

**BA (Hons) Developing Leadership and Management
Creativity and Innovation
BMSW5013**

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Introduction

Tesco Plc is among the major international retailers in the world with its headquarters in Welwyn Garden City, United Kingdom. Tesco, which was started in 1919 by Jack Cohen, has since then started as a simple stall in the market and has since become a global retail giant with operations spread to more than 10 countries, some of which include the United Kingdom, Ireland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Thailand (Sharma, Jain and Pajni, 2022). The company has different formats which include big hypermarkets, convenience stores and online platforms where it deals with groceries, clothing, electronics and financial services. The mission of Tesco, which is to serve customers a little better every day, demonstrates that Tesco is dedicated to delivering quality products and services by being innovative and operationally excellent in the eyes of the customers.

Tesco being a market leader in the UK retail industry has been under constant pressure by the other competitors like Sainsbury, Asda, Aldi, and Lidl (Papanagnou et al., 2022). The environment under which the organisation functions is very dynamic and competitive with the consumer preferences, changes in technology and demands of sustainability creating a continuous change. To this end, Tesco has made a big investment in digital transformation, supply chain optimisation, and sustainability. Long-term sustainability is in the vision of the company that will involve waste reduction capacity of food, cutting down carbon emissions, and having a responsible source of products (Youssef, Eid and Agag, 2022). These priorities are in line with the wider strategy of Tesco, which is the creation of value to customers and stakeholders and the operation of business at all levels.

Tesco has as its core of operations. The organisation is always seeking new methods of furthering innovations and creativity customer experience, reducing logistics and inventory management. The retail service of the company has been transformed by technological integration, including self-service checkouts, mobile shopping apps, and AI-based demand forecasting (Das, 2021). Moreover, the Tesco Every Little Helps is not just a marketing statement, but also a philosophy of operation where Tesco forces people to make small changes in processes and delivery of services. These programmes demonstrate how Tesco has focused on the need to develop an

innovative culture that not only leads to the development of the organisation, but also flexibility in the ever-changing retail environment.

Current Role in the Tesco Plc

In this context, my work as an Assistant Manager at one of the regional stores at Tesco has an important role to play in the smooth day-to-day operations of the stores. My role is to supervise employees, stock management, quality of customer service and adherence to health, safety and operation regulations. I am also involved in sales performance analysis, sales at store level where I contribute towards waste reduction strategy and other store-level innovations that head office initiates. I am expected to collaborate well with different departments such as logistics, procurement, and customer service in order to make sure that the activities of the stores are aligned with the strategic goals of Tesco.

My experience has provided me with very useful information about operation problems that can interfere with efficiency, including inaccuracy in inventory, food waste, and interdepartmental inconsistency. They have direct impact on profitability and customer satisfaction, which is why the innovative operational solutions are needed. I am also actively promoting the involvement of the staff, brainstorming and constant improvement as a part of my managerial duties, which Tesco is committed to innovate at all levels of the organisation.

Critical Analysis of the Importance of Creativity and Innovation in the Retail Sector

Retail business is a highly dynamic and competitive sphere of the global economy subjected to the impact of the high rate of technological development, shifting consumer attitudes, and growing sustainability demands (Mostaghel et al., 2022). Creativity and innovation have turned out to be a necessary strategic instrument to organisations such as Tesco Plc in order to remain competitive, increase operational efficiency, and customer experience. Ek Styvén et al. (2022) define innovation as a way of making the organisations do what they do but better, which proves useful in enhancing the operation and value-creating processes.

The Retail Industry: Changing Character

The last twenty years have seen a tremendous revolution in the retail world. Globalisation, digitalisation and e-commerce have transformed the way consumers engage retailers. The emergence of online retailers like Amazon and online grocery stores like Ocado has shaken the established business concepts, compelling old retailers to be innovative at all times (Woods, Doherty and Stephens, 2021). Moreover, the COVID-19 gave momentum to the online shopping habits, which enhanced the significance of operational flexibility and innovative approach to problem-solving in terms of business continuity.

Herein, the term creativity or the capacity to produce something new and valuable ideates is the basic premise of innovation or the process of putting such ideas into action to realise quantifiable results (Fu et al., 2023). In the case of the retail organisations, they are inseparable in the process of addressing the rapid market changes and the evolving consumer demands in addition to the economic uncertainty.

