

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Understanding and Engaging in the Customer Experience BMSW5103

Organization's Quality Systems and Customer Relationship Management

Florina Loredana Lupulescu 1922055
Lecturer: Balendran Kandasemy

Executive Summary

M&S is in the retail industry, and it is important for them to create and maintain good customer relationships in order to remain competitive in the marketplace for a long period. It is in their interest for a company to give high-quality services and products to its customers as this will assist them to improve their experiences, which will lead to an increase in market value and profit. M&S must analyse elements that have an impact on their business operations and functions, as well as devise a system to improve their customers experiences by satisfying their expectations or requirements. This is because it will aid in the development of effective decisions and plans that will improve service quality and relationships with their customers.

The current report has highlighted the theories and practices related to engaging and understanding the customer experience. The report primarily focused on defining how organisations can enhance the value for the customers and evaluated the external factors, including the Covid-19 impact on quality systems of the organisation and controls for the customers and how the organisation dealt with the new situation.

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Introduction

The aim of writing this report is to analyze the importance of customer value for a chosen organization and the relationship with their customers. Customer value is a changing factor that companies need to focus on especially now with the changes after the pandemic.

The organization chosen for this study is Marks and Spencer, the largest retailer in the United Kingdom that sells clothing, footwear, gifts, home furnishing and food not only in the UK but also around the world (Marks and Spencer plc, 2021). Working for M&S in the past as a customer assistant and warehouse operative gave me the ability to learn how to serve, care for and interact with customers around the shop. Therefore M&S was chosen for this study as the experience will help to analyze certain factors that influence the way the organization is developing and maintaining good customer relationship.

To properly analyze how internal and external factors can influence M&S's ability to maximize customer value the use of the following theories is needed: A PESTEL and SWOT analysis to see how these factors can have an influence on customer management; customer relationship management (CRM) to find out how a company interacts with their customers; customer engagement and customer experience – 5 dimensions of service quality (Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles), and the 7 Ps of the relationship marketing mix (service quality gap SERVQUAL) to manage the customer experience.

The first section will cover the background of the organization with a thorough analysis of the business environment. Then in the next sections, the experience as a customer assistant and the knowledge acquired will be used together with the researched literature of the theory to analyze the customer experience at M&S.

The outcome of this report is showing the importance of customer relationship and experience to the customer value of an organization.

Background of the organization

Marks & Spencer is leading food retailer, and it is one of the biggest in the UK. The organisation mainly sells food products, clothes, gift items, electronics, homeware and offers banking services as well. The organisation currently has more than 900 stores, and it is operational in more than 40 territories. The organisation is built on the foundation of five major principles, and that is innovation, service, trust, value, and quality. At the core of Marks & Spencer's business model is their purpose of 'making every moment special'.

The organisation is a result of a partnership between Thomas Spencer and Michael Marks, who set up the company in September 1884. The organisation first began its operations by selling common groceries such as socks, needles, thread, buttons, and biscuits through the Penny Markets (Buttle and Maklan, 2019).

At present, the executive chairman of the organisation is Steve Rowe, who was appointed in 2016. The organisation is of the opinion that building good relations with society, suppliers, and customers is crucial as it assists in creating better value for their stakeholders and customers. For the organisation, it reflects the way they operate their business while keeping in mind their ethics, principles, and core values. M&S adheres to standards used for animal welfare, uses good material, and provides a good level of wages to its employees, and deals efficiently with the suppliers. M&S aspires to be a fair partner, paying suppliers a fair price, supporting local communities, and ensuring excellent working conditions for everyone involved in our operations and supply chains. This principle lies at the centre of all they do (Murdock, 2020).

Application of Marketing Theories to analyse customer experience

SERVQUAL

Is a tool used by many industries to measure the service quality they provide to their customers. It has five dimensions to measure the quality of the service: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. They help in finding if the quality of the service is poor or high in a company and if the quality is poor then the tool uses 5 gaps as reasons for poor customer experience (Appukuttan and Nath, 2017).

Tangibles are the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, employees, and communication materials from the service. Marks & Spencer uses various types of equipment in order to provide the customers with the best possible services and physical facilities like top shelf, query about the product and services at the counter. For example the employee appearance describes the M&S brand with their uniforms.

