

Software Solutions for Business

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The following section will be Task 1.

In this section there will be introduced 3 e-commerce website builders: Shopify, Magento and OpenCart. Each one of these has its own strong and weak points, which are pointed out in brief and concise way.

¹ Shopify

Shopify is one of the most popular and widely used e-commerce website builders. User-friendly interface allows its users to create and customize their online store with ease. It provides a wide range of themes and templates, supports multiple payment gateways, and offers various marketing and SEO tools to enhance online visibility.

With Shopify, everyone can set up the most important features for their store in the internet, such as mobile responsiveness, products management, orders management and various payment options. All these components are provided with satisfying performance for businesses of all scales, ensuring smooth experience for the customers.

Pros:

- User-friendly
- Quick setup
- Hosting and Security
- Various payment options
- Scalability

Cons:

- Transaction fees
- Monthly cost
- App dependency
- Transaction limitations
- Customization without required knowledge may be limited
- No e-mail hosting

⁴ Magento

Magento is an open-source e-commerce platform that provides businesses with a flexible and scalable solution for building and managing online stores.

The platform offers a solid set of features and tools that empower merchants to create unique and engaging shopping experiences for their customers. It provides a comprehensive suite of e-commerce functionalities, including product catalog management, order and payment processing, customer management, marketing and promotional tools, search engine optimization (SEO), and multi-store management.

There are two main editions of Magento. Firstly, Magento Open Source (formerly known as Magento Community Edition) is free to download and use, making it accessible to small and medium-sized businesses. The second edition is Magento Commerce (formerly known as Magento Enterprise Edition) which is a paid version that provides extra features, additional support, and enterprise-level functionalities for larger businesses.

Pros:

- Highly customizable
- Lots of features
- Scalability
- Strong community support
- Open source

Cons:

- Technical expertise required
- Higher development costs
- Steeper learning curve

4

OpenCart

OpenCart is an open-source e-commerce platform that provides a simple and user-friendly solution for building and managing online stores. The platform is known for its lightweight nature, simplicity of applying, and affordable hosting requirements. It is a very good option for small to medium-sized businesses that require a straightforward and customizable e-commerce solution, without excessive complexity.

It is important to note that while OpenCart is a popular choice, it may not offer the same level of scalability and enterprise-level features as some other platforms. If you have complex requirements or expect significant growth in the future, you may want to consider evaluating other e-commerce platforms as well.

Pros:

- Easy setup
- User-friendly
- Cost-effective
- Community support

Cons:

- Limited built-in features
- Not optimized for SEO

The following section will be Task 2.

This section is going to be an explanation of mind mapping concept. The idea behind mind mapping, benefits from using it and key elements necessary to create a mind-map.

Mind mapping is a visual and intuitive technique used to organize and represent information. It is a powerful tool for generating, capturing, and structuring ideas, thoughts, and

concepts. The concept of mind mapping was popularized by British psychologist, Tony Buzan, in the 1970s.

At its core, a mind map is a diagram that represents a central idea or theme, surrounded by related subtopics or branches. It mimics the way our brains naturally make associations and connections. The central idea is typically placed in the center of the map, and radiating branches extend outward, representing different aspects or categories related to the central idea.

Here are the key-elements for mind maps:

- Central topic: The central idea or topic is placed in the center of the map, serving as the focal point. It can be a single word, an image, or a short phrase that encapsulates the main subject of the mind map.
- Branches: Branches extend outward from the central topic and represent the main categories or key concepts related to the central idea. These branches can further divide into sub-branches, creating a hierarchical structure.
- Keywords and Images: Each branch and sub-branch is usually accompanied by a keyword or a concise phrase that captures the essence of the concept. Images or symbols can also be used to enhance understanding and memory retention.
- Colors and Formatting: Mind maps often employ colors, different line styles, and formatting techniques to visually distinguish branches, subtopics, and connections. This helps create a more engaging and memorable representation.
- Associations and Connections: Mind mapping encourages the creation of associations and connections between different ideas or concepts. These connections are represented by lines, linking related branches and sub-branches.
- Nonlinear structure: Unlike traditional outlines or linear notes, mind maps embrace a nonlinear structure that allows for flexible exploration and expansion of ideas. It promotes free thinking and encourages the discovery of new connections and insights.

Benefits of Mind Mapping are the following:

- Enhanced creativity: Mind maps stimulate creativity by providing a visual canvas for brainstorming and generating new ideas.
- Improved memory and Recall: The visual and hierarchical nature of mind maps aids in organizing information, making it easier to remember and recall later.
- Comprehensive understanding: Mind maps help in grasping complex subjects by breaking them down into manageable chunks and illustrating relationships between different elements.
- Efficient note-taking: Mind maps offer an efficient alternative to traditional linear note-taking, enabling quick capture and organization of ideas during meetings, lectures, or research.
- Problem solving: Mind maps can be used to analyze problems, explore different solutions, and identify potential connections and solutions.