Efficiency and Innovation in Operations

Process innovation is also important in improving the operations of retail business in terms of efficiency, minimization of wastes, and better service delivery. Some of the pioneering process innovations at Tesco include the self-checkout system, contactless payments, and inventory management using data (Fisher and Raman, 2022). These not only enhance convenience of customers, but also decreases labour expenses and customer wait.

The theory of innovation by Schumpeter asserts that the economic development relies on constant refreshing of processes and systems. Such a theory can be seen in practise at Tesco by the fact that the company has implemented the use of advanced analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to predict demand and optimise inventory levels (Fisher and Raman, 2022). This minimises overstocking and waste that are paramount in the grocery business. Other rivals like the Sainsbury and Aldi have taken the same route and have employed digital supply chain solutions and robotic warehouse. Therefore, the operational sustainability and competitiveness of retail organisations is directly dependent on creativity and innovation.

Product Innovation and Customer Experience

Customer experience has become a competitive point in the recent retail world. In order to attract and retain customers, product innovation must be integrated like adopting new product lines, environmentally friendly packaging and marketing it personally. The examples of creativity are the Tesco Finest and Tesco Clubcard Plus, which make customers more loyal and perceptive to Tesco.

According to the Service-Dominant Logic value is an outcome of customer-organisational interactions (Alzoubi, Ahmed and Alshurideh, 2022). The retailers have to continuously innovate their service models in order to provide high value. Design customer-centric solutions, including the development of home delivery services, mobile shopping applications, and virtual shopping systems, to address the needs of various consumers is driven by creativity.

In addition, the emergence of ethical consumerism has compelled the retailers to be innovative in sustainability areas. The fact that Tesco has already switched to recyclable packaging and is striving to become net-zero by 2035 is indicative of how innovation results in the realisation of environmental and consumer expectations (Alzoubi, Ahmed and Alshurideh, 2022).

Digital Transformation and Technological Innovation

Digital innovation has become one of the pillars of strategic development in the retail industry due to its technological revolution. Retailers are changing their operations and decision-making process with the help of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and the Internet of Things (IoT). As an example, the agreement that Tesco has made with Trigo to roll out the GetGo cashierless shops is a major step towards a smoother and smoother shopping experience.

It is said that organisations that do not adjust to the emerging technologies may be placed in danger of obsolescence as per the Disruptive Innovation Theory by Christensen (Ho, 2021). Blockbuster and Debenhams are retailers that can be used as a reminder of the businesses that did not innovate fast enough. Tesco, on the contrary, proves that being innovative guarantees the company survival and growth in a highly competitive environment through its active investment in digital technologies.

Social Innovation and Sustainability

Other than profitability, creativity and innovation will also underpin the sustainability agenda of the retail sector. The consumers are more demanding transparency and ethics in doing business (Gil-Saura et al., 2023). Tesco has reacted with new supply chain projects, including collaborating with the domestic production, minimising food waste by its perfectly imperfect line, and advertising plant-based choices. These innovative programmes do not only improve the perception of the brand but are also part of the corporate social responsibility objectives.

Social innovation is not limited to the environmental work but also covers the community and employee development. The culture of innovation is encouraged in Tesco and the industry through creative staff training, flexible work systems, and inclusion.

Identification of the 4Ps of Innovation Relevant to the Proposed Idea

Francis and Bessant have established the model of 4 Ps of Innovation which offers a frame of study of various types of innovation in an organisation. The four types, Product, Process, Position, and Paradigm innovation, allow establishing the points of innovative change and the way in which it happens (Slim, Selvy and Veziant, 2021). In the case of Tesco Plc, the introduction of innovation in its working systems is the key to its competitiveness and sustainability.