Assurance is the employees' knowledge and behaviour about courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence. Colleague as they are called inside M&S are trained specifically to deliver great customer service with product knowledge and behave accordingly following procedures and policies that M&S uses them fairly in case of misconduct.

Responsiveness is the service company's willingness to help customers and provide punctual services. The management of Marks & Spencer have given their customers precise detail about the products and services. This helps in checking up with the products and services by the employees and helps the customers.

Reliability is the service company's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. The charges must be accordingly so the customers can feel safe and can trust the organisation and also will be reliable and dependable on the organisation (Venter et.al, 2015).

Empathy is the provision of care and individualized attention provided to customers.

The Five Key Service Dimensions of the Servqual model

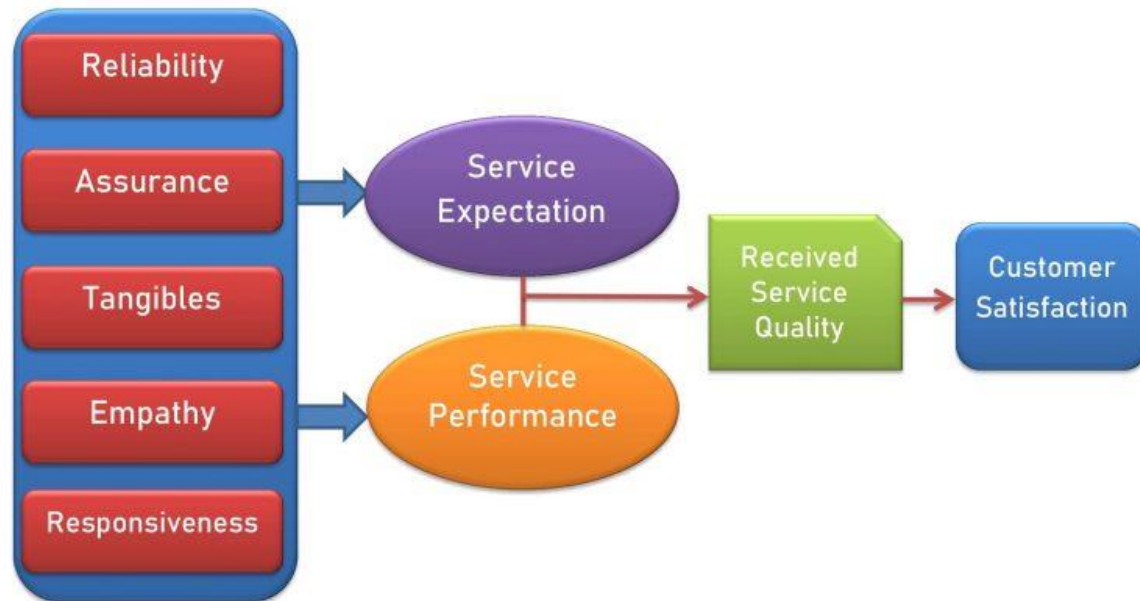


Figure 1: SERVQUAL Model

(Source: CMO, 2019)

By measuring the gap the company can attract more customers according to their experience and the demand of the customers (Venter et al, 2015). This helps in filling up the gaps that can be identified by Marks & Spencer and ensuring that can be handled in an effective way in order to solve all the problems that can be faced by the organisation and meet the demands of the loyal customers.

GAP 1: Management perceptions and customer experience

When the customer expectations are different than what the management perceives then the company should use good customer relationship management techniques to know the customers' expectations, tastes, and needs. Marks and Spencer partnered with Starcount (a data science company) to personalise M&S loyalty and CRM programmes, including M&S's Sparks Card, to help improve consumer knowledge and insights (Marks and Spencer, 2021).

GAP 2: Service quality specification and management perception

Management needs to know the level of service that is needed to be offered to customers. M&S uses service quality products that are based on customer requirements.

GAP 3: Service delivery and service quality specification

Managers must assess the existing customer experience provided by the company and ensure that it meets or exceeds expectations.

GAP 4: External communication and service delivery

Marks and Spencer can adopt effective communication skills to avoid misleading customers with unclear or dishonest words. This should help to improve communication, so customers understand what the store is saying exactly. An example can be the advertisements that need a clear message that customers can understand not only images.

GAP 5: experiment services and expected services

This gap comes when the service delivered meets the requirement of the customers. For example a customer might be satisfied with the overall service received in one of the coffee shops in M&S but disappointed to find that he or she does not get the same service from the food floor.