¹ Mind map of contemporary software applications that are used to support day-to-day business/Organisation operations:

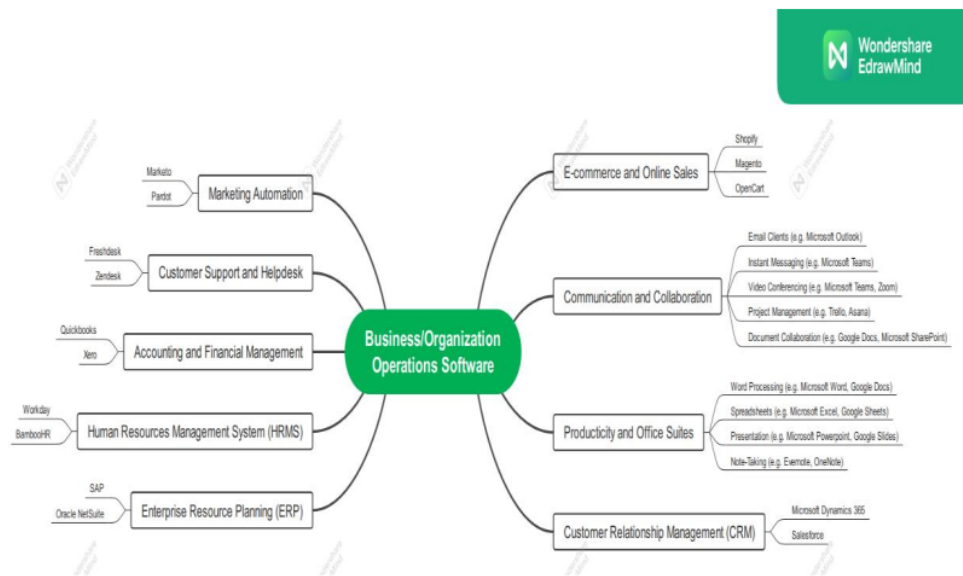


Figure 1: Mind Map example from Wonder share Edraw

The Mindmap has been created using Wondershare EdrawMind software. The section that follows will be Task 3.

The following section will be Task 3.

This section is an explanation of four MS Office applications: Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access, highlighting their features, benefits and limitations. Each of these serves as great tools in business operations. However, only together they can reach their full potential. The second part contains a test of some features included in these applications.

MS Word

Microsoft Word is a word processing application, first introduced in 1983 for MS-DOS, that exemplifies the pinnacle of textual composition and documentation within the realm of office software solutions. Easily one of the most popular applications in its field, due to its versatility and user-friendly interface. MS Word embodies a formidable arsenal of features that allow users to craft and manipulate textual content with finesse.

Jessica Scott (2022) states: "Microsoft Word is a great word processor with many features that can be extremely useful for both personal and professional use. Although the software has some drawbacks, the advantages definitely outweigh the disadvantages. If you're looking for a powerful and feature-rich word processor, Microsoft Word is definitely the right choice for you."

At its core, MS Word serves as a bastion for document creation and editing, where users can harness an assortment of tools to author an extensive array of materials, ranging from mundane correspondence to intricate reports and dissertations. The application's hallmark lies in its unyielding commitment to facilitating a seamless writing experience, complemented by an extensive repertoire of formatting options. Users can wield an assortment of font styles, sizes, and colors, effortlessly

align paragraphs, and utilize an abundance of stylistic elements to embellish the visual appeal of their documents and writings of various nature.

The application transcends the boundaries of individual endeavor through its remarkable collaborative capabilities. Harnessing the power of cloud-based integration, users can embrace real-time collaboration, thereby fostering an environment that fosters collective ideas. Such a feature empowers disparate teams to synchronize their efforts and cohesively edit documents.

To simplify the office work even further, MS Word offers a collection of pre-designed templates and themes that cater to an array of contexts, encompassing resumes, brochures, flyers, and beyond. These templates, coupled with contents of smart art elements, empower users to create visually captivating documents, invigorating the presentation of information with a flair.

However, as with any creation, MS Word is not without its limitations. Its primary emphasis on text-based content can leave some desire for more comprehensive data management capabilities. The application's performance may occasionally falter when grappling with voluminous documents that incorporate an abundance of intricate graphics or embedded objects, albeit such occurrences remain a rarity in typical usage scenarios.

Furthermore, despite its collaborative features, MS Word's potential in this realm remains somewhat eclipsed by cloud-based alternatives, which foster more streamlined and instantaneous collaboration. Additionally, its proficiency in intricate data analysis pales in comparison to its sibling software, MS Excel, whose domain lies in the analytical manipulation of complex datasets.

Summary:

Benefits:

- User-Friendly interface
- Extensive formatting options
- Collaboration and Review tools
- Efficiency and Productivity

Limitations:

- Data analysis limitations
- Large documents may cause delayed responses of the application
- Collaboration efficiency isn't as smooth as in case of cloud-based alternatives

MS PowerPoint

Microsoft PowerPoint is a sophisticated and dynamic presentation software, first released in 1987 for Macintosh computers, that empowers users to create visually compelling slideshows, enabling effective communication and engaging storytelling in various professional and educational settings. Its array of features provides a comprehensive toolkit for crafting captivating presentations with ease.

