

Student name: Shelina Jaigirdar

Student ID number: 2235135

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Lecturer: Jemma Smith

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AI acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Executive Summary

J D Wetherspoon is a well-known, pub and restaurant. This report presents the strategic evaluation of the restaurant and pub J D Wetherspoon chain in the United Kingdom. They operate around 800 pubs in the UK and some hotels. Wetherspoon are known for their affordable menu and a laid back and relaxed atmosphere.

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Introduction

JD Wetherspoon has established itself as a well-known name in the pub and restaurant industry in the UK. The company is associated with great value and a broad customer base.

This review, strategically conducted, assesses Wetherspoons current position and identifies opportunities for improvement. The review will focus on key areas such as efficiency of operations, marketing, and customer experience. Recommendations will be given to enhance the company's performance in the fast paced and ever evolving industry. This will ensure success for the future in a competitive market. This report will analyse Wetherspoons financial performances, customer satisfaction, operational strategies and competition. Furthermore, it will examine the evolving consumer trends. The goal of this report is to offer recommendations that will optimise the Wetherspoon business, achieve growth and strengthen their market.

Main findings

Wetherspoon is one of the largest pub and restaurant chain in the UK, founded by Tim Martin. It was founded in 1979, when the barrister, at the age of 24, decided to open the first pub, (Kane, 2012). Martin opened his first pub in North London, Muswell Hill, naming it Martin's free house. Just one month later it was rebranded to J D Wetherspoon. It is said that the name was inspired by Martin's school teacher, Mr Wetherspoon who told him, when in Primary school that he will never become a businessman. He decided to become a successful businessman and prove his teacher wrong. It took the business five years until it could make any profit. From 1948, the pub started making a profit and from there it started continually advancing, (Brown, 2023).

Restaurant Profile and Strategic Direction

Wetherspoon in the UK and Ireland, are known for their low-priced menu of food and beverages. On the menu, they have pizzas, steaks, fish and chips, wraps and burgers. There is usually a menu for breakfast, children's meals and deals, (J D Wetherspoon, 2024). By 2001, from opening the first pub, and many more after that was recognised as UK's fastest growing company and the ninth fastest growing business in the whole of Europe. 50 hotels were also opened by 2016, (Lloyd, 2021).

Wetherspoons strategic direction is maintaining the focus on the competitively priced, value food and drinks that they sell, in an atmosphere that is welcoming and relaxed, (Khetan, n.d.). Their commitment is reflected on the layout and decor of the

pubs with creates customer satisfaction. They have converted many unique, interesting buildings, like banks and theatres into their pubs restaurants and restored them so that the history of the buildings can be celebrated, (www.jdwetherspoon.com, n.d.). Their mission statement is the commitment to provide remarkable quality and value products and an inviting, friendly environment for its guests.

The quality of its products is strongly highlighted in its mission statement. Many of the ingredients are sourced locally, which means fresher products as they have not had to travel far. This means good nutritional value and better flavour. Locally sourced products also reduce environmental impact, and this supports farmers locally, (Team, 2024).

Wetherspoons vision, long term is to be the leading operator of pubs in the UK. They want to prioritise sustainability, engage with the community, and provide exceptional customer services and create a company that is socially responsible and profitable.

Wetherspoons values are, quality, service, cleanliness and atmosphere. Customer service is taken extremely seriously. They have at least five mystery visitors guaranteed every month to each of the pubs, to ensure standards are always met. (www.jdwetherspoon.com, n.d.).

Strategic aim

Due to poor standards of the local pubs in 1979, Tim Martin decided to open his own first pub. He wanted to have an offering of a selection of real ales. Their incentives are to attract customers through the competitive pricing of alcoholic and soft drinks that are much lower in price than other businesses. They made improvements on the menu. Guests will come for drinks and have meals, and this has indeed rapidly increased the company's growth.

Their approach is to achieve a competitive advantage and focus on low prices that appeal to a wider customer market, including families, students, professionals and budget-conscious guests,

In Britain, over the last few decades, the pub sector has faced a decline. With rising costs, the challenge was how to keep the business profitable without increasing the menu price. Wetherspoon was somewhere in between where they could not pass on the high costs to the consumers as did the high-end pubs, and were unable to compete on price with the big chains. Their strategy was to negotiate with the suppliers on competitive prices, considering the large scale of ordering for the nearly 800 pub restaurants, (MDE Pub Consultants, 2025).