When used over time, the Servqual model can help you understand customer expectations, perceptions of specific services, and areas where quality improvements are needed (Qualtrix, 2020).

7PS OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING (MARKETING MIX)

The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), (2015) defines marketing as being “The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.”

It is essential for an organisation to use a basic marketing strategy that it will enable them to know what it will create, at what price, how it will distribute products or services, and how customers will be informed (CIM, 2015). The aspects to be considered with the marketing

strategy analysis are product, price, place and promotion, people, processes, and physical evidence.



<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/images/lead/7p-marketing.png>

Product – Creating the right product to sell on the market is very tricky as often companies do not know what the customers want and if they will like their product without testing it first. M&S is selling a range of products from food, clothing, homeware, and banking therefore they use the corporate sustainability strategy in the manufacturing, transport and selling of their products.

Price – Pricing is the main part of the marketing mix that creates income; it puts you in the marketplace in relation to your competition; the more you charge, the more value or quality your customers will expect for their money, expectations that need to be fulfilled to retain customers (CIM, 2015). To show customers that their prices in Food are more affordable than they might imagine, M&S has launched “remarksable” campaign where most bought grocery items are

reduced so that families can buy with confidence, encouraging them to shop at M&S more frequently and in larger quantities. This is M&S's Food approach of connecting with customers about its trusted value and quality products that are also measured against competitor's price (Marks and Spencer, 2020).

Place - The product must be available when needed, at the right time, and in the correct quantity, with the location where customers purchase a product, as well as the methods by which the product is delivered to that location, must be appropriate and handy for the customer (CIM, 2015). Marks and Spencer has over 1500 stores in 62 international markets and last year due to the circumstances of the pandemic partnered with Ocado to sell their products online and deliver to customers. This was a big decision as M&S did not do home deliveries before, but the decision has proved to be very profitable (Marks and Spencer, 2020).

Promotion – The method a company uses to communicate, what it does and what it can give to customers is through promotion. Promotion must grab the customer's attention and offer them a cause to choose the product over someone else's and highlight the benefits that a customer obtains from a product (SkillsYouNeed, 2021). M&S spends millions of pounds on advertising campaigns but now they increased their attention on social media, the most effective channel for promoting a company's products and services. It uses faces like Brazilian model Ana Beatriz Barros, X factor judge and singer, Dannii Minogue and Capital FM breakfast show presenter Lisa Snowdon, Myleene Klass continues to. The new face of M&S menswear is former footballer and face of Sky Sports Jamie Redknapp. Also their new ads that focus on “quality, provenance, price, innovation, ethics and offers – as well as showing delicious, irresistible food” (MarksandSpencer, 2020). In store promotions are introduced very often with “3for2”, half price items, dine in for £10 on meals, 20% or 30% off, £5 off when you spend £25 in store, especially at Easter or Christmas with January sales going up to 70% off.

People - employees will have a significant impact on customer satisfaction, whether positive or negative and the brand's reputation is in the hands of the employees (CIM, 2015). M&S places a high value on its employees, believing that they must be motivated to deliver for customers and business success through appropriate rewards, making them feel valued in an inclusive and diverse workplace with a respectful corporate culture, and having their colleagues' voices heard in decision-making. They are called “colleagues” inside M&S which gives the company the “M&S family” atmosphere (MarksandSpencer, 2020).

Processes – Is the experience the customers have from the beginning of their contact with the company through sales, and afterward which is very important to overall customer happiness. M&S has a detailed website which is easy to use and in “tune for their customer’s needs “where they can access information including the corporate site and now people can use the Ocado website to order M&S food.

Physical evidence - is how the customer sees the products they are buying, this might be through how the website looks, or how the products are set in store. And these need to give a good impression about a product or service offered, customer reviews are also considered as evidence for other customers (SkillsYouNeed, 2021).

Discussion of Quality Systems that supports quality processes and CRM

In order to successfully satisfy consumers' expectations, requirements, and needs and maximise their value, different frameworks can be used.