Major Features:

- Slide Creation and Customization: PowerPoint's core functionality revolves around slide creation. Users can create multiple slides, each serving as a visual aid for a specific topic or idea. The application offers a wide range of design options, such as slide layouts, themes, and slide masters, allowing for consistent and visually appealing presentations.

- **Multimedia Integration:** application enables seamless integration of multimedia elements, such as images, videos, audio and animations. Users can leverage these elements to enhance the impact of their presentations, ensuring a more immersive and engaging experience for the audience.
- **Animation and Transition Effects:** this element provides a wide set of animation and transition effects, enabling users to add dynamic movements and smooth transitions between slides. This feature contributes to creating a cohesive and professional presentation flow, capturing the audience's attention and interest.
- **Presenter Tools:** PowerPoint offers various presenter tools to enhance the delivery of presentations. ¹¹ **Presenter view allows presenters to see speaker notes, timings, and upcoming slides while the audience views only the slideshow. Additionally,** the built-in laser pointer and pen tools aid in emphasizing key points during the presentation.
- **Collaboration and Sharing:** as a part of MS Office software, PowerPoint supports collaboration, enabling multiple users to work on the same presentation simultaneously. It also facilitates easy sharing and distribution of presentations, making it effortless to collaborate within teams or present to wider audiences.

Benefits:

- **Visual Communication:** PowerPoint's visual nature enables effective communication of complex ideas and concepts. By presenting information in a visually appealing manner, it helps the audience grasp and retain information more effectively. ⁶
- **Creativity and Engagement:** Shrot Katewa (2023) states: "PowerPoint provides huge flexibility in design and creativity. You can, for instance, use its visual hierarchy features when you create your slides. With this feature, you assure that the right elements and content catch the eye."
- **Efficiency and Customization:** PowerPoint's user-friendly interface and customizable templates expedite the presentation creation process. Users can tailor their slides to match their branding or style preferences, ensuring a cohesive and professional look.
- **Professional Presentation Delivery:** PowerPoint equips presenters with tools and features that enhance the delivery of presentations, allowing for smooth transitions, emphasis on key points, and effective speaker support, ultimately elevating the overall presentation quality.

Limitations:

- **Overemphasis on Visuals:** While PowerPoint excels at visual communication, excessive reliance on visuals without sufficient content or context may diminish the impact of the message. It is essential to strike a balance between visuals and informative content.
- **Steep Learning Curve for Advanced Features:** While creating basic presentations is straightforward, mastering advanced features like animations and custom slide layouts may require more time and effort, posing a learning curve for some users.
- **Not Ideal for Text-Heavy Content:** PowerPoint's slide-centric nature may not be the best fit for content-heavy presentations, as too much text on slides can overwhelm the audience and reduce engagement.

Summary:

Microsoft PowerPoint's dynamic and creative features make it an indispensable tool for crafting visually engaging presentations. Its multimedia integration, animation capabilities, and collaboration support contribute to delivering impactful and compelling presentations. However,

users should be mindful of striking the right balance between visuals and content and invest time in learning advanced features to fully leverage the application's potential.

MS Excel

Microsoft Excel is a powerful and versatile spreadsheet application that empowers users to organize, analyze, and manipulate data with precision and efficiency. With a wide range of features and functionalities, Excel provides a comprehensive toolkit for data management and analysis in various professional and personal contexts. The initial release took place in 1985. JavaTpoint site (2022) states: "Even after almost 30 years, MS Excel continues to be the finest in the world."

Major Features:

- Data Organization and Management: Excel's grid-like interface allows users to input, organize, and manage data in cells, rows, and columns. Users can create custom tables, define data types, apply formatting, and manipulate data effectively.
- Formulas and Functions: the app provides a vast library of built-in formulas and functions, enabling users to perform complex calculations, statistical analysis, financial modeling, and more. These formulas and functions automate calculations, saving time and reducing the risk of manual errors.
- Data Visualization: Excel offers a variety of chart types, graphs, and pivot tables to visualize data. Users can create visually appealing charts and graphs to understand patterns, trends, and relationships in the data, facilitating better decision-making.
- Data Analysis Tools: advanced data analysis tools, such as sorting, filtering, conditional formatting, and data validation are built-in the application. These tools enable users to extract insights from data, identify outliers, and perform comprehensive data analysis.
- Automation and Macros: Excel supports automation through macros, which are sets of recorded actions or custom scripts written in Visual Basic for Applications (VBA). Users can create macros to automate repetitive tasks, improve productivity, and streamline complex processes.

Benefits:

- Efficient Data Management: Excel's grid-based structure, formula capabilities, and data manipulation tools enable efficient data organization, storage, and retrieval. It provides a flexible framework for managing a wide range of data types and scenarios.
- Advanced Data Analysis: an extensive library of functions and tools allows users to perform advanced data analysis, modeling, and statistical calculations. It empowers users to gain valuable insights, make data-driven decisions, and uncover patterns or trends in large datasets.
- Data Visualization: Excel's visualization tools help users present complex data in a visually appealing and understandable manner. The ability to create charts, graphs, and pivot tables enhances communication and facilitates comprehension of data.
- Customization and Extensibility: application allows users to customize spreadsheets to suit their specific needs by applying formatting, creating custom formulas, and designing macros. It can be tailored to handle diverse data management and analysis requirements.
- Integration with Other Applications: as a part of MS Office software, Excel seamlessly integrates with other applications and supports compatibility with various file formats. It

allows users to import and export data between different applications, promoting interoperability and enhancing workflow efficiency.

