a great tool for businesses to interact with their customers, build brand loyalty and get customer feedback on their products and services (Ebrahim, 2020). Even though Next plc has a sizable social media following, the company might do more to encourage customer involvement and engagement.

In terms of boosting revenue and building brand recognition, the marketing division has been successful. The corporation Next plc reported a profit of £342 million in 2020, with sales that

had been rising gradually over time (Nextplc.co.uk, 2023). The advertising efforts run by the marketing division, notably the Christmas ad campaigns, were a key factor in raising the company's sales and building brand recognition. Brand loyalty has also been fostered successfully by the marketing division. Numerous clients of Next plc frequently return to the business to buy apparel and home goods, demonstrating the company's loyal consumer base. Customers have developed brand loyalty to the business as a result of its marketing initiatives, especially its loyalty programme.

4. Promotional strategy for Next PLC

Women's, men's, children's and home goods are just a few of the clothes and home goods that Next plc sells. The company's goods are of a high calibre and created with the needs of its intended market in mind. In order to draw customers, Next plc offers its items at fair pricing and frequently holds specials and discounts. The company's price approach is intended to appeal to customers who are looking for value for their money. The company employs a variety of marketing platforms, such as social media marketing, print advertising, online advertising, television advertising and print advertising, to advertise their products (Wei, Dai and Liang, 2021). The goal of the company's marketing initiatives is to increase sales, increase brand recognition and draw in new clients. It is critical to initially determine the most appropriate marketing channels for Next plc before creating unique marketing tactics. There are numerous ways for businesses to reach their target market in the modern digital era, including

4.1 Online promotion

Social media marketing: The target market for Next plc can easily be reached through social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The business can communicate with customers, offer product updates and advertise deals and promotions on social media.

Influencer marketing: Influencer marketing is the process of promoting a company's goods or services by collaborating with social media influencers (Wei, Dai and Liang, 2021). For advertising its apparel and accessories and reaching a larger audience while gaining trust from potential customers, Next plc could collaborate with fashion influencers.

Email marketing: Email marketing entails giving customers personalised communications through their inboxes. The latest collections, special discounts and updates on new goods and services might all be promoted by Next plc through email marketing.

Content marketing: Creating meaningful, pertinent and interesting material is a key component of content marketing, which aims to draw in and keep a target audience.

4.2 Offline marketing

Events and Experiences: Holding events and offering distinctive in-store experiences can assist to increase brand recognition, creating buzz and improving the customer experience.

Experiential marketing: Marketing through experience entails developing engaging interactive experiences that let people interact with a brand in a memorable way. The latest collections from Next Plc could be featured at pop-up stores or other events, giving customers a distinctive and interesting experience.

5 Branding and management equity:

5.1 Branding:

Next Plc might organise contests on social media to entice clients to post pictures of them wearing Next Plc attire. In addition to generating useful user-generated content that the business can use in upcoming marketing campaigns, this would aid in raising brand awareness and engagement on social media. Innovative marketing techniques are fresh, original ways of doing business that aim to catch the attention of consumers and set a company's brand apart from that of its rivals. These techniques can take a variety of shapes, including the introduction of new products, inventive advertising campaigns, interesting social media posts, or distinctive in-store experiences (Nunan, Malhotra and Birks, 2020). Businesses aiming to boost brand recognition, client engagement and ultimately sales must employ cutting-edge marketing techniques. Customers expect a seamless experience across all channels of communication, so messaging, branding and tone must be consistent throughout all touchpoints (Fish and Lord, 2023). This can be done by utilising a unified customer data platform, which combines data from various channels to produce a 360-degree view of the customer.

5.2 Brand equity:

The total assets of a particular brand are referred to as brand equity in the realm of marketing. In this instance, the societal significance of a well-known brand name is implied by the net worth. Companies must constantly develop their marketing techniques in today's fast-paced, cutthroat business world if they want to stand out from the competition and draw in new clients. This section of the paper defines innovative marketing strategies, lists pertinent marketing avenues for Next plc, offers real-world examples of innovative marketing strategies for Next plc and explores the theoretical underpinnings of creative marketing strategies (Nunan, Malhotra and Birks, 2020). The actual owner of a well-known brand name may create greater profit and revenue merely because people regard the commodity of that manufacturer as superior to those of lesser-known brands.

