



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

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Introduction

The American multinational company Nike is a well-known global brand which is involved in the manufacturing of sports equipment, especially athletic shoes. The brand is also known for its engagement with worldwide marketing, and the development of unique products through intense research and attractive designs. The company mostly incorporated with the production of footwear becoming a brand with recognition as the world's largest supplier of athletic shoes. Apart from the sports shoe category, the company is also known for its clothing and accessories globally. Strategic marketing activities have shaped the current position of Nike over 25 years, becoming one of the most impactful brands in the world (Nike, 2023).

Nike initially known as **Blue Ribbon Sports** (BRS) was founded by Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman on 25 January 1964 starting their journey from Oregon. The company was initially operating as a distributor of Onitsuka Tiger a Japanese shoe-making company (Nike, 2023). Over time, the company became a brand through its extensive R&D in the sports shoe category along with strategic marketing interventions.

This study focuses on Nike's marketing management activities to identify the specific touch points along with their significance that can help Nike to grow sustainably. In addition, the importance of end-to-end customer experience in the context of Nike's business management growth has also been evaluated. Apart from that, the innovative marketing strategies that may create significant brand value for Nike along with its effective customer journey and communication channels have also been discussed. The study has been concluded by suggesting a marketing strategy for Nike.

Definition of touch points and its significance

As acknowledged by Baxendale *et al.* (2015) touch points can be defined as specific contact points between consumers with a brand. The touch point might be direct or indirect without limitation to any specific channel. The same academic source highlights the definition of Neslin *et al.* (2006, p. 96) that, "***a customer contact point, or a medium through which the firm and the customer interact***". In contrast, a touch point can be considered as any time a potential or existing customer comes in contact with a brand or company. Therefore the point

of contact might be before purchasing something or after the consumers purchase something. However, a touch point can also be considered during any purchase by a customer. Therefore, the touch point is a unique as well as complex point of time at which a customer realises or feels connected with the brand's vision, product or marketing interventions. The touch point can be a significant factor in terms of customer satisfaction. For instance, marketing interventions by a specific brand or in the case of Nike can be determined by different types of touch points through which a brand can impact its potential or existing customers.

Although the touch points that can impact or attract specific brands include a brand story, innovation, brand promise, purchase moment and consumer experiences. In addition, to provide optimal customer satisfaction previously mentioned factors are also associated and interlinked with each other. However, to present a brand story, innovation, and promise brand is essentially required identifying the potential strategies such as advertisement, in-store communications, word of mouth or brand promise (Baxendale *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, Nike might adopt various ways of advertising to deliver a touch sense of specific products to their customer. In contrast, multichannel advertisements such as in-store branding, branding through television and social media and traditional methods of advertisement are also required to be followed by Nike. Apart from that, sensory touch through effective advertisement can also be done. For example, the projection of products including famous sports personalities can be an impactful way to develop touch points as Nike's products are mostly sport-oriented (Forbes, 2022).

Identifying the touch points of Nike

As discussed previously touch points are the specific point in time that stimulates a sense of attraction or feeling or integrity in a consumer's mind for a brand. Therefore, potential touch points for Nike can be anything from the product itself to the brand history of inception, the brand to its customers, and the unique service provided by the company to their commitment to customers despite any discrimination.

The brand mainly deals with the sports equipment section and especially manufactures a range of different shoes offering sufficient categories to their customers of different needs. In addition, the company has different outlets in different prime locations around the globe.

Therefore, strategic marketing, presentation of category-specific promotional ads, projection of sustainable manufacturing and sourcing activities and involving famous sports personalities can be the significant way of touching the senses of potential consumers. In addition, providing unique in-store experiences to throw costumes such as providing treadmill run tests for a better understanding of their product capabilities is one of the unique touch points that distinguish them from the competitors (Squeezegrowth, 2022).

However, developing a multi-touch point design to attract as many as possible customers can be beneficial for Nike (Maechler *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, improving service design as well as **omnichannel** design and UX design can be one of the remarkable human and brand-centred interventions by Nike.

Based on the assessment of different consumer inclinations and feedback accumulation after-sales assistance and 30 days return policy for in-store purchases are one of the effective facilities provided by the brand creating a valuable point to stimulate consumer interest.