Limitations:

- **Large Datasets:** Excel's performance may be impacted when handling very large datasets or complex databases. As the volume of data increases, calculations and operations may slow down, affecting productivity.
- **Data Integrity and Errors:** Manual data entry and formula errors can lead to inaccuracies in spreadsheets, compromising data integrity. Careful verification and validation are essential to ensure accuracy and reliability of results.
- **Collaboration Challenges:** While Excel supports sharing and collaboration, simultaneous real-time collaboration on the same spreadsheet can be challenging. Version control, resolving conflicts, and tracking changes may require additional effort.
- **Steep Learning Curve for Advanced Features:** Excel's advanced features, such as pivot tables, array formulas, and macros, can be complex to master, especially for users with limited experience in data analysis and programming.

Summary:

Microsoft Excel's robust features and functionalities make it a valuable tool for data organization, analysis, and visualization. Its benefits include efficient data management, advanced analysis capabilities, customization options, and integration with other applications. However, users should be mindful of potential limitations related to handling large datasets, data integrity, collaboration challenges, and the learning curve for advanced features when leveraging Excel for complex data tasks.

MS Access

Microsoft Access is a powerful and versatile database management system, initially released in 1992, that allows users to create, manage, and analyze databases with efficiency and flexibility. As a part of the Microsoft Office suite, Access provides a comprehensive toolkit for organizing and manipulating data, making it a valuable asset for businesses and individuals seeking to store and retrieve information effectively.

Major Features:

- **Database Creation and Management:** Access offers a user-friendly interface for creating and managing databases. Users can define tables, set data types, and establish relationships between tables, facilitating the organization of large datasets.
- **Data Entry Forms:** the application allows users to design custom data entry forms to input and modify data conveniently. These forms provide a structured and intuitive way to interact with the database, ensuring data consistency and accuracy.
- **Queries and Data Retrieval:** support for powerful querying capabilities enable users to extract specific data from the database based on criteria and conditions. They can build queries using a graphical interface or SQL, making it suitable for users of varying technical expertise.
- **Data Integration and Import/Export:** Access allows users to import data from various sources, such as Excel spreadsheets or external databases. It also supports data export to different formats, making it easy to share data with other applications.

Benefits:

- Customizable Database Solutions: Access provides a customizable platform to design databases tailored to specific business needs. Users can create solutions for managing inventory, customer data, project tracking, and more.
- Efficient Data Management: Access streamlines data organization and retrieval processes, enabling users to manage vast amounts of data efficiently. With relational databases, users can establish connections between datasets, enhancing data accuracy and consistency.
- Cost-Effective: comparing to other database management systems, MS Access is relatively cheap.
- Data Analysis and Reporting: Access's querying and reporting capabilities allow users to gain valuable insights from data. The ability to create custom reports and charts facilitates data analysis and presentation for informed decision-making.
- Integration with Other Applications: Access integrates seamlessly with other Microsoft Office applications, allowing data import/export between Excel, Word, and other tools. This interoperability enhances productivity and data sharing within the Office ecosystem.
- Scalability and Multi-User Support: Access supports multi-user environments, making it suitable for small to medium-sized business applications. It can handle concurrent access by multiple users, facilitating collaboration and data sharing.

Limitations:

- Not Suitable for Large-Scale Systems: While Access is effective for small to medium-sized databases, it may not be suitable for large-scale enterprise systems with extensive data and high concurrency requirements. For such scenarios, more robust database management systems like SQL Server are recommended.
- Limited Security Features: Access provides basic security features like user-level permissions, but it may not meet the stringent security needs of highly sensitive data. For more advanced security measures, other database solutions may be preferable.
- Learning Curve for Relational Database Design: Designing and managing relational databases in Access may require a learning curve, especially for users unfamiliar with database concepts and normalization.
- Web-Based Limitations: Unlike cloud-based databases, Access is primarily a desktop application. It may have limitations in terms of web-based data access and real-time collaboration, which are better addressed by cloud-based database solutions.

Summary:

Microsoft Access's major features and benefits make it a valuable tool for creating customizable database solutions, managing data efficiently, and performing data analysis. It offers a user-friendly interface and integration with other Office applications, contributing to enhanced productivity. However, Access may not be suitable for large-scale enterprise systems and has limitations in terms of security features and web-based capabilities.

