

Marketing Management LCMB 7001

**Creating Innovative Marketing Strategies
for Brand Awareness and Improving
Customer Journey**

MARKS &
SPENCER

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Submission Date: 15 May 2020

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Introduction

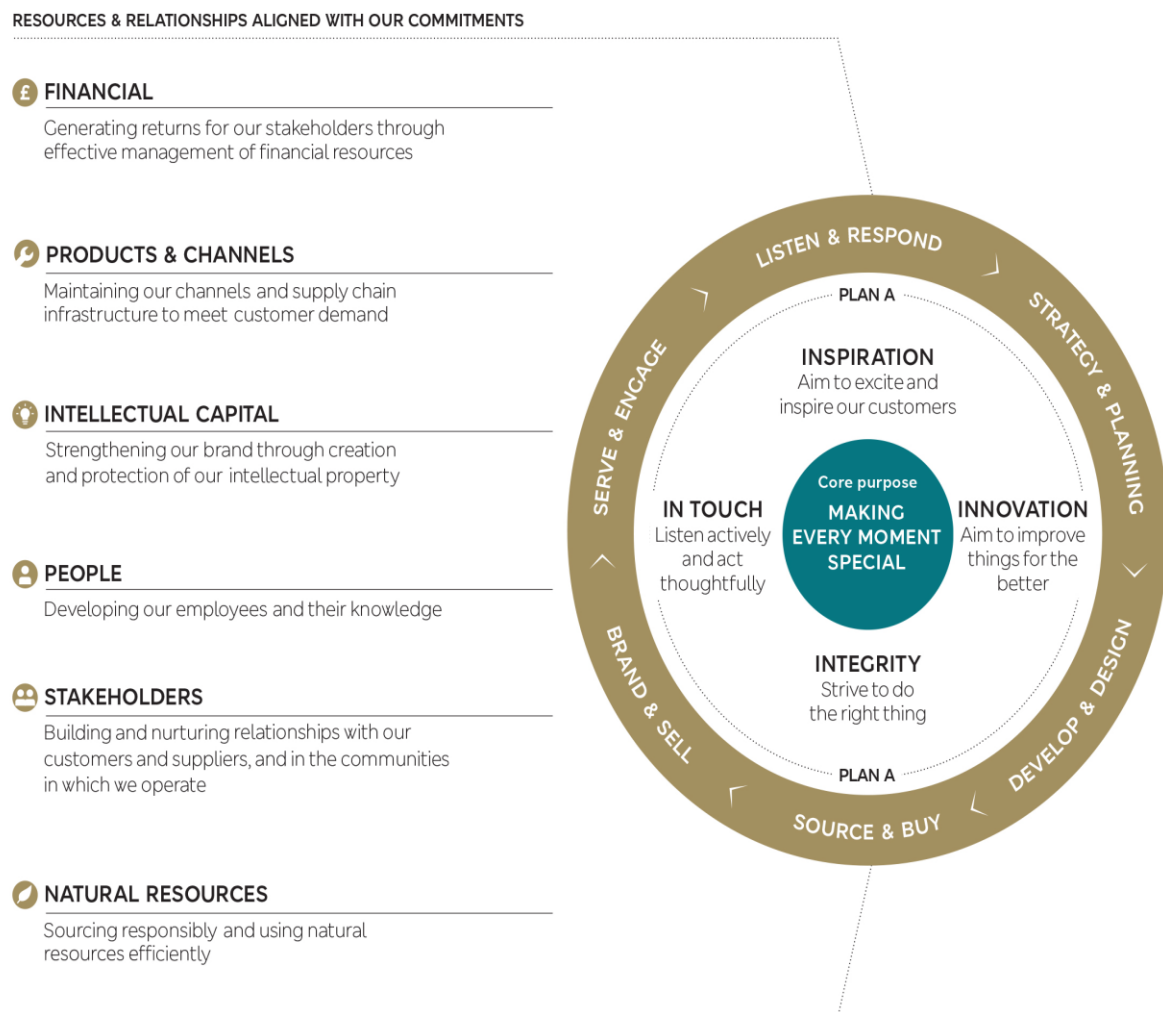
The management of marketing serves as the framework for the process of marketing. Marketing management is the main link between marketing and the societal level and the daily consumption by the general public (Burnett, 2010). One of the key focuses of marketing management is customer satisfaction. This report is a strategic marketing analysis on how M&S, apparel retail can create innovative marketing strategies for raising awareness of its brand and customer satisfaction. It discusses how M&S is managing and evaluating the customer journey through different communication channels in order to fulfil the current and future stakeholders' expectations.