6. Keller's brand equity model:

The consumer-based brand equity model, which Kevin Lane Keller first developed, is also known as Keller's brand equity model. The basic tenets of this specific model state that in order for any business organisation, including Next plc, to create a strong brand, it is necessary to conceptualise the feelings and thoughts of its clients with regard to its goods and services. This can be accomplished by creating the proper kind of experience around its brand. Next plc customers who have a strong level of brand equity are more likely to make larger purchases from the company and to recommend it to their friends, family, and other contacts. Strong brand loyalty among potential customers of Next plc can be produced as a result of strong brand equity.

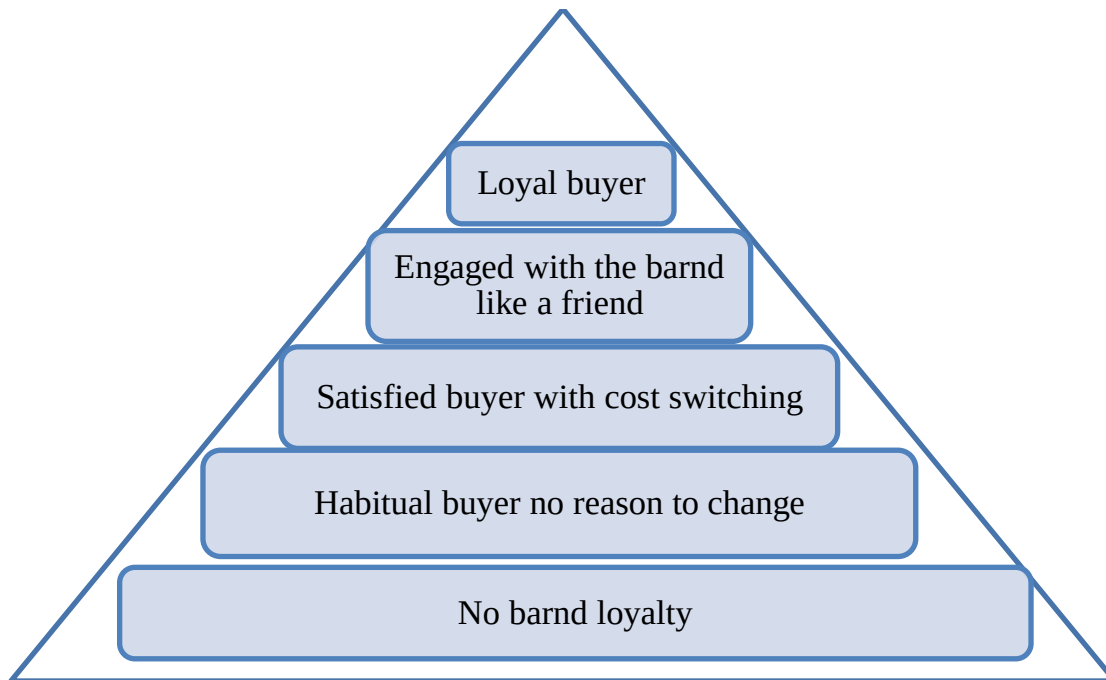


Figure 3: Brand Loyalty Pyramid

(Source: Self-developed)

Next plc has been working to enhance its customer service efforts from the very beginning of its business. The company must successfully prove their dedication to their customers above all else through customer service efforts to avoid arranging a variety of goods and services (Spangenberg and Lorek, 2019). Even though the company is seen to have changed over time, the core of the brand remains strong. Their primary business goal is to achieve sustainable profitability across all of their businesses, distribution channels, and product lines. With this in mind, they strive to provide the best level of customer service. A strong brand can generate long-term value.

Brand loyalty

The customer-centric approach is another theoretical framework that underpins creative marketing tactics. The customer is at the centre of the customer-centric marketing strategy, which involves giving them a seamless and customised experience (Gupta and Ramachandran, 2021).