The mission of the company is to provide quality product at outstanding value and an environment that is welcoming to their customers. Their aim is to create a restaurant environment that stands out from the rest, (Team, 2024).

The restaurants positioning

Wetherspoons positioning is a major one in the UK restaurant and hospitality industry with a segment in the consumer sector, (DirectorsTalk Interviews, 2025). Their competitive advantage is that they can remain the most well-known pub restaurant in the UK. Their innovative model and one that is hard to replicate made the company a success from when they started the company. The size of a typical Wetherspoon pub is between; 5,000 to 10,000 square feet compared to any other standard UK pubs that would size around 1,800 square feet. Serving the highest number of sales per pub in the whole industry, J D Wetherspoon can keep prices fixed at low rates so the cost per unit is low. Wetherspoon are happy to pass on this benefit to their customers and are sharing the low-cost savings on them.

The extravagant size of the pub would not be a factor alone in the success of the business if there were limited guests visiting so they strategically invested in locations that were favourable and had a pool of potential consumers to keep the pub busy.

Although Wetherspoon is a well-established business, unfortunately this is not the full perspective of the company. Since its peak in 2015, there started a decline by 11% in the number of Wetherspoon pubs there were.

There are a few challenges the company is facing such as:

- Taxation inequality with off trade.
- Labour cost inflation.
- Pressure on household budget due to financial strain on disposable income.
- Evolving consumer preferences, (Gedi Dirkstys, 2023).

Facilities, Services and Organisational Structure

It is crucial to have an organisational structure in any business to boost efficiency, the communication across the whole team and accountability. A restaurant can quickly become chaotic if roles are not clearly defined. A good, organised structure helps keep everybody focused on their responsibilities and tasks, (Rigbye, 2025).

The facility and service of the business would depend on the number of guests that will be served, restaurant opening hours when service will take place, the types of payment and food deliveries, (www.wbdg.org, n.d.).

The Menu

Wetherspoon offers a diverse range of breakfast, lunch, dinner, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. From the traditional pub favourites of breakfast, steaks, burgers, curries and international dishes. Most of the Wetherspoon restaurants open early around 7am for breakfast and run until midnight depending on the location. Wetherspoon caters for vegetarian and vegan diets. Their main dishes are prices at

around £5.65, and they offer food delivery services, (Menu Spot, 2025). With the rise of living costs and despite higher expenses on the business side, J D Wetherspoon will try to keep the increase to a minimum, (Wise, 2025).

Service style

Wetherspoons service style is self-service, so orders must be placed at the bar or online. Once the order is ready to be served, it will be served to the table. Ordering on the app saves time over queuing long lines, (MoneySavingExpert Forum, 2019).

The Ambiance of the Wetherspoon restaurants are the laid-back atmosphere and vibe where guests do not feel rushed and can relax and spend some time without having to rush. The boss, himself says, "If you ask people why they go to pubs, the number one issue is atmosphere," (Rom Preston-Ellis and Zak Garner-Purkis, 2025).

Workforce skills

Workforce capability is the ability to develop employee skills and knowledge through giving training, and opportunities for promotion to generate an experienced workforce. This would involve providing learning opportunities, qualifications and a career pathway, (Craftguildofchefs.org, 2025). J D Wetherspoon was the first pub to sign up to this kind of skills initiative.

Customer demographics

Wetherspoons demographics include families, students, general pub-goers and pensioners. They have a diverse and wide range of customers that are drawn into the restaurant because of the affordable menu prices, appealing to all, wide range of menu options and a laid-back spacious atmosphere.

Internal culture

Wetherspoon is committed to providing their employees a workplace environment that is, safe, supportive, friendly and a company they should feel happy being a part of. They understand the work and life balance and how important it is. No two shifts should be within 12 hours of each other, and rotas are handed out 3 weeks in advance. They believe in celebrating and acknowledging their employees' achievements, (J D Wetherspoon Careers, 2024). For that reason, Wetherspoon has been awarded the best employer for the 18th time. Organisers are assessed on their people practices vigorously. They offer great opportunities to their employees to grow and develop within the company. Their success is evident in the high number of employees within Wetherspoon, that go onto senior, higher positions, (Caterlyst.com, 2023).

Business Life Cycle Analysis

They are in the maturity stage of the life cycle. They are a big, well established consistent company, but their growth is slowly declining. They went through the growth phase, from 1979 – 1992 and currently they are still a significantly well-established company that is focusing on improving and maintaining its position through cost management, operations and innovation. Through cost control and efficiency, they are trying to maintain their competitive position. The areas they would like to take the initiatives would be areas such as employee training, water conservation and waste reduction.