Examples of features of Office applications:

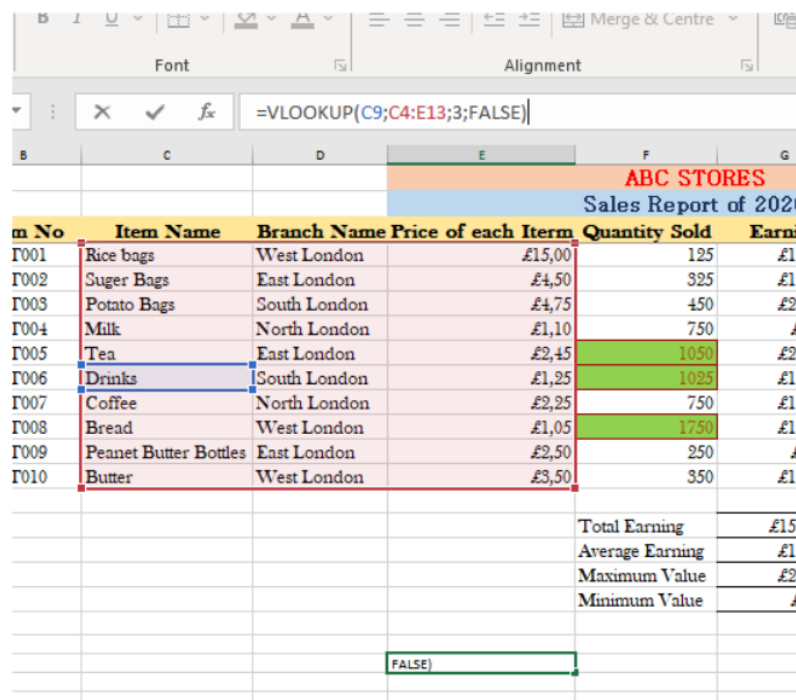
VLOOKUP

VLOOKUP is a function included in MS Excel. It stands for “Vertical Lookup”, which perfectly describes its usability – it searches for the specific value in the leftmost column of a table of data and returns a corresponding value from a specific column in the same row.

The formula’s syntax can be explained as the following:

VLOOKUP(What you wish to look up; what’s the range of data you’re searching in; number of the column where the desired return is placed; approximate (TRUE) or exact match (FALSE))

Here is an example of VLOOKUP usage:



The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with a formula bar at the top displaying `=VLOOKUP(C9;C4:E13;3;FALSE)`. Below the formula bar is a table titled "ABC STORES Sales Report of 2021". The table has columns: Item No, Item Name, Branch Name, Price of each Item, Quantity Sold, and Earning. The data rows are as follows:

Item No	Item Name	Branch Name	Price of each Item	Quantity Sold	Earning
T001	Rice bags	West London	£15,00	125	£1
T002	Suger Bags	East London	£4,50	325	£1
T003	Potato Bags	South London	£4,75	450	£2
T004	Milk	North London	£1,10	750	£1
T005	Tea	East London	£2,45	1050	£2
T006	Drinks	South London	£1,25	1025	£1
T007	Coffee	North London	£2,25	750	£1
T008	Bread	West London	£1,05	1750	£1
T009	Peanet Butter Bottles	East London	£2,50	250	£1
T010	Butter	West London	£3,50	350	£1
				Total Earning	£15
				Average Earning	£1
				Maximum Value	£2
				Minimum Value	£1

Below the table, there is a cell containing the text "FALSE".

Figure 2: VLOOKUP function formula

In this scenario, the goal is to look up for Price of each Drinks. Drinks are listed in C9 cell in spreadsheet. Second variable includes “Item Name”, “Branch Name” and “Price of each Item” columns, 3 in total. The intention is to look up the price, which is listed in column 3 of selected for the function. Lastly, the exact match is chosen as the return, which is represented by “FALSE”

The return should be “£1,25”. Let’s have a look at the result:

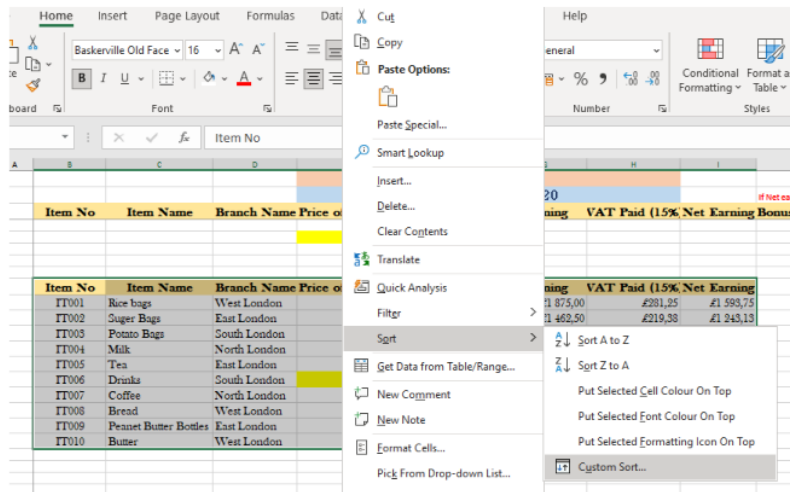


Figure 5: Access path to Custom Sort function

In order to do so, all it takes is to click RMB on previously selected data, then choose "Sort". The intent was to sort the data by two criteria, so "Custom Sort" is the right option.