The sole principle of Nike's business development is to focus on product design, development and the worldwide market. The product sales strategy of the brand is direct i.e. selling products through retail stores and digital platforms mentioned by the brand as **NIKE Direct** (Nike, 2023). Therefore, strategic interventions performed through their retail stores can effectively impact the customers

On the other hand, Nike is a product-oriented brand offering six key categories to their consumers in terms of its entire range of products such as "Running, NIKE Basketball, the Jordan Brand, Football (Soccer), Training and Sportswear (our sports-inspired lifestyle products)". In addition, 61% of the revenue of the company is generated from the non-US market majorly through retail store distributions (CDN, 2022). Apart from that, Nike holds the first position in the sports brand category globally.

The retail store experiences might develop and develop unique touch points to achieve a large group of consumers from the different sections for sustainable business growth.

Innovative marketing strategies to be adopted by Nike for improving brand awareness

Product innovation

As opined by Gong *et al.* (2020) brand awareness can be described as the important dimension of brand value by which individuals can recognize and recall a brand through certain product categories. Nike is a global brand that essentially prioritizes its product line along with making interventions. On the other hand, service is the ultimate consent of a consumer. Therefore, extensive research on continuous product development is desirable for Nike. The new generation is entirely inclined and dependent on innovations. Development of an appropriate product strategy a brand might utilise consumer opportunities along with unique value propositions through marketing interventions (Gong *et al.*, 2020). For that reason innovating new products such as shoes or other wearables equipped with digital gadgets can be a phenomenal strategy for Nike to improve their brand awareness to most consumers as possible around the globe.

Offering freebies

Every consumer loves freebies and sometimes prefers a product over another based on this factor. Offering certain free along with the purchased product can be an effective way to generate potential customers for Nike as a sales promotion intervention (Orji *et al.*, 2020). Apart from free products, Nike might offer free services to their potential customers at their retail stores such as an offering to test their newly launched products as discussed above. Apart from the premium branding, the concept of **freemium** branding can be a significant way to attract more customers to their retail stores as well as to the brand.

Value proposition and Storytelling

Value proposition or unique value proposition also known as USP (unique selling point) is a substantial factor on the basis of which a customer prefers to buy something over another. Therefore, proposing a clear statement or sometimes a unique product line with a specific tagline or slogan can be the potential USP for Nike (George, 2016). Therefore launching a new product line or marketing a specific product promoting healthy lifestyle habits or environment sustainability concepts can be impactful activities by the company. Previously, Nike launched a campaign named “Free Running” introducing a new product line called “free runs” shoes that provides natural movement while running the same as running barefoot

(Nike, 2023). Therefore, further campaigns like this can be effective to target a range of consumers from different sections. In addition, the promotion of new or existing products in the form of storytelling is a unique way to grasp the attention of consumers in an emotional way.

Personalisation

“Product personalisation” is the key to building brand awareness along with boosting customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Therefore, delivering tailored products, especially for specific individuals or providing tailored offers messages to each person might be a significant way of an innovative marketing strategy for Nike. The brand is majorly concentrated in the sports sector and a great thing about the sport is experimental marketing contexts can be personalised to the brand objectives creating larger-than-life concepts (Smilansky, 2017). That is why it can be effective to offer personalised services as much as possible to grasp a larger consumer base.

Social Strategy

Acting along with the social algorithm is a prominent aspect of marketing. For instance, stimulating consumer inclinations towards a social trend and getting benefited by that is a consequential strategy for the markets. For instance, promoting environmental consciousness, and healthy lifestyle trends through product marketing or brand campaigning or projection of awareness concepts through exclusive retail stores can be significant interventions to increase brand awareness for Nike. Therefore, organizing frequent social awareness programs can be beneficial for the brand. For that reason, the optimal utilisation of social medial platforms can be an impactful concern for Nike in the context of the modern technology-driven generation.

Evaluating the end-to-end customer experience through different communication channels by Nike

A communication channel generally refers to the specific medium through which the interaction between a brand and the consumers takes place. In reference to that, a communication journey map is a relevant tool for the visual guidance of consumer interaction with a brand through different touch points. For instance, Nike is more likely to communicate

with their consumer directly. For instance, the retail stores located in different locations around the globe are the predominant distribution channel for Nike. In addition, certain independent distributors, and licensees are also holding the rights to sell out Nike's products.