The Model of 4Ps of Innovation

The four dimensions of innovation under 4 P framework will be classified as:

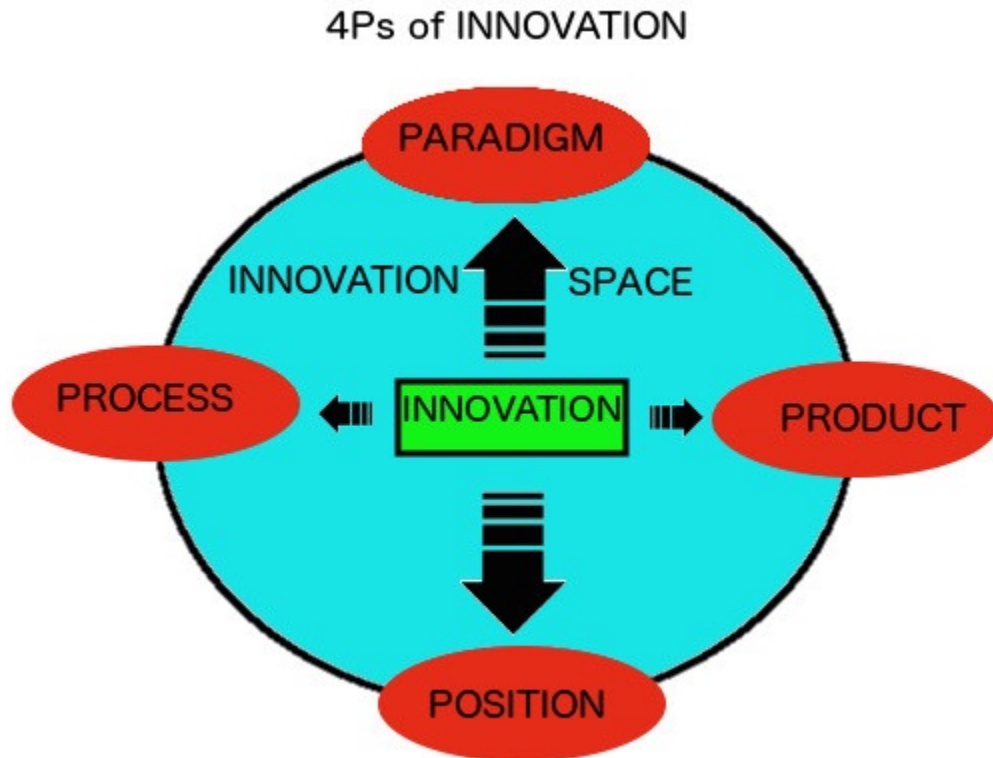


Figure 1: 4Ps of Innovation

Source: (Slim, Selvy, and Veziant, 2021)

- **Product Innovation:** It is the introduction of new or better goods or services that add value to the customer (Xie, Wang and Zhang, 2023).
- **Process Innovation:** The operation of new or better methods of doing things in order to make processes more efficient or higher.
- **Position Innovation:** Redefining product or service perception or positioning in the market (Slim, Selvy and Veziant, 2021).
- **Paradigm Innovation:** Radical changes in the business model or organisational thinking.

All the types have a different contribution to value creation and organisational development, and the extent of their impact depends on the nature of the applied innovation.

Process Innovation and Alignment of the Proposed Idea

The suggested AI-driven inventory management framework mostly fits Process Innovation since it is aimed at enhancing the manner in which Tesco runs its operations but not changing the

products or services (Tidd and Bessant, 2018). Process innovation usually entails the use of new technologies or systems, which improve the workflow, minimise the cost, and increase the productivity.

The Tesco case illustrates that the innovation is meant to solve endemic issues that pertain to stock inaccuracy and food wastes. The AI system would employ predictive analytics to track the demand trends, low sales products, and make automated re ordering decisions. The system could have reduced the problem of overstocking and understocking, by incorporating real time information on sales, supplier deliveries, and expiry dates (Manners-Bell and Lyon, 2022). This would not only maximise inventory control but would also help in Tesco achieving its zero-waste sustainability objective which will limit the environmental footprint and operational inefficiencies.

Moreover, process innovation can also improve the customer experience with more availability of products and fresher stock, which directly positively affects satisfaction and loyalty (Turner, 2020). It also helps in enhancing efficiency of employees through minimization of manual counting of stocks and also allows making of decisions based on the data at store management level.

Justification of Elements of Paradigm and Product Innovation

Although the presented concept is more of Process Innovation, it is supported by minor aspects of Paradigm and Product Innovation.