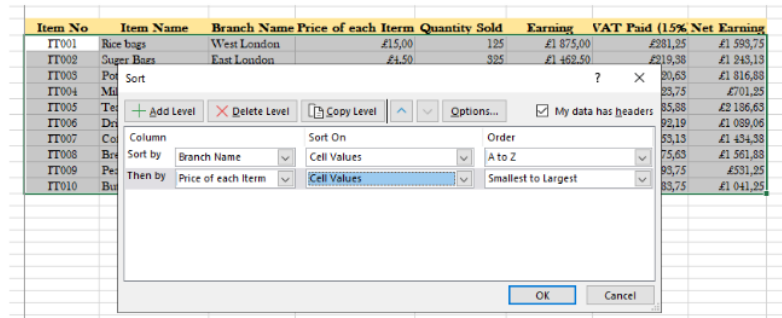


Figure 6: Parameters set up for Custom Sort function

In the "Sort" tab I can choose which columns I want to sort by and what kind of order

Item No	Item Name	Branch Name	Price of each Item	Quantity Sold	Earning	VAT Paid (15%)	Net Earning
IT005	Tea	East London	£2.45	1000	£2 572.50	£385.88	£2 186.63
IT009	Peanut Butter Bottles	East London	£2.50	250	£625.00	£93.75	£531.25
IT002	Sugar Bags	East London	£4.50	325	£1 462.50	£219.38	£1 243.13
IT004	Milk	North London	£1.10	750	£825.00	£123.75	£701.25
IT007	Coffee	North London	£2.25	750	£1 687.50	£253.13	£1 434.38
IT006	Drinks	South London	£1.25	1025	£1 281.25	£192.19	£1 089.06
IT003	Potato Bags	South London	£4.75	450	£2 137.50	£320.63	£1 816.88
IT008	Bread	West London	£1.05	1750	£1 837.50	£275.63	£1 561.88
IT010	Butter	West London	£3.50	350	£1 225.00	£183.75	£1 041.25
IT001	Rice bags	West London	£15.00	125	£1 875.00	£281.25	£1 593.75

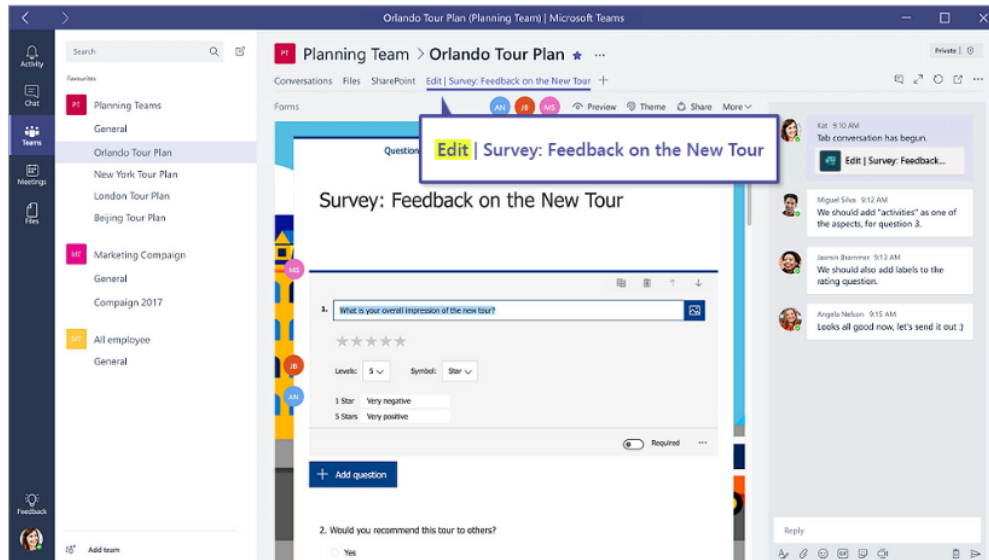
Figure 7: Results of Sort function

After confirming settings, shown on previous screenshot, the desired result has been reached. All rows are sorted by "Branch Name" (from A to Z order), then by "Price of each Items" (ascending).

The following section will be Task 4.

This section is an ¹ analysis of contemporary communication and online collaboration applications, that are used in business operations and companies all over the world. The second part contains a test of some applications, mainly used for collaboration in organizations.