The end-to-end customer experience is about interactions between the brand and the consumer through business relationships. Therefore, end-to-end customer experience starts from the touch points to the ultimate consumer satisfaction including a favourable purchasing experience, frequent visits to the retail stores, after-sales services assistance discount offers specially tailored for the consumers and loyalty rewards.

For a specific area of concern, Nike aims to impact their consumers specifically understanding their needs. For example, Nike offers test run facilities to their consumers to test their Nike sneakers before buying. Therefore in-store treadmills are placid in the Nike stores to provide an optimal product experience. In addition, the employees check every aspect and requirement of the customers to make their potential customers pick the right pair of shoes. Therefore, direct communication is one of the effective activities for Nike to interact with their consumers and provide them with a valuable service experience.

Apart from that, Nike's unique approach to advertisement made its brand image distinguishable from other competitors. The brand frequently aired promotional ads based on a core social or universal message incorporating its product line. In addition specific taglines or slogan such as "***Just Do It***" is one of the remarkable features that promote and distinguish Nike at the same time from others creating unique value for their consumers? Therefore, indirect touch points through promotional activities can effectively turn a potential customer into an existing customer. Further, the company encourages their loyal customers to join its Nike plus with the intention to build a loyal and motivated community. On the other hand, Nike's strategic promotional activities showcasing famous sports personalities are a well-known and well-accepted strategy to attract customers.

How Nike manages and evaluates customer journeys across its different communication channels

Nike uses various communication channels which help the company to manage and evaluate its customers. The company uses social media channels as well as direct sales and various

sporting goods markets to communicate with customers. Nike communicates with a large crowd through advertising on various social media platforms and also uses traditional advertising channels. Due to its advertising strategies, the company influences the perception of the customers which leads to an increase in sales. To increase the awareness of the customers the company uses celebrity endorsement which helps the company increase awareness among the customers. Moreover, the company also promotes their products on social media channels like Instagram, YouTube and so on. The company also uses Nike's personal selling to increase its sales of the company (Ilyas *et al.*, 2021). The salesperson of the company communicates with potential customers directly. In addition to that the company focuses on the personal preferences of the customers so that they can satisfy their needs. As a result, it helps in increasing the value as well as helps in increasing the sales of the company. Moreover, to increase customer satisfaction the company also organises early access programs for selected customers and encourages the customers to give feedback on the products. Therefore, it can be said that the company strategy helps in increasing customer engagement which helps in increasing the loyalty of the customers. Moreover, the company also has social media platforms to connect to the customers and also communicate with the customers to let them know about various products and offers of the company.

In addition, the company also sends personalised mail to the customers. It helps in increasing the satisfaction of the customers thus increasing the value of the company. To boost the demands of the company also organises sales promotion which helps in customer engagement and also helps in increasing product value. Their main aim is to continuously communicate with the customers to let them know about the current sales and offers. Moreover, the company also uses various e-commerce platforms like Amazon and so on to increase awareness among customers. The company also has physical stores present in various locations. It helps the customers to access the stores easily. In addition to that the company also sells their products in various convenient stores like Walmart and so on. Therefore it can be said that the availability of the product helps the company to gain customer loyalty as well as increase sales. In order to increase the value in the eyes of the customer the company focuses on building public reactions by donating hotter services for the wellbeing of society. In addition to that the company also implements sustainable

strategies to increase its value to the customers (Taufique, 2022). Therefore, it can be said that Nike uses various communication channels to attract and influence customers.

Suggested marketing strategies for Nike to ensure the stakeholders' expectations in the current time and future

During this study, it has been observed that Nike has faced a significant decline in the overall profit generation during their operation in the past few years. The possible factors can be the effects of the recent pandemic Covid 19 along with economical disturbances caused by the pandemic throughout the globe. However, two major reasons can be considered major challenges for Nike and that may become the predominant challenge for Nike in the near future.

High competition in the market provided by the competitors such as Adidas, Puma, Sky Sports, and Under Armour Reebok globally is one of the major issues that is challenging Nike in terms of profit generation.