Company Background

Marks and Spencer (M&S) Group plc is a major multinational retailer in Britain who manufactures and sells high-quality clothing, home and food products. It was established in 1884 by Michael Marks and Thomas Spencer in Leeds. M&S is a family of accountable businesses, including Food and Clothing & Home, using the M&S own-brand model, focused on delivering quality products at great value for money (see Appendix 1). Although primarily based in the UK, M&S sell into 57 countries from 1,487 stores, and 35 websites around the world with over 80,000 colleagues serving about 32 million customers. (Marksandspencer, 2020). M&S has its own clothing brands which target upper, and upper-middle-class customers and the most popular brands are Per Una, Autograph, Indigo, Classic Collection, Limited, Rosie, Blue Harbour, M&S Collection, M&S Maternity, Bridal, Petite Collection, and Denim (Marketline, 2020).

M&S believes in eco-friendly goods and fair-trade products, and they are still working profoundly towards achieving it (Bhasin, 2019). M&S became in 1988, the first UK Company to make a pre-tax profit of more than £ 1 billion, even though it eventually collapsed. Factors leading to this decline were several as using British suppliers for their goods, refusal to accept credit cards till 2001, the rising competition within the fashion market and the failure in the last decades of their out of style clothing brands. M&S is one of the UK's first premium brands and has survived recessions, PR nightmares, dry periods, but despite these hardships, they still retain a formidable presence on the UK high street (Hodgson, 2017). M&S has a unique business model which enables the company to create long-term value through the effective use of resources and relationships, as shown in Figure 1 (Markandspencer, 2020).

Figure 1: Marks and Spencer Business Model



(Source: Marksandspencer, 2020)

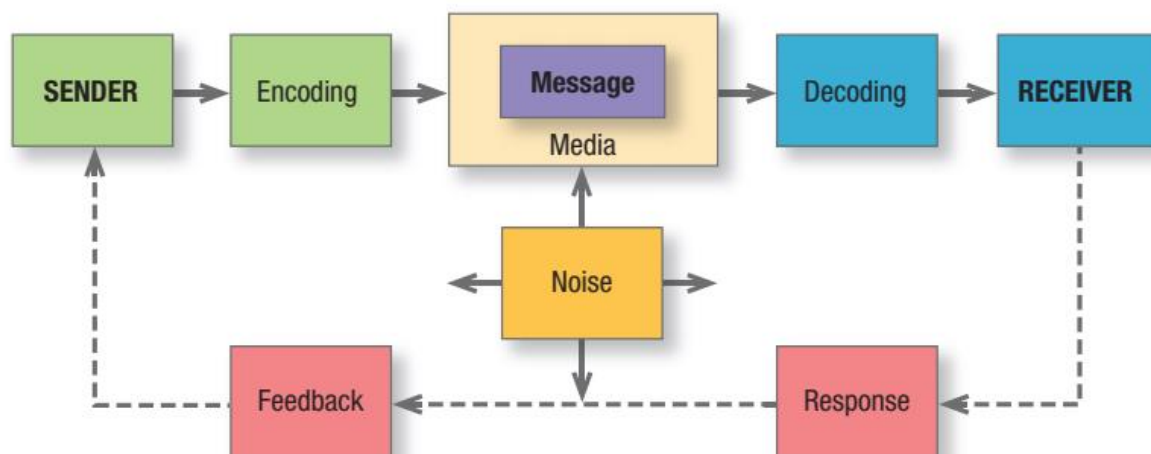
What Is Communication?