Paradigm Innovation: The implementation of AI technology basis indicates the strategic change of the operating philosophy of Tesco, as it has ceased to provide the reactive management of the company based on human estimations and started providing the proactive management based on the artificial intelligence (Baregheh, Rowley and Hemsworth, 2016). This transition is in favour of broader cultural changes in support of better organisational transformation and data-centric management.

Product Innovation: The system is not providing a new physical product to the consumers, but indirectly, it enhances the service product offered by Tesco to its consumers by making sure that the stock is correct and that the product is always available (Dangelico, 2016). The more

customers get out-of-stock products and higher quality products, the higher the perceived value of the service offering of Tesco becomes.

Strategic Value to Tesco Plc

The correspondence to Process Innovation is important since it promotes the strategic goals of Tesco efficiency, sustainability, and customer satisfaction directly. As the Annual Report of Tesco claims, the company focuses on innovation in the digital technology sphere to improve operational performance and achieving long-term environmental objectives (Abdelazim, 2024). The use of AI-based inventory would increase the capacity of Tesco to achieve these goals, as it would help reduce waste, increase profit margins, and sustain the supply chain.

Furthermore, in a period where rivals such as Sainsbury and Aldi are implementing the same technologies, this process innovation enables Tesco to have a competitive edge by having better operational intelligence and forecast analytic services.

Creativity Process Applied to Develop the Idea

Creativity is a process and it is systematic and it involves the transformation of new ideas into solutions. The creative process applied to the suggested innovation, which is an AI-driven inventory management system at Tesco Plc, entailed identifying the areas of inefficient operation, brainstorming about the possible solution, and narrowing the concept to an actual plan (Abdelazim, 2024). This part uses Four-Stage Model of Creativity developed by Graham Wallas, which contains Preparation, Incubation, Illumination, and Verification. This systematic process provided a right way of thinking, reflecting and critical assessment, which finally would result in a realistic and value-added solution.

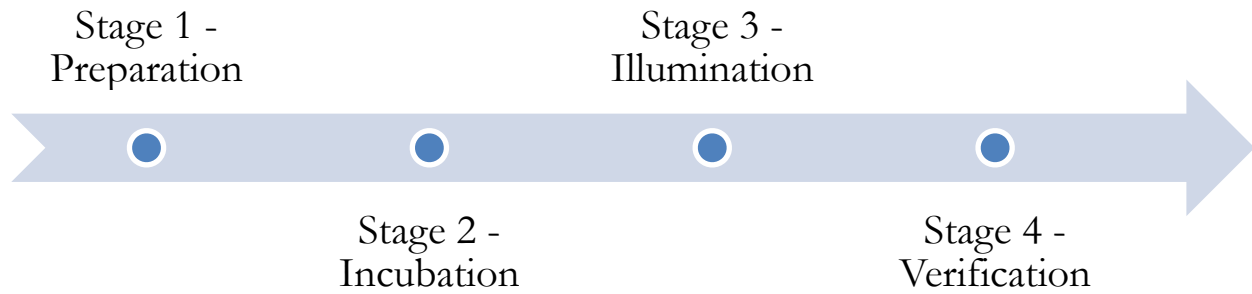


Figure 2: Creativity Process Applied to Develop the Idea

Source: (Author's Construction)

Stage 1: Preparation

The preparation phase entailed the identification and analysis of a major critical issue in the operations of the Tesco store- surplus food waste and inaccurate inventory. My observations and internal reports revealed that due to manual control of stocks and a lack of predictive systems, in many cases, there was an overstock of perishable products and understock of fast-moving products (Trott, 2016). I analysed the Tesco sustainability goals and found out that waste reduction corresponds to the overall strategic plans of Tesco to be net-zero and zero waste by 2035.

In this stage, I have also practised informal communication with colleagues in the store and examined the literature about digitalisation of retail stores and AI use in inventory management (Trott, 2016). The study formed the background of knowledge to examine how artificial intelligence would help to optimise inventory accuracy and operational efficiency.

Stage 2: Incubation

During incubation stage, I gave myself time to reflect and unconsciously develop ideas. Instead of imposing a single solution, I took into account the way various technologies, including machine learning, IoT sensors and automated analytics, could help overcome the discovered challenges. To imagine how such technologies can be implemented in the situation of Tesco, I considered practical examples of such innovations, including Amazon predictive shopping algorithms or Walmart data-driven supply chain. This step played a crucial role in relating the already known facts to new opportunities through associative thought.