The business has changed its strategy to meet customer demands. It has diversified with hotels and airport, train station pubs, however the main profit still comes from the pub business.

The business innovates in a way that it aids the original model of the business such as food donation, Fareshare, staff training and investing in technology to optimise operations.

The qualitative indicator of Wetherspoon would be the measurement of quality for example the consumers perception of the business. These would be how the consumers feel about the company and the quality of the product that is on offer, or how responsible and focused the restaurant brand seems to be. These factors influence brand reputation, customer satisfaction, customer experience and customer loyalty.

The quantitative indicators of Wetherspoon are the financial health and performance of the company such as sales, profitability, and earnings per share. Free cash flow will also be measured after expenditure. They report all the capital investments spent such as expenses on the existing pubs, the opening of new ones and IT.

Market Position and Financial Insights

Wetherspoons market position is of a company that delivers value, budget friendly food and drinks.

J D Wetherspoon confirmed that their sales rose to 4.2% and the brand exceeded expectations of performance of CGA RSM Hospitality Tracker for 37 months consecutively. They are expected to open an additional 12 businesses by the end of July 26, 2025, (Ajbelle.co.uk, 2025).

Identify key competitors and assess comparative performance.

Wetherspoons main competitors are Greene King, The Restaurant Group and Mitchells & Butlers. Other competitors are supermarkets, other pub chains and fast

food restaurants. Their comparative performances are at a rate that is five times higher than their competition businesses, (Bar, 2024).

Evaluate available financial or performance data (e.g. pricing strategy, average spend, turnover).

J D Wetherspoon restaurants have started to pick up dividend payments again since the pandemic. Analysis conducted on the business praised the company's resilience and achievements amid difficult times in the restaurant business.

The large company, with around 800 pubs around UK, exceeded all expectations, making a 73.5% profit rise. Analysts note that despite of the inflation, especially in labour, energy and maintaining costs, Wetherspoon has been able to offer budget friendly options for the cost-conscious customers, (Wright, 2024).

Analyse the restaurant's market share and brand positioning

Hospitality industry analysis consists of collecting, interpreting and using data to evaluate the present market environment. It looks at factors such as the scale and progress of the market, customer preferences, competitive strategic planning, and regulatory influences.

It helps business owners to assess if the company fits the current trends. Having a good understanding of this helps the business identify the opportunities and avoid potential threats and is a crucial part of a solid business plan, (Dakshta Bhambi, 2025).

Any business planning should start with a good understanding of the industry and not just the location of the business and the menu.

The F&B landscape is so competitive today that it is paramount to understand market trends, customer preferences, regulations, economic conditions and competition, (Dakshta Bhambi, 2025).

As shown below 39.81% of Wetherspoon shares are held by top shareholders, (markets.ft.com, n.d.).

Some of the main stock competitors of Wetherspoon are, Greene King, Domino's Pizza, Greggs, Michells & Butlers and Young & Co.'s Brewery, P.L.C. All these companies are part of the restaurants industry, (www.marketbeat.com, n.d.).

Company	Revenue (TTM)	Net income (TTM)	Market cap	Employees
Fuller Smith & Turner PLC	376.30m	27.20m	197.98m	5.33k

Marston's PLC	897.90m	68.40m	284.33m	10.36k
Young & Co's Brewery PLC	485.80m	10.00m	440.49m	7.39k
Domino's Pizza Group PLC	669.20m	77.70m	719.70m	2.06k
J D Wetherspoon plc	2.13bn	67.99m	725.17m	24.33k
SSP Group PLC	3.58bn	-23.60m	1.18bn	41.67k
Mitchells & Butlers plc	2.67bn	168.00m	1.44bn	50.85k
Greggs plc	2.08bn	144.80m	1.60bn	32.26k

Data as of Nov 04 2025. Currency figures normalised to J D Wetherspoon PLC's reporting currency: UK Pound GBX