Microsoft Teams



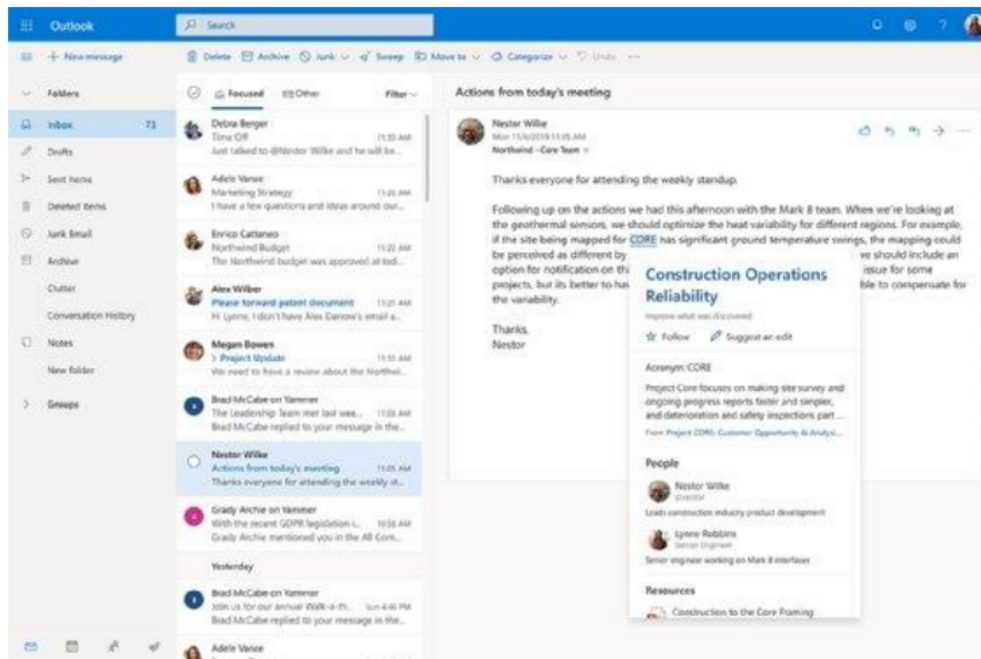
Microsoft Teams is an application, ² available for both computers and mobile devices supporting collaboration, offering various features, such as:

- Instant Messaging and Chat
- Video and Audio Conferencing
- File sharing and Cooperating
- Integration with other Microsoft 365 applications
- Channels and Tabs

The company introduces users to its Business variant of product by using the following phrases:

- ² Meet from anywhere - "Start meetings with anyone and boost engagement with virtual backgrounds, recordings, transcriptions, and AI-powered recaps."
- Chat with anyone - "Get work done with people inside and outside your company. Send messages, react with emojis, create teams, and coordinate events—all from one app."
- Get things done in one place - "Collaborate on documents in real time and reduce context switching by working in Microsoft 365 apps right from Teams."
- Stay secure and productive - "Proactively reduce risk while helping employees stay in the flow of work. Have peace of mind knowing sensitive information is encrypted in all chats, calls, meetings, and files."

Microsoft Outlook



¹ MS Outlook is a popular personal information manager and email client. As its name implies, it is a part of the MS Office suite and is widely used for things like managing emails, calendars, tasks, contacts.

The application offers supporting scheduling and management features, which are the following:

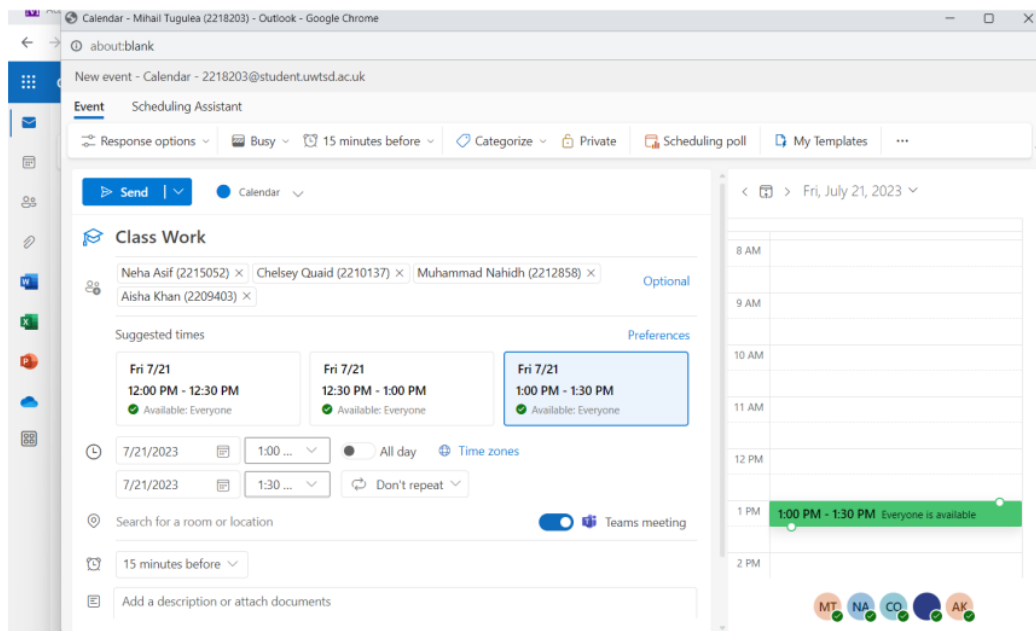
- Email Management: Outlook's primary function is ¹⁰ as an email client, allowing users to send, ⁷ receive, and organize emails from various accounts
- Calendar and Scheduling: Outlook includes a robust calendar feature that lets users schedule events, appointments, and meetings.
- Task Management: Outlook's task manager enables users to create to-do lists, set deadlines, and track their progress.
- Contact Management: Outlook provides a comprehensive address book to manage contacts efficiently.
- Integration with Microsoft Office and Cloud Services: ⁷ Outlook seamlessly integrates with other Microsoft Office applications, such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Additionally, it can connect with cloud services like OneDrive, allowing users to share and collaborate on files directly from within Outlook.
- Security and Privacy: Microsoft has made significant efforts to enhance Outlook's security and privacy features.
- User Interface and Customization: ¹⁵ Outlook offers a user-friendly interface that is easy to navigate. Users can customize the layout, themes, and add-ons to suit their preferences and work style.
- Mobile Apps and Cross-Platform Support: Outlook is available as desktop software for Windows and macOS, and it also has mobile apps for iOS and Android. This cross-platform

support ensures users can access their emails and information from different devices seamlessly.