Communication is used by people or businesses to transmit their ideas, signs, and beliefs to interested individuals or audiences. The word “communication” is coming from Latin, where the word “COMMON”. In the association of a brand with symbolic, functional, experiential benefits and attitudes based on each person characteristics, culture and experiences with the brand, communication plays a significant role (Keller, 1993). Communication as a process is the platform on which relationships are built (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). In integrated marketing strategies, communication is in the form of a promotional message, and its main aim is to gain attention, to be understood, believed and remembered (Law, 2009).

An Effective Communication Model

Effective communication facilitates innovations in a business organisation by allowing employees and management to come up with innovative ideas that might further help in the overall development of the organisation. An effective communication process is shown in Figure 2, which is formed from different key elements. Kotler and Keller (2016) argue that senders must understand their audiences and what responses they want to get from them. They must transmit their messages through appropriate media that reach the target audience and create effective feedback channels to monitor the reactions. M&S uses different media to send messages to the target audience. For example, they use social media which allow them to get feedback from people and make sure the message successfully decoded by the audience.

Figure 2: An Effective Communication Process



(Source: Kotler and Keller, 2016)

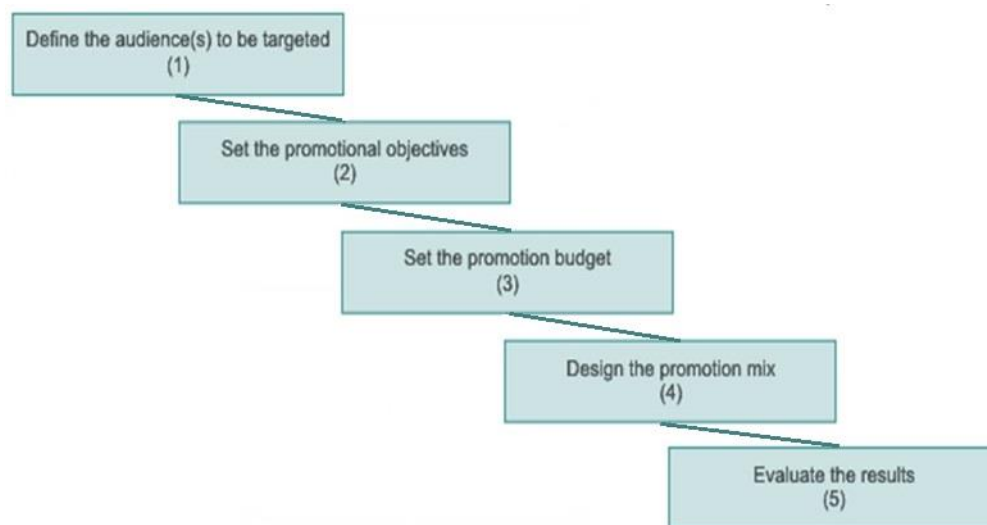
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

The IMC concept helps all types of communications and messages to be linked together in harmony. “Marketing communications activities must be integrated to deliver a consistent message and achieve the strategic positioning” (Kotler and Keller, 2016, P.585).

Integrated Marketing Communications Plan of M&S

An IMC plan is a tool which can accomplish the targets of a promotional (marketing) campaign, through a harmonized use of different promotional methods which are intended to complement each other. Figure 3, represents the steps of this process which will be applied in M&S case.

Figure 3: Effective Integrated Marketing Communication



1. Identify the target audience – where the company will set up an appropriate target audience like potential and current customers, influencers, specific group, groups or the general public. “The target audience is a critical influence on the communicator’s decisions about what to say, how, when, where, and to whom” (Kotler and Keller, 2012, P.586). A good example in M&S case is ‘Spend it Well’ campaign was the first time M&S has united both its food and clothing divisions under a single tagline and philosophy. Basically, the audience targeted in this case was the nation “M&S URGES THE NATION TO ‘SPEND IT WELL’ “(MarksandSpencer, 2017)

2. Set the promotional objectives - is the stage where marketers will establish one or more objectives: establish a need for a category, building brand awareness, building brand attitude or influence brand purchase intention (Kotler and Keller, 2012). “ This campaign introduces an inspirational tone of voice for the brand and focuses on attitude and empowerment” This particular campaign includes a significant focus on customer experience, on and offline and puts the customer in the centre of everything (MarksandSpencer, 2017). In this, the marketers target all the objectives which could be achieved.