Stage 3: Illumination

The light bulb phase was the eureka moment when the idea is now clear. I fantasised the idea of having an artificial intelligence system that would combine sales information, supplier information, and expiry dates to automate the decision to reorder products (Mayer and Oosthuizen, 2021). The concept was initiated by the realisation that such system would be able to minimise the amount of food wastage, maximise stock levels and better the sustainability performance. It was an innovative and yet sensible method of incorporating innovation into the current digital platform of the Tesco.

Stage 4: Verification

During the verification step, I tested out the viability of the idea using critical reflection and feedback. I estimated the possible obstacles (cost, staff education, data quality, etc.), and found the possibility to test the system in several selected stores and implement it fully (Mayer and Oosthuizen, 2021). Examining the digital innovation history of Tesco ensured that the technical capabilities of the organisation to sustain such an initiative are already available. So, this idea was confirmed as both the innovative and viable one, able to provide operational and environmental improvements that could be measured.

A Critical Evaluation of the Idea's Viability Using Lewin's Force Field Analysis

To assess the viability of an innovation, the relationship between drivers and inhibitors of change must be known. Another model that has been in frequent use and is the Force Field Analysis developed by Kurt Lewin to determine the readiness and ability of an organisation to undertake new initiatives (Mayer and Oosthuizen, 2021). It determines the change forces that foster change and the change restraining forces that counter the change enabling the management to devise strategies that reinforce the former and reduce the latter. This part is a critical analysis of the feasibility of the proposed AI-based inventory management system at Tesco Plc within the Force Field of Lewin.

Introduction to the Proposed Innovation

The innovation suggested is the introduction of an Artificial Intelligence developed inventory management system that decreases food waste, increases stock accuracy, and supplied chain efficiency (Heins, 2023). The system can automate the process of reordering and detect the inefficiencies in real-time by combining predictive analytics, sales data, and the expiry tracking. The innovation contributes to the sustainability of Tesco and the consumer satisfaction through the better availability and freshness of products. Nevertheless, when introducing such a technological change, there are both positive and negative organisational forces that need to be controlled.

Application of the Force Field Analysis by Lewin

The Force Field Analysis by Lewin makes two sets of forces that are opposite to each other:

- **Driving Forces:** Forces that cause the organisation to move towards embracing change.
- **Restraining Forces:** Forces that inhibit change.

The general feasibility of the innovation would be on whether there are more driving forces or restraining forces.

Driving Forces that Contribute to the Innovation

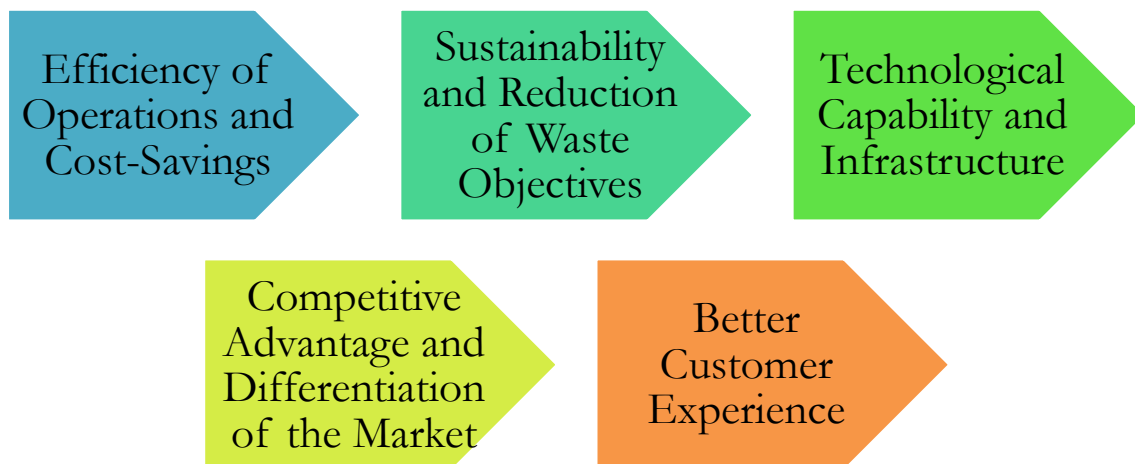


Figure 3: Driving Forces that Contribute to the Innovation

Source: (Author's Construction)

Efficiency of Operations and Cost-Savings: The AI system will also streamline operations through the reduction of manual labour and accuracy of inventory. This translates to cost

reduction and enhanced profitability- which are major incentives to the management of Tesco (Baltera, 2024).