Marks & Spencer will benefit of meeting the needs of the customers by using quality systems process to build relationship with their customers and maximise customer value as well. Due to COVID-19, it is necessary to build a strong connection with the customers in order to generate value so that the customer transactions can be increased in the company. The value of the company can be enhanced by increasing the level of experience of the customers by meeting their demands and expectations. M&S priorities towards customers satisfaction are to: provide their favorite products that are of good quality and value; make the entire product line available to them; provide them with a store estate and an online offer that are simple and enjoyable to shop in; being an ethical and sustainable corporate citizen that customers can trust when it comes to procuring the things they wear, eat, and bring into their homes (MarksandSpencer, 2021).

Customer value framework

Drucker, (2017) explains various elements that can be useful for the organisation in their value proposition:

- **Functional value:** Functional value refers to the services and the products that are offered by the business. Marks & Spencer offers a range of services and products to the customers according to their needs and demands. This adds more value to the experience of the customer.
- **Emotional value:** Marks & Spencer can increase the value by providing attractive or pleasant products to the customer. The customer nowadays is more attracted towards traditional touch in clothing as it means the culture and tradition of people differs.
- **Economic value:** The COVID-19 has impacted the world and now individuals think twice before shopping anything from a large organisation. Marks & Spencer offered financial assistance to its customer by enhancing the value and making the customers happy when they purchase a certain product and have not taken advantage from this pandemic.
- **Symbolic value:** Social responsibility is a type of symbolic value that is necessary to help in attracting the customers.
- **End value:** The end value is offered by the company to some of the values and Marks & Spencer will help in analysing and identifying the image of their services and products always improving and changing their products to more sustainable ones

There are various factors that impact on Marks & Spencer way of increasing the experience of the customer and maximising the value. The impact of COVID-19 has led the customer towards low purchases that impacted on the organisation. For example, the hospitality and convenience categories like food on the go and ready-t-eat meals have dropped due to the restrictions imposed and time spent more at home. The clothing and home declined a little over 20% (MarksandSpencer, 2021). Employee being a crucial part of the organisation they help to increase and deliver to the expectations of the customers; their productivity adds value to the customers. Marks & Spencer has employees who are skilled and trained according to the needs of the customers that can impact the experience of the customers. If the organisation takes care of its customers, then it will lead to expectations of the customers to be fulfilled.

Consumer behaviour

Companies can affect consumer behaviour in the long run by taking the following five steps: Confirm good new beliefs; Use new offers to shape emerging behaviours. Use environmental advice to help maintain new habits, Tailor messaging to the attitudes of consumers and examine consumer attitudes and behaviours at a higher level (Charm et al, 2020). Customer spending habits have changed because of the lockdown pandemic and have put pressure on certain goods like hand sanitizer and toilet paper, whilst others are declining so M&S has worked around customers habits purchase to make available the items they bought more during the pandemic and also sold more comfort cooking food items.

Innovative techniques

The organisation is using innovative technology for years now and is providing the best services to the customers. Some of them are refrigerated shelf-edge technology, conversions to LED lighting, and trialling of new fan technologies, technology is used throughout the stores from signposting to smart mirrors in dressing rooms to virtually try on clothes. The latest change for them is the investment in social media and digital marketing by readjusting their site and app. The advanced technology used by Marks & Spencer will add value and comfort to the customers.

Business processes

How the flow of organisational activities and the tasks work in a company to get profits while satisfy customers and employees. The business process involves a few steps like planning, buying of products, moving the products, and selling (Zeithaml et al, 2020). In the planning of their business, M&S is doing their market research first to see what product customers want and if they will like it. They consider very important the relations with their suppliers as it helps in the moving and handling of products. When buying their product, M&S is carefully considering the sourcing of their products as this allows them to deliver the high-quality, sustainably sourced products that the customers expect. They have scheme set for the dairy farmers guarantees a set price for fresh milk, allowing farmers to invest in infrastructure, animal welfare, and environmental improvements to maintain their competitive advantage. (MarksandSpencer, 2020).

Customer relationship management (CRM)

CRM refers to the activities that a corporation undertakes in order to communicate with its customers, as well as how it handles such interactions. It helps identify, attract, and retain customers in order to help organisations maximise customer value while also improving performance (Buttle, 2004). M&S engages with customers using surveys (customers mood was monitored during lockdown through a survey to find how they felt and thought about M&S during that period), interviews (Dotcom experience to analyse online customer experience and growth), the Sparks loyalty scheme, in store customer experience, newsletters, social media and end of year reports.