The company advertises Outlook by using the following phrases:

- "Connect, organize, and get things done with free personal email and calendar."
- "Get on top of your inbox with Copilot and save time"
- "Email and calendar, together in one place"
- "Stay safe and connected with security you can trust"
- "Keep your busy life organized"
- "More accessible than ever"

Example of Microsoft Outlook usage:



One of Outlook's features is a useful tool called the "Scheduling Assistant," which is designed to help users efficiently schedule meetings or appointments by finding the most suitable time slots for all participants. The Scheduling Assistant is primarily used in the context of organizing meetings within an organization or among multiple individuals.

In this example, we can see an event "Class Work" scheduled for 4 students. All parameters needed to schedule an event are easily accessible to set up: exact time, participants of the event, availability of the participants, alarm for certain time before the event starts, and optional location. It also offers integration with MS Teams, which is really handy for collaborative purposes.

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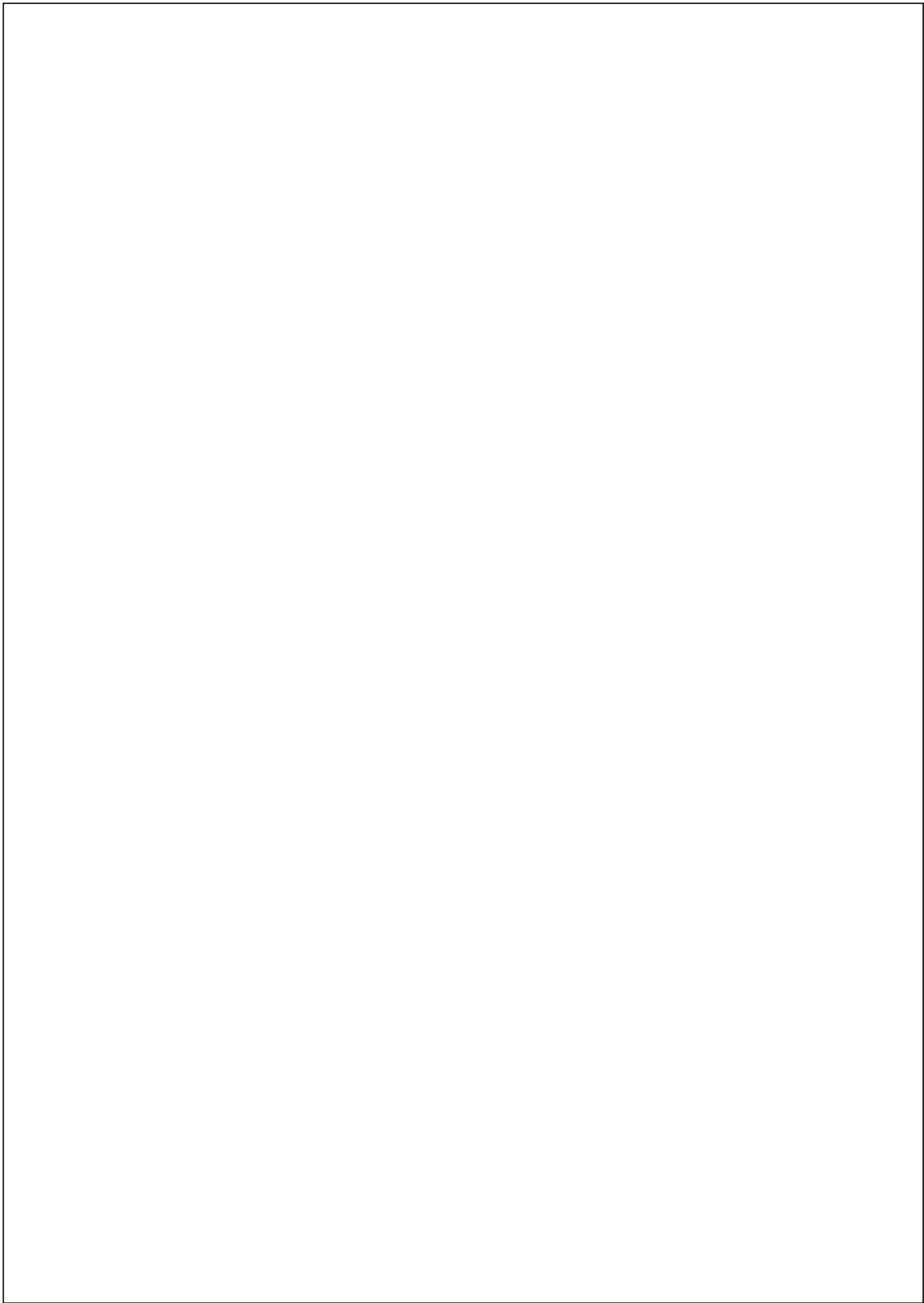
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