Sustainability and Reduction of Waste Objectives: Tesco has set a goal of ensuring that it has attained net-zero operations by 2035, and this aspect influences the implementation of technologies that reduce wastages (Mostaghimi and Behnamian, 2022). The given innovation helps the company directly implement this sustainability agenda because it prevents overstocking and minimises food waste.

Technological Capability and Infrastructure: Tesco already invested in digital platforms, data analytics, and AI applications to a large extent. This good technological platform renders the adoption of a new AI system possible and strategically oriented in terms of its digital transformation roadmap (Baltera, 2024).

Competitive Advantage and Differentiation of the Market: Sainsbury and Aldi are some of the competitors that are increasingly recording the use of AI solutions. The adoption of this system will lead to Tesco remaining in the lead through the display of operational innovation and excellent service delivery.

Better Customer Experience: Enhanced inventory levels, fresher goods and lessening shortages lead to greater customer satisfaction and customer loyalty; a necessity in the long-term maintenance of market share in a competitive retail market.

Constraining Forces Hindering the Innovation

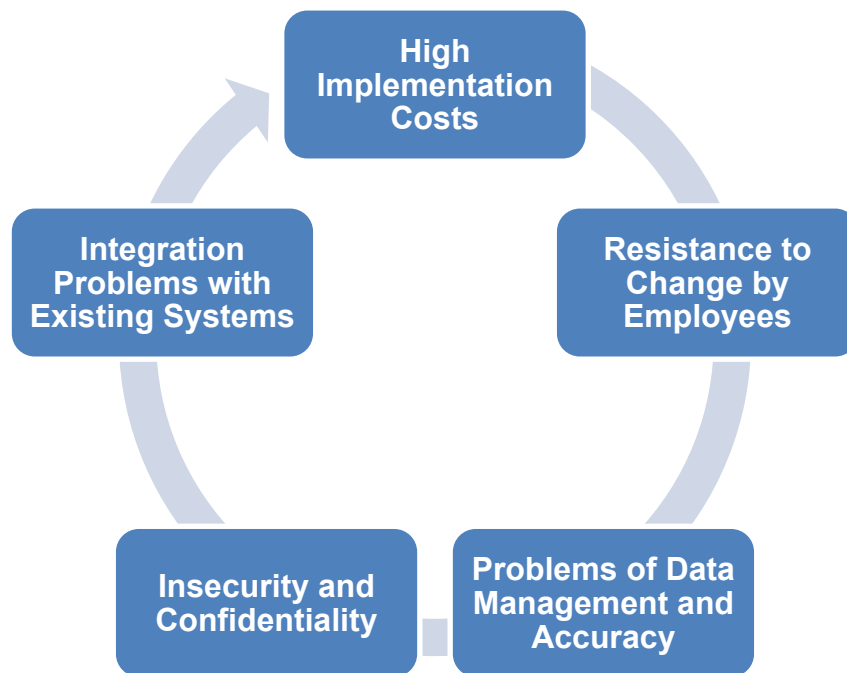


Figure 4: Constraining Forces

Source: (Author's Construction)

High Implementation Costs: Creating and implementing an AI-based system would be costly in terms of software, data infrastructure, and employee training. Small scale implementation could be delayed or curtailed due to budget constraints especially in small branches.

Resistance to Change by Employees: Employees can be convinced that AI systems will put them at a risk of losing their jobs or increased workload. The fear of redundancy, inability to understand, or digital illiteracy may bring about resistance (Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke and West, 2014).

Problems of Data Management and Accuracy: The AI systems are based on clean, accurate and real-time data. This may compromise the reliability of the system and result in bad decision-making due to inaccurate entries in stock or unavailable supplier data (Ek Styvén et al., 2022).