Apart from that, Nike invests a major in the sports utility sector which can be one of the serious issues in terms of lack of product diversification. In addition, various other challenges can be identified for Nike such as changes in consumer preferences and reduced customer demands, cancellation or postponement of sports seasons, disruption in the distribution centres, and third-party manufacturing partners along with increasing issues with vendors and facility closures, the vulnerability in financial markets globally due to various disruptions during covid (Finance yahoo, 2022). In addition, exchange rate fluctuations, a decline in Nike's debt rating and import and export rate changes throughout different countries in the world.

Based on the above-mentioned challenges it can be assumed that several challenges are required to be addressed by the American brand to mitigate rapidly. However different problems that appeared to Nike are versatile in terms of business operation such as the brand facing financial issues, product-related issues, consumer trend-related issues along with operation and distribution activity-related issues (Nike, 2023). Therefore a substantial impact from different key stakeholder's s required to be mitigated. For instance, the stakeholder theory suggests that it is essential to value and understand the participation of every

stakeholder to maintain a sustainable business. Therefore, understanding the needs or perceptions of different stakeholders whether internal or external such as consumers, society, government, suppliers, creditors, employees and distributors is essentially important for a brand or organisation (Stakeholdertheory, 2022). Therefore Nike is suggested to improve their brand value as well as brand image along with strategic management of internal stakeholders especially the distributors, suppliers, and employees to a larger extent. On the other hand, to understand the changing situation and monitor the financial data Nike is required to focus on their vulnerable areas of operation.

On the other hand, developing specific target consumer-based products along with manufacturing different ranges of products of all price segments might be the major tactics to recover the financial figures in near future.

In addition, providing prior attention to study the financial trends, and consumer inclination of specific geographic locations along with a vast understanding of consumer needs of specific areas can be desirable interventions by Nike.

Apart from that, following the **4P** strategy adequately is more important to attract a range of consumers. Therefore, pricing comes in the first place for consideration. Nike generally sells their products at price points at which other brands might offer their premium products (Išoraitė, 2016). For that reason, Nike needs to pick a strategic as well as a lucrative price that is accessible to the consumers as well as honours the brand values of the company at the same time. For instance, the price should be fixed based on an adequate study of the gross income rate and buying capacity of a specific location not considered too high or too low pricing.

While considering the **4P** strategy, the place comes second. For instance, finding the right place to set up retail stores that significantly promotes the brand in front of a wide range of audiences is important to target potential customers (Išoraitė, 2016). Selection of a valuable place also services the third factor of the 4P i.e. promotion as Nike is mainly focused on retail outlets including in-store promotional interventions. Therefore, after finding a key location it is essential to prompt effectively utilise omnichannel communication to cover a larger area of consumers. Lastly, diversifying the product range and developing a new range of consumer-

focused and more affordable products can be beneficial for Nike to sustain itself in the market by ensuring an optimum level of stakeholder satisfaction.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion it can be assessed that modern businesses no longer rely on the product solely for sustainable profit generation in the competitive market. The realisation of various aspects especially of the marketing activities is essentially important to strengthen the business structure as well as meet customer satisfaction in this modern innovation-oriented era. This study scrutinised that various touch points and end-to-end customer experiences through different communication channels are prominently significant to impact the optimum amount of consumers. Therefore evaluation of different potential touch points such as omnichannel design for product distribution and customer interaction is inevitably required. In addition, developing new innovative product lines and strategic marketing can be the potential points for Nike to touch the sense of their target consumers. However, without innovation or innovative strategy implementation, it is hard to sustain a business globally maintaining the first position as well as a long-term legacy. Therefore, certain innovative marketing strategies have been suggested through this study for the improvement of Nike's brand awareness in the global context. For instance, brand awareness is that specific point by which a customer recognises a brand. Therefore, investing more effort in brand awareness development can be an effective intervention for Nike through innovative product development, value proposition, offering freebies, personalisation and social strategy along with storytelling activities during brand promotion. Lastly, based on the assessment of end-to-end customer experience certain suggestions have been given to Nike by which Nike may sustainably meet the stakeholders' expectations in the current time as well as in the future.

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