Brand performance

Making a visual representation of the customer journey while identifying touchpoints, pain points and chances for improvement is known as customer journey mapping (Rishi and Popli, 2021). The report also makes creative marketing recommendations that Next plc can use to build brand recognition and efficiently manage the customer journey across various communication channels. Clothing, shoes and home goods are the primary product categories for Next plc, a British multinational retailer. Since its founding in 1982, the business has expanded to rank among the UK's biggest clothing retailers (Nextplc.co.uk, 2023). Additionally, offers a thorough method for comprehending the client journey and locating opportunities to enhance the customer experience and brand image simultaneously.

Brand imagery

More than 500 stores are run by Next plc in the UK and there are an additional 180 stores in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and other places (Glassdoor.co, 2023). A strong e-commerce platform that enables customers to make purchases online makes up the company's significant online presence. The clothing industry is extremely competitive, so businesses must create strong marketing plans to stay on top (Musovaet *al.* 2021). The successful Christmas advertising campaigns of Next plc have earned the company a reputation for creative marketing strategies.

6.1. Advantages of Keller's brand equity model

- i) According to Steward et al. (2019), the pyramid of brand resonance is primarily used as a specific tool for evaluating the effectiveness of promotional communication on brand equity through the development of relationships and brand loyalty. The Next Plc brand has a very strong brand resonance, and for this particular company, the word-of-mouth strategy is seen to play a key role in growing their business. The company can gain some competitive advantage in the market with the aid of a successful implementation of this specific model because it has the ability to utilise its resources as fully as possible. The company has found success in terms of attracting a broad range of customers by utilising the economy pricing strategy.
- ii) This particular model has also aided Next plc in building a strong brand by influencing how their customers feel and perceive them.

iii) In addition, this has aided the company in determining the brand's reputation in the relevant UK market. They have also been successful in determining what else needs to be done for their company to continue growing.

6.2. Demerits of Kellers' brand equity model

According to Wibowo et al. (2020), brand resonance requires modification in order to be extremely relevant. It has frequently been observed that Next plc's business growth is not at all influenced by the emotions and ideas of its customers. However, this might not be the case for Next plc in this instance because it has been noted that customers have a high level of confidence in the goods and services offered by their business.

7. Customer journey

Managing the customer journey across communication channels entails giving customers a consistent and seamless experience at every point of contact. Best practices for managing the customer journey across communication channels include the following:

Developing a customer-centric approach: Understanding the needs, preferences and behaviours of the customer is necessary to develop a customised experience across all communication channels. It entails building thorough customer profiles, monitoring customer interactions across channels and using this data to tailor offers and messaging. Instead of waiting for a response from customer service, customers prefer to solve their problems on their own. Customers can find solutions to their issues more quickly and easily by using self-service options like chatbots, FAQs and knowledge bases (Krishnan *et al.* 2022).

Offering multichannel support: Whether it is through email, phone, chat, or social media, customers expect to be able to contact a business in their preferred manner. In order to increase customer satisfaction and lower churn, multichannel support can be provided (Merritt and Zhao, 2020).

Continuously measuring and optimising: It can be useful to identify gaps and areas for improvement by measuring customer satisfaction and engagement across various channels. The customer journey can be continually improved to help boost customer retention, loyalty and advocacy.

8. Customer Journey Management at Next plc

Any organisation hoping to develop lasting client relationships must manage the customer journey. The report's study of Next plc's present customer journey management, identification of management gaps and issues and identification of a theoretical framework to support the analysis and identification are all covered in this section. The customer journey of Next plc can be broken down into a number of stages, including awareness, consideration, purchase, post-purchase and advocacy.

8.1 Pre-purchase

In order to reach its target demographic during the awareness stage, Next plc uses a range of marketing channels, such as television advertising, print advertising, web advertising and social media marketing. Customers conduct research on the company's goods and services, contrast them with those of competitors and weigh their options during the consideration stage (Keiningham *et al.* 2020). Customers may get all the necessary information on the internet store run by Next Plc, including product descriptions, reviews and sizing details.

8.2 Purchase

The online store operated by Next plc offers a simple and user-friendly checkout process that enables customers to finish their purchases quickly and simply. In order to make it as simple as possible for customers to complete their transactions, the business also provides a variety of payment methods, including credit cards and PayPal.