Institutional shareholders

Top holders

Movers

Ninety One UK Ltd. : 5.24

39.81%Per cent of shares held by top holders

Holder	Shares	% Held
Natixis Investment Managers International SAAS OF 01 OCT 2025	9.02m	7.40%
Ninety One UK Ltd.AS OF 27 JUL 2025	6.38m	5.24%
Artemis Investment Management LLPAS OF 30 JUL 2023	5.60m	4.60%
Jupiter Asset Management Ltd.AS OF 27 JUL 2025	5.33m	4.38%
Hargreaves Lansdown Asset Management Ltd.AS OF 27 JUL 2025	5.25m	4.31%
Phoenix Asset Management Partners Ltd.AS OF 27 JUL 2025	4.51m	3.71%
AzValor Asset Management SGIIC SAAS OF 03 OCT 2025	4.08m	3.35%
Fidelity Investments Canada ULCAS OF 01 OCT 2025	3.10m	2.55%
Fidelity Management & Research Co. LLCAS OF 03 OCT 2025	2.95m	2.42%

Evaluate available financial or performance data

Pricing strategy, average spend, turnover

Wetherspoons' promise and ethos is to deliver good quality products at affordable prices. The savings from the large-scale operations means costs are lower per unit sold. This plays a crucial role in the pricing strategy. The brands strategy is to pass the savings onto the customers. Wetherspoons ethos of good quality and straight forward offering means they stick to a simple menu, and it does not complicate the business operations. The supply chains efficiency is key to the brands price promise of keeping menu prices down. The low-priced good quality products are offered through the strong relationship with the supply chain.

A comment once written on Quora stated that the price of beer at Wetherspoon is low because they sell near sell by date beer. This is a rumour that the company has refuted and explained their cheaper prices are due to the longer opening hours that other pubs which means selling more and good long-term relationship with suppliers, (Swindells, 2025).

The locations of the restaurants are in old banks and cinemas, and repurposing these buildings, keeps the costs low but adds character and a unique feel to the experience. The footfall remains high because of the low pricing strategy, (Tarlaci, 2023). Many of these buildings which were also ballrooms, and old post offices before getting restored and had been left empty for years until Wetherspoon took over them, (Feehan, 2022).

Digital Strategy and Reputation Management

The company has been at the forefront of the digital strategy. It introduced the no smoking area before the legal ban that was implemented throughout the whole of the UK by 2007 and they introduced the ordering from the table on the app before the pandemic made it a common practice, (MDE Pub Consultants, 2025).

Examine the restaurant's online presence (website, booking systems, social media, review platforms).

Wetherspoon has decided to turn off all their social media accounts, although they claim their presence was not big anyway. Tim Martin, the chairman believes that this decision will not affect the business at all whatsoever as the pub atmosphere is not one that people are sat on social media and their loyal regulars will not be affected, (Mortimer, n.d.).

They do not have an online booking system for the pub and have remained a “first come, first serve” operating basis.

However, food can be ordered on the app and delivered to your table, (Winchester and Grahns, 2020).

The company has been awarded a 3 star on the Food Made Good standard, which is the highest rating for responsible retailing, (J D Wetherspoon, 2024). However, quite a lot of reviews on Trustpilot would suggest otherwise with a significant 62% that gave a 1-star rating. Many complained of dirty cutlery and cold food, with mixed reviews on some good and bad customer service, (Trustpilot, 2025).

Analyse how the digital footprint influences customer expectations and reputation

When a customer searches a company online and finds plenty of positive reviews, a lot of relevant, useful information and engaging interactions on social media it builds trust and gives a good impression of the business. On the other hand, neglected and outdated websites and responses not replied to on reviews, gives a negative outlook on the company and a bad reputation. The digital footprint is the online reputation, and it can attract customers, and increases company awareness. A badly managed website can do the opposite to the business and hinder growth and damage reputation, (solutionshub.epam.com, 2024).

Social media plays a bigger part than just promoting and attracting new customers; they also retain the existing customers. It builds on loyalty and trust and customers that are loyal to the company, they spend more. Social media is a way to stay connected with the customers, to understand what they think and want by asking and to promote offers, discounts and loyalty programs, (Dublino, 2023).

This is the area where; Wetherspoon are lagging in their social media presence. There are many reviews on Trustpilot that have not been responded to, and most are not good ones either, which would give the customers the impression that they do not value their customers feedback and do not have the intention to resolve the issues that they had. This can be very damaging to the company's reputation.

However, on the Wetherspoons website it states that any kind of complaints should be raised with the pubs manager during the pub visits, (J D Wetherspoon, 2024). This might not be ideal as some consumers would rather stop going than decide to go again to complain. Checking on Trustpilot reviews and having similar issues being

brought up with no response will determine that their outcome will be left unresolved too,

Operational Challenges or Service Gaps

When comparing the median hourly rate of pay, for men, every £1 that they earned, woman earned 99p, 1p less. 46% of woman were in the highest paid category, while 56% in the lowest. Comparing median bonus pay, woman's bonus was lower by 23.5% than men, (Service.gov.uk, 2023).