Quality of service

Marks & Spencer provides high-quality services to the customers and expect the customers to come back to the organisation for such services again. They provide customers with great quality and value products; good availability across product lines; have an easy and engaging store estate and online offer to shop in; are a responsible corporate citizen that customers can trust to have sourced products ethically and sustainably when they wear, eat, and bring into their homes.

The organisation being impacted a lot lately due to the pandemic is still delivering its best to retain the customers for a longer period of time. The fast and quick services provided by Marks & Spencer has a great impact on the experience of the customers (Mason et.al, 2015).

Ethical consideration

For decades, Marks and Spencer has placed a major emphasis on people, human rights, and ethical trade, implementing key initiatives. In a report written for Marks and Spencer, Hilary Murdoch (2020) describes the ethical systems that are introduced in the company:

- Through **HR** M&S has processes in place to guarantee that all employees are well cared for, have the opportunity to prosper and grow, and are fully aware of what is expected of them, benefiting the company from their dedication to reaching the objectives.
- M&S uses the best practices for responsible **recruitment**. This includes application and selection processes, right-to-work checks, ensuring workers fully understand employment conditions before and after starting work, effective induction, and fair probation procedures.

- For the company to succeed, there is a need for a **strong culture of equality and inclusion** for all employees. M&S places a high value on equal opportunities and inclusion, not only in the company but also in their supply chain.
- The focus should be on good **Health & Safety management** systems, eliminating workplace H&S hazards, safeguarding workers' health and well-being, and building a safe working culture. M&S is proud of the seriousness it is taking into these issues as it is important to keep a safe workplace that increases high productivity and quality, as well as lowering the risk of health problems, accidents, and injuries, which not only have a human cost, but also a financial cost to the company in lost work hours and potential legal action.
- **M&S manages working hours** as they are not only a legal requirement to set working hours properly, but it also guarantees that employees are healthy and productive. Excessive working hours have hidden consequences for both people and businesses.
- Everyone in the M&S supply chain is **adequately compensated** for their efforts, which includes both salary and benefits. This is critical for the workers' and their families' health and well-being, as well as their morale and dedication to the company they work for.
- Workers that are **engaged** have a strong sense of belonging, they feel respected and heard, and they want to give their all. M&S's engagement approach is through the Business Involvement Group (BIG) to find issues that are important to colleagues, Colleague updates, Inclusion & Diversity, the monthly Colleague Voice Pulse Survey gives the Board and ExCo an informed picture of how colleagues feel about the business.
- Beyond complying with all relevant laws and regulations concerning worker welfare, M&S believe that **making the company a "Great place to work"** helps not just employees but also the company by enhancing the positive contribution and commitment of their personnel. M&S uses a staff survey to find if M&S is a great place to work for their employees.
- For M&S to thrive and grow, it **provides training and development** to its employees so that they can achieve, contribute their best to the company's success, and advance within the company.
- M&S has a long history of respecting **human rights** in the United Kingdom and advocating for those values globally.

Digital marketing: This refers to various marketing activities that are conducted by the business using the digital innovations (Morgan et.al, 2019). After the lockdown, the organisation has improved their website and app and have started online deliveries of food for the first time in partnership with Ocado as this helped M&S to survive in the market due to COVID restrictions. Advertising online and social media plus the deliveries through Ocado have proven to be a success that brought profit and success in those difficult times. Only from the relaunch of the Sparks loyalty scheme their membership grew with over 10 million.

Analysis of the factors that impact on M&S's quality systems and controls

An analysis of the external environment is needed to clarify the factors that affect Marks and Spencer and how these change customer experience and engagement.

Marks and Spencer SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis sets internal capabilities (strengths and weaknesses) against external developments (opportunities and threats) (Johnson and Scholes, 1999).

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- With over 32 million clients and great brand recognition, it is a well-known British brand. - A broad range of products, with a concentration on high-quality items - Due to the company's own-brand business approach, it has strong supplier relationships. It also has a large number of outlets.	- There are too many brands, especially in the clothing industry, which confuses consumers. - Compared to competitors such as John Lewis and Primark, which are popular among younger shoppers, the public perceives M&S as unfashionable.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
- Online opportunities - More expansion internationally	Too many businesses with too many brands are leading to a highly competitive high street

Marks and Spencer PESTEL analysis

PESTEL is a strategy for identifying macro-environmental elements that may have an impact on a company in the future (Johnson et al., 2014). These factors are connected especially now with the Brexit vote, and this is an issue in each factor. Using a PESTEL can help to identify opportunities for change and development for the company (MindTools, 2021).