Insecurity and Confidentiality: Higher digitalisation poses the threat of cybersecurity. Securing sensitive operation and customer information is a significant issue that may make adoption difficult.

Integration Problems with Existing Systems: The IT infrastructure currently being used at Tesco is huge and disorganised (Alzoubi, Ahmed and Alshurideh, 2022). A combination of the new AI technology and the already established supply chain and point-of-sale systems may be technically challenging, which will cause changes to the operations in the transition period.

Viability Critical Evaluation

As the Force Field Analysis indicates, the driving forces are better structured and more aligned with the long-term goal of Tesco than the restraining forces. The new product is also aligned with the key priorities of Tesco, which are efficiency, sustainability, and digital transformation, which are at the centre of the new corporate strategy (Ek Styvén et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the restraining forces should be addressed in order to achieve successful implementation.

Phased implementation will help Tesco to overcome financial and technical obstacles by starting with pilot testing in selected stores, after which a nationwide implementation can be done. The digital literacy should be enhanced by introducing employee training and engagement programmes to decrease the resistance (Dangelico, 2016). To increase the accuracy of the data, it is possible to conduct regular audits and incorporate quality assurance protocols. Also, it is possible to reduce cybersecurity and integration risks by engaging with established AI vendors.

With these restraining forces under control, Tesco will be able to enhance the driving forces, which will make the proposed innovation viable, scalable, and viable in the long run.

Organisational Climate for Innovation and Likelihood of Implementation

The Tesco Plc has created a very enabling organisational climate concerning innovation which is fuelled by their insistence on continuous improvement, sustainability and digital transformation. Strategic vision of the company, which is called Serving customers a little better every day, is associated with the culture of flexibility and operational excellence (Ho, 2021). Tesco has shown a preference to invest in technological innovation in the years, including those related to self-service checkouts, contactless payment systems, and AI-based demand forecasting tools. Such a

culture of experimentation and improvement is a solid basis of implementation of the new idea, including the suggested system of AI-driven inventory management.

On theoretical, the Componential Model of Creativity proposed by Amabile states that innovation thrives when the employees are provided with resources, autonomy, and encouragement of the management (Mostaghimi and Behnamian, 2022). These qualities can be presented in Tesco management culture in terms of its internal innovation schemes, which research new technologies like machine learning and automation, like the Tesco Labs programme (Tidd and Bessant, 2018). The open communication framework and data-driven decision-making model of the organisation make employees suggest ideas to improve performance at the organisational level. Furthermore, the sustainability agenda of Tesco is strongly correlated with the goals of the suggested idea to minimise food waste and enhance efficiency, which are the primary concerns regarding its corporate responsibility plan.

Nevertheless, there are possible obstacles that can restrain the direct implementation of the innovation. Complex technological changes in large organisations such as Tesco tend to encounter bureaucracy and risk adverse attitude (Tidd and Bessant, 2018). The large-scale implementation can be delayed due to the budget limitations and competing investment priorities. However, the fact that the proposed system is highly aligned to the strategic objectives of Tesco makes its potential acceptance very likely.

Altogether, the innovative nature of the climate at Tesco, the sustainability that the company has devoted itself to, and the track record of enabling digital transformation make the company a good place to implement the AI-based idea of inventory management. When pilot testing is done properly along with involving the stakeholders, the management team will go a long way in supporting this initiative and making it successful.

Conclusion

This will include the provision of data pipelines of internal data, point-of-sale records and inventory logs and the provision of APIs to collect data off of social media and other sources available on the web (Dangelico, 2016). The second stage will take about half a year, and it will

imply the design and training of models in the areas of machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision.

The data scientists and the ML engineers will put up, train and test various models which will ultimately be pieced together into a single forecasting engine. Such a systematic approach is critical in the management of complicated AI development since it demands structures of investigations, education, and practise (Papanagnou et al., 2022). The third phase will last three months and will involve pilot programme being conducted using a limited number of products to determine the accuracy and usefulness of the system in a real environment. With that pilot, we will have a good foundation to build on through the feedback of the user. The fourth phase will involve implementation of the models on all product categories and they will be improved as they will be monitored and improved with the changes in data over time.

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