8.3 Post-purchase

Next plc follows up with clients after they make a purchase to make sure they are happy with it. Customers who purchase from the business can return products for free within a predetermined time range with no fuss. Additionally, Next Plc encourages users to post reviews of their products so that other customers can make well-informed choices.

9. Customer Journey map

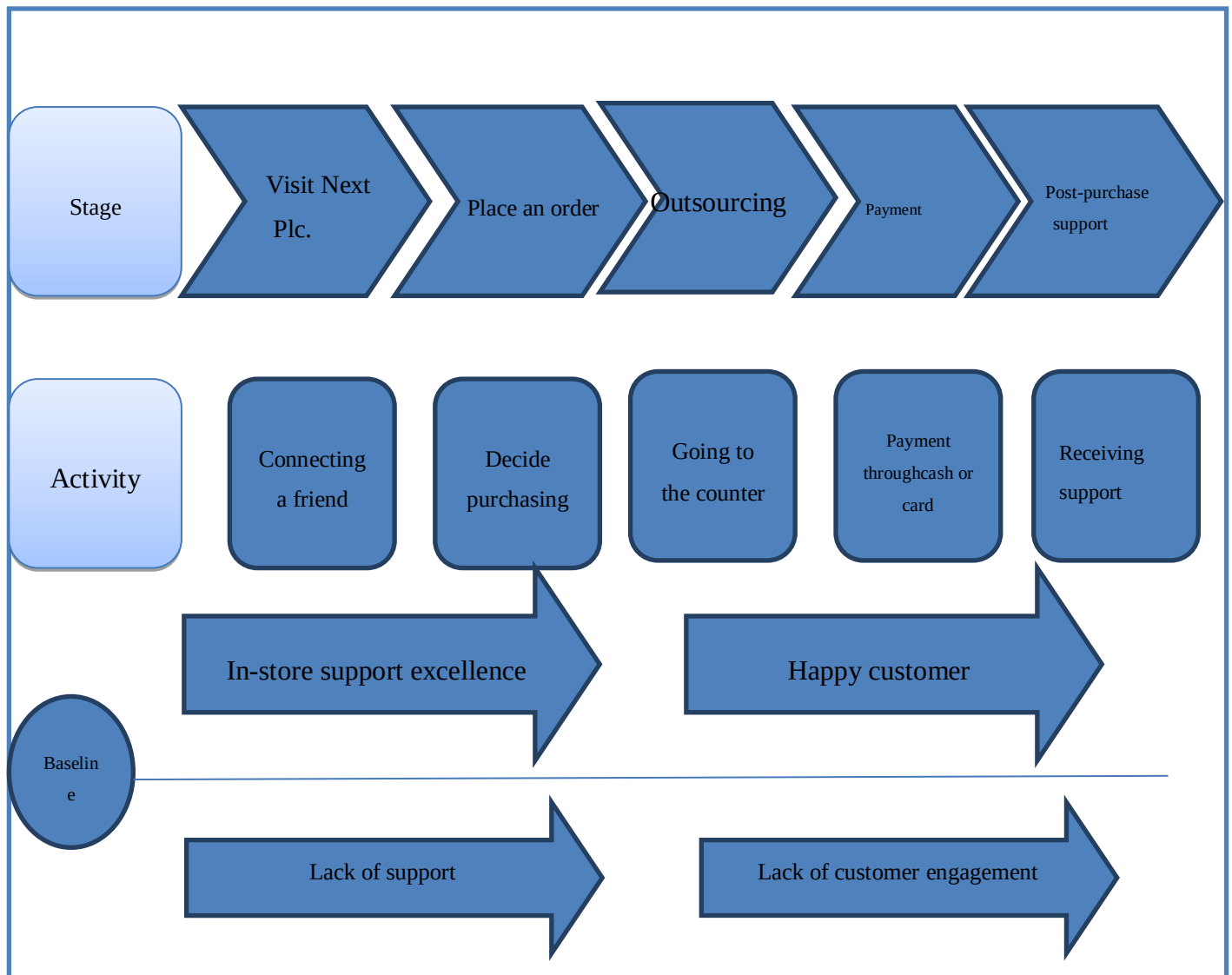


Figure 3: Customer Journey Map

(Source: Self-developed)