POLITICAL factors are government policies and political stability, tax implications, industry regulations and global trade agreements and restrictions. Politically M&S is facing with a lot of procedures and changes imposed by the government, trade regulations and tariffs which was a benefit for M&S as the free trade permitted the company to expand internationally but BREXIT is an issue now with M&S facing higher costs, a tight labor market, supply, import and export duties

ECONOMIC factors will include exchange rates, economic growth or decline, inflation, globalization, interest rates (Companies that face higher import expenses must either accept the charges or raise their pricing (KPMG, 2016). COVID 19 impacted with costs as well as adjusted earnings for Covid, M&S experienced a few direct Covid expenditures, including £63.2 million on door hosts and cleanliness, £28.5 million as incentives for non-furloughed colleagues to work during the pandemic, and £3.9 million in a minor reduction in colleague holiday hours (Marks and Spencer, 2021).

SOCIAL factors that influence M&S are demographics, class structure, education levels, culture (gender roles), attitudes about changes in health, environment, consumer spending habits. Promotes diversity and inclusion with an annual diversity festival, international women's day is very important for M&S as supports gender equality. and black history month. M&S provides a safe and healthy working environment for employees and has an organizational culture which promotes diversity, inclusion, personal development, and respect. Weaker consumer spending has resulted in fewer people visiting the M&S stores.

TECHNOLOGY being a growing factor, can affect how an org responds to these changes in innovation of products and services, other advancements will impact on data storage, disruptive technologies such as smartphones, social networking, automation robotics and the increasing shift towards AI artificial intelligence (CIPD, 2020). To keep up with the technological changes, M&S is focusing on investing in IT infrastructure, has made changes to its website, partnered

with Microsoft and Ocado for online food shopping trying to create a digital-led customer experience.

ENVIRONMENTALLY M&S operates under certain standards and considers factors like weather, climate change, environment pollution (air and water pollution in the retail industry), recycling by using easy to recycle packaging, waste management (reduced with 24% in 2019 and gives food to charities) and attitudes towards green products and renewable energy. M&S is using PLAN A which is a sustainability transformation plan that M&S is committed to Tackle by helping transform communities, through different activities (M&S is raising money for causes that matter: MC Millan cancer support, Unicef with the recycled hangers money, Prince's trust, WWF – world wildlife fund, Oxfam with the shwooping project where you give unwanted clothes. Helps people live happier, healthier lifestyles launching the plant kitchen range, becoming a zero-waste business and helps the planet with the principle on plastic – re-use, r-design, reduce, re-turn, and re-cycle. Uses sustainable cotton clothing and amount send to landfill was zero in the last 7 years (Marks and Spencer, 2020).

LEGAL - employment labor law and employment tribunal decisions impact upon working practices continuously. It is also important to keep up to date with all changes in legislation and of course Health and safety regulations, discrimination law, consumer protection, employment law, health and safety law, and data protection (CIPD, 2020). M&S is applying and adheres to all these laws as they are an ethically driven company that does things right.

Conclusion

The pages above are showing as an example Marks and Spencer, a British retailer at work during an unpleasant but unavoidable situation that has affected some organisations more than others, changed their daily operations and interfered with the way they served their customers.

In order for an organisation to be successful there are things that must be done accordingly to manage and build relationships with their customers and meet their expectations. For instance being an ethical company that not only expects profit but cares for their employees, embraces innovation, adapts to different environmental changes, and continues to find ways to satisfy and reach their customer is the way of doing things, and is a great advantage.

As an organisation, M&S has adapted their services and space to the restrictions imposed to make sure they trade in line with government guidance and welcome shoppers back in their stores to shop safely and with confidence. The move that Marks and Spencer did of investing in social media and digital marketing has helped the company to engage with more customers. The company took advantage of the online extension to reach new customers and together with the investment in Ocado gave the company opportunity for growth as their food market increases social media engagement.

It can be concluded that every company must have a thorough awareness of their customers' expectations in order to provide them with a successful experience. Furthermore, in order to maximise customer value, an organisation must identify elements that may influence its business operations and functions. By knowing these factors, effective decisions and strategies can be improved and adapted to meet the needs of the customers and ways to apply them in their culture can be applied to overcome any challenges that may arise.

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