Identify a significant operational issue (e.g., inefficiencies, service breakdowns, quality inconsistencies).

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis has four parts to it, they are the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat, (Kenton, 2025).

The strengths are:

- Strong brand reputation.
- Value.
- Quality service.
- They have a loyal customer base.
- Wide demographic customer base, including tourists and families.
- Ease of ordering through app from the table.
- Large selection of food and drinks.

Weaknesses are:

Threats are:

- UK experienced inflation rates peaking at 6.7%, which lead to a decrease in disposable income which affected how much was being spent at restaurants, (Dineoutmagazine.co.uk, 2025).
- Strong competition from other chain pubs, such as Mitchells & Butlers, Greene King and Craft beer establishments.
- Regulatory changes. The government have been discussing a minimum pricing law on alcohol, which would affect the business significantly as 75% of their revenue is from alcohol sale.

Opportunities:

- Consumers are willing to pay 9.7% more for locally sourced, sustainable products. Wetherspoon can use initiatives to incorporate this into the business to appeal to their customers, (PWC, 2024).
- Wetherspoon can improve on customer engagement using technology. They have the mobile app for ordering from the table but including other services such as online booking and up to date websites and social media platforms, will keep customers informed and engaged. Having a customer relationship management system, (CRM) it will be possible to gather information on customer data for more customised interactions, (www.theaccessgroup.com, n.d.)
- While the company is currently focusing only on the UK, it could increase its revenue if expanded Internationally.
- Tactical partnerships could open doors to a new market or improve existing products.

Threat:

- The restaurant industry faces economical threats due to rising inflation rates which impacts on consumer spending.
- Higher wage is demanded by staff to cope with the inflation.
- People are eating out less due to the rising prices, (Marsh, 2025)

PORTERS 5 Forces

A model that identifies and analyses the forces that shape the industry and determines a business's weaknesses and strengths, (CIPS, 2023).

Existing competitors

With the increasing use of home deliveries like Uber and Deliveroo, and increase in cost of living, people are going out less to eat which means less diners are walking through the doors, (Marsh, 2025).

Winning customers and retaining them from existing competition is what Wetherspoon needs to do.

Threat of new entrants

Wetherspoon has an advantage over new entrants with its low-cost menu. They can use marketing to retain their customers from switching to new entrants.

Bargaining power of suppliers

Wetherspoon has over 1000 suppliers which provide the food and beverages to them across the UK. This means the company does not need to rely on just one supplier and can keep the price of products at a competitive rate as there are many other suppliers that will if one did not. Although the costs of switching suppliers is low for most needs, the costs for the speciality and unique products could sometimes be higher.

Bargaining power of buyers

It is extremely easy for customers to switch from Wetherspoon restaurant to another similar competitor without any consequences for a better experience or for lower priced menu. This makes the customers powerful, and businesses need to compete for their attention.

Threat of substitutes

The threat of substitutes with many similar pubs and restaurants means that customers can shop around for better deals, preferences and convenience.

Recommendations and Change Strategy

Propose practical, evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

Customers demand healthier options in restaurants as healthy eating trends prevail. With consumers increasingly becoming aware of the downsides of ultra-processed foods and caring about well-being, they want to see options of healthier and low-calorie choices, as well as vegan, vegetarian and gluten free, on the menu. (Thesra.org, 2024b). This will be a change that Wetherspoon can make to retain customers and make new ones.

Improving customer service for Wetherspoon will enhance the customer experience. Offering employees training will help with that.

The use of technology and implementing marketing strategies to reach out to customers through regular updates to websites and social media will make the business visible to new customers. Engaging with them and offering promotions and loyalty schemes will keep them loyal, (Burrows, 2024).

Conclusion

Wetherspoon remains in a strong position in the market due to their value of food and beverages. The business faces challenges from the increase of the cost of living and the ever-evolving consumer preferences and competition. For future success, strategic changes are needed.

For customer engagement Wetherspoon should invest in loyalty programs and marketing. For continuous improvement, they should focus on data analytics and processes for decision making. To sustain growth, the company should look at opportunities to expand into new markets. This can be a competitive advantage for long term success.

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