3. Set the promotion budget - marketing department has a difficult decision to choose the desired or affordable budget model: affordable method, percentage of sale method, competitive parity, objective-and-task method (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The campaign was massive, so the most probable model chosen was objective-and-task.

4. Design the promotion mix - is the stage where marketers should choose from the main modes of communication “sales promotion, advertising, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, mobile marketing, online and social media marketing, direct and database marketing, and the sales force” (Kotler and Keller, 2016, P.595). The line was broadcast across all digital

channels, in-store and all M&S marketing communications moving forward, including M&S Bank and its rewards club, Sparks. Award-winning British actor Helen McCrory narrated the ad and was set against a new arrangement of David Bowie's classic Rebel Rebel. (MarksandSpencer, 2017). Based on the findings, it was evident that the campaign had the full range of the promotion mix elements.

5. Evaluate the results - at this stage, managers want to know the outcomes and revenues resulting from their communications investments. (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The M&S "Spend it well" campaign has caught the attention of those observing the trials and tribulations of the M&S's clothing lines. However, in their 2019 Annual Report, M&S states that in their clothing range, there is still reductions in buying power and stores that are confusing to navigate. The campaign was a success, but there is to improve regarding the fashion lines.

M&S's Promotional Strategies for Brand Awareness

The study of marketing communication also represents the study of promotions, where promotion objectives are to increase sales and market share, to build brand loyalty, brand awareness and product differentiation. In Marketing Management Persistent Communications, also known as promotions, are a part of the 7P's or 4P's of the marketing mix. The main components of the marketing communications mix (also known as promotion mix) consist of advertising, personal selling, public relations (PR) and publicity, sales promotions, sponsorship and direct marketing. In relation to marketing communication, there are few other essential tools digital marketing, push and pull strategy (Marketing Management, 2012).

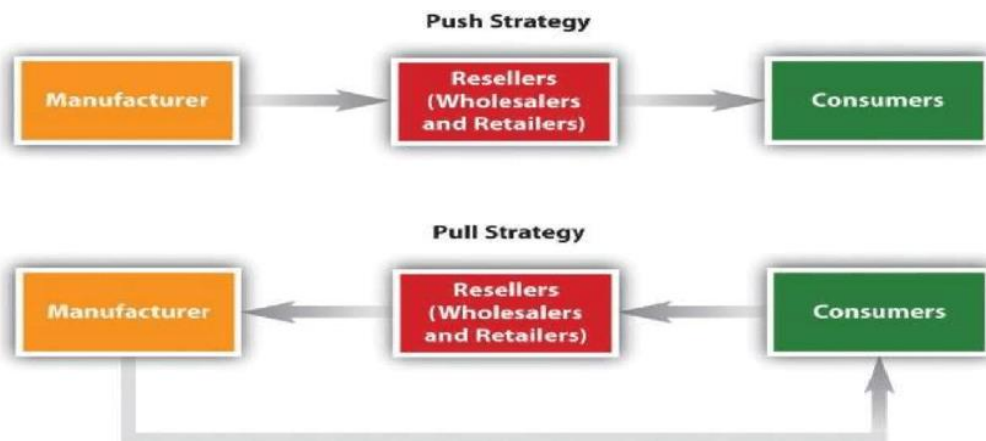
Advertising is a type of mass communication through various channels to promote services, products and ideas, etc. M&S uses different advertising techniques, especially TV ads, celebrity endorsement and even their distribution lorries. Sales Promotions is a marketing tool that utilizes a collection of incentive techniques to structure sales-related campaigns targeted to clients, and it is used for a new product, to increase the sale or clear out a line of product. In the case of M&S, known promotions are Digital Marketing Strategy, In-store strategy, Sparks Rewards strategy (Bhasin, 2019). Personal selling is a face-to-face paid personal communication, and its purpose is to inform and convince potential clients and current customers to purchase products or services. It involves specific communication directed at one or several persons. M&S is not known for personal selling as the customers can browse the stores themselves. However, they have a bra fitting service where bra adviser advice the customer and this is a form of personal selling.