9.1 Critical evaluation of the Customer journey map of Next Plc

Even though Next Plc has managed the customer experience successfully generally, there are still some areas where the business could do better. Giving clients a more individualised experience is one aspect. As customers expect businesses to customise their experiences to meet

their unique requirements and tastes, personalization is becoming more and more crucial in marketing. In order to give its customers a more engaging and pertinent experience, Next plc could leverage customer data to offer more personalised recommendations and promotions. The ability to deliver a cohesive experience across all media is another area that needs work. Customers want a consistent shopping experience whether they are making purchases in-store or online (Haruna, 2020). Next plc could do more to guarantee a seamless experience for its customers across all channels. For instance, the business may take advantage of in-store technology to provide customers access to their online accounts and let them view their past purchases and also give post purchase support.

9.2 Strengths:

The main advantage of Next plc's customer journey map is that the business has a diverse group of productive employees who are constantly willing to go above and beyond to meet the needs of their clients.

9.3 Weakness:

The primary flaw in this company's customer journey map is the abundance of options that consumers have from other retail businesses in their market. Therefore, there is very little room to raise the price of any good or service in order to make more money.

10. Total engagement model

Leading UK apparel company Next plc engages with customers through a variety of channels, including social media, email and its website. The website for Next plc is easy to use and offers thorough information on prices and available products. A consistent stream of updates on new products, deals and events can be found on the company's social media accounts (Dolega, Rowe and Branagan, 2021). Through the application of the Service Profit Chain theory, the company's current management of the customer journey across communication channels can be assessed. The SPC theory is a framework that emphasises the significance of customer loyalty, employee satisfaction and service quality in producing profits for a business (Son, Kim and Kim, 2021). According to the theory, financial performance, customer loyalty and employee satisfaction are

all closely related. As an impact it may maximise the overall engagement of the concerned company.

11. Recommendations

11.1. Summary of the key findings and recommendations

The marketing initiatives and contribution of the marketing department at Next plc have been evaluated critically in this report. Additionally, Next plc's current customer journey management has been examined and evaluated in the report, with gaps and challenges being noted. Additionally, this report has offered real-world illustrations of cutting-edge marketing techniques for increasing brand recognition and controlling the customer journey across communication channels. The results show that Next plc has a strong marketing division that has made a significant contribution to the company. The business has a strong online presence and engages with customers well on social media. The provision of consistent messaging and branding across all communication channels, however, is lacking. Additionally, there is room for improvement in managing the customer journey and delivering a seamless and consistent experience at every touchpoint. It is advised that Next plc use customer journey mapping to find gaps and opportunities for improvement in managing the customer journey in order to address these problems. In order to offer a more individualised experience, the business should also gather customer data and use CRM systems. The provision of omnichannel support and ensuring consistency in messaging, tone and branding across all communication channels are the responsibility of Next plc (Zhang *et al.* 2021). Finally, the business must constantly evaluate and enhance the customer experience based on feedback and data.

11.2. Limitations and future research directions

There is a lack of consistent branding and messaging across all communication channels. Other areas that could be improved are managing the customer journey and providing a seamless and consistent experience at every touchpoint. It is advised that Next plc use customer journey mapping to find gaps and areas for improvement in customer journey management in order to deal with these problems. The company should also collect customer information and make use of CRM systems in order to provide a more individualised experience. Next plc is in charge of providing omnichannel support and making sure that all communication channels use the same messaging, tone and branding. Last but not least, the company must continually assess and improve the customer experience based on feedback and data.

12. Conclusion

Next plc has a strong marketing division that has greatly aided in the development of the company. It is essential to enhance journey management across different communication channels in order to guarantee customers have a seamless and uninterrupted experience. This can be done by implementing cutting-edge marketing strategies like experiential marketing and influencer marketing, which can improve brand recognition and encourage better customer engagement. Following the customer experience management framework will allow you to implement the most efficient methods for managing the customer journey. Next plc can achieve greater success and boost customer satisfaction by consistently enhancing our marketing management procedures.

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