Public relations is a vast set of communication activities used to create and maintain positive relationships with shareholders, employees, potential investors, suppliers, government agencies, financial institutions, media etc. These are Annual reports, sponsorships, various programmes, brochures which are beneficial for the community. M&S didn't have any planned PR; however, they have negative unplanned PR, mainly to do with their crumbling, declining image of their fashion lines. They use celebrities' endorsements to attract the targeted audience. Sponsorship is a type of public relations and progressively popular, particularly with big businesses. M&S sponsored different events to change its image. To attract the younger audience, they sponsorship "New Generation" award for the young designer at London Fashion Week. Publicity is also a mean of public relations. The media space or the time It is not paid for, and it is non-personal mass communication.

Direct marketing is a way of vending products to customers by which companies communicate directly with target clients to obtain a response. M&S uses direct marketing through emails. When a customer sign up to their email subscription, receives an email with promotions and events. This is designed to encourage the brand further. Digital Marketing is the part of marketing that utilises the internet and online-based digital technologies. According to Vizard (2019), the company declared "our search engine optimization is not good enough". In 2019 starting in March, M&S began to a 26 weeks plan and invested £88.9m in digital marketing to help "campaigns relevant to the family customer and spend in digital channels". In 2013, the Marks & Spencer brand finally updated a new website, freeing itself of the Amazon-based eCommerce platform it had operated within beforehand, moving into a new period of digital growth and innovation (Hodgson, 2017).

Push and Pull Strategy - Pull strategy is the case where the communications are sent through direct channels to consumers to develop strong consumer demand for the product or service. In the push strategy, the marketer promotes the product only to the next institution down the marketing channel. Push strategy is applicable when brand loyalty is low, but consumers know about brand benefits, and they purchase in-store. Figure 4 shows the process in each of these strategies. In the case of M&S fashion lines, push strategy is applied through the in-store discounts and pull strategy was applied with their Denim Campaign (Marksandspencer, 2019).

Figure 4: Push and Pull Strategy



(Source: Reasearchgate, 2020)

M&S use frameworks like public relations, advertising sales promotion, in order to maintain brand visibility. Their recent ad campaigns are everywhere displayed on print and visual media such as magazines, newspapers and TV. They have also realized the importance of social media platforms, and they created Twitter page, Facebook and Instagram page, which have millions of followers (Hodgson, 2017). At the beginning of October 2019 “M&S is relaunching Per Una with a new campaign and logo but has removed its Classics sub-brand in an effort to simplify its clothing portfolio”(Hammet, 2019). Also, in October 2019 “M&S was launching a standalone casual menswear campaign focused on the “improved fit” of its new season outerwear and knitwear” (Barker, 2019). In 2018 M&S launched their ‘most digital campaign’ that celebrates and shares with customers the Must-Have wardrobe essentials, following the restructure of their marketing function. M&S is using digital channels to help achieve their target to move a third of their sales online and growing customer share.

What Is Branding and Brand Equity?

A brand is the most valuable intangible asset of a company, where a brand could be defined as a name that is given to a specific product or service or a range of these (Kotler *et al.*, 2009). “Branding is the process of endowing products and services with the power of a brand” (Kotler and Keller, 2016, P. 323). Brand equity could be defined as the added value allocated to products and services with consumers. The maker of a product is identified through brands and allow consumers to dedicate the responsibility for its performance to its maker or distributor. Brands perform a number of functions for both clients and firms. In return for customer loyalty, the firm promises to reliably deliver an anticipated positive experience and set of desirable benefits with its products and services. A brand also offers the firm legal

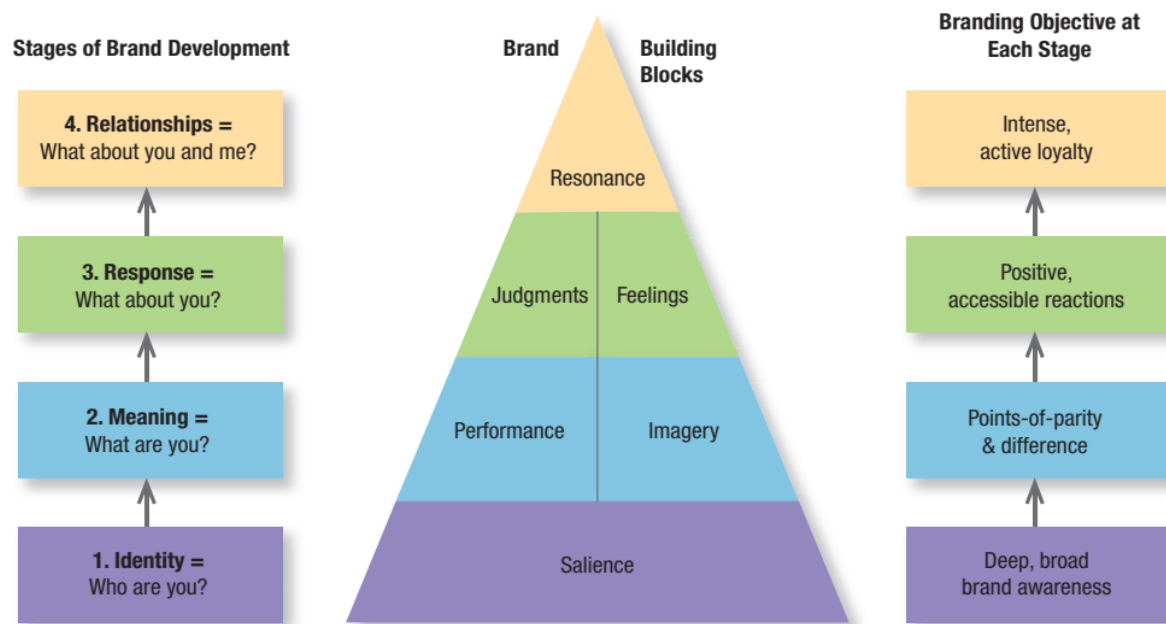
protection for exclusive features of the product and are protected through patents (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

M&S could also be defined as a private-label brand retailer. A private-label brand (also called a house, store, or distributor brand) is a brand that is developed by the wholesalers and retailers. M&S, The Body Shop, Bennetton carry particularly own-brand merchandise. In Europe and Canada, store brands account for around 40 per cent of the sold items. In Britain, large chains like M&S, John Lewis, The Body Shop sell is store-label goods (Kotler and Keller, 2016). There is a private label threat where other brand marketers are trying to stay steps ahead of the store brands by investing significantly to bring out new brands, line extensions, features and qualities improvements. Regarding the brand strength retailers like New Look or H&M are really unlikely to achieve M&S brand strength in the same way as M&S will never gain designer label and brand strength like Versace or Prada.

M&S's Brand Equity Model

Based on Kotler and Keller 2016 the brand equity model also known as brand resonance model (see Figure 5) considers that brand building steps are starting from bottom to top by ensuring clients identify the brand and relate it to a specific type of product (step 1), strongly establishing the brand meaning in customers' minds through different methods and not through product price (step 2), obtaining customer responses regarding brand-related feedbacks (step 3) and transforming customers responses into a relationship with the brand like brand loyalty (step 4). In an effort to connect their dots between digital marketing and it's merchandising and the bid to revive their troubled clothing arm, M&S invested in its first-ever stand-alone TV ad for its biggest product category, denim, which run for the whole month of February 2020. It is well known the fact the retailer sells around 15 pairs of jeans every minute and is actually the market leader for womenswear denim and ranks fourth in engine searches (The Drum, 2020). So basically, M&S is using one of their most loved products to create brand awareness and loyalty of their whole fashion range, for their current and future customers. The campaign along with a TV ad, run in-store, on social, online and OOH and features Donna Summer's classic I Feel Love to boost awareness and 97% of the targeted audience was estimated to see it 13 on average (The Drum, 2020).

Figure 5: Brand Resonance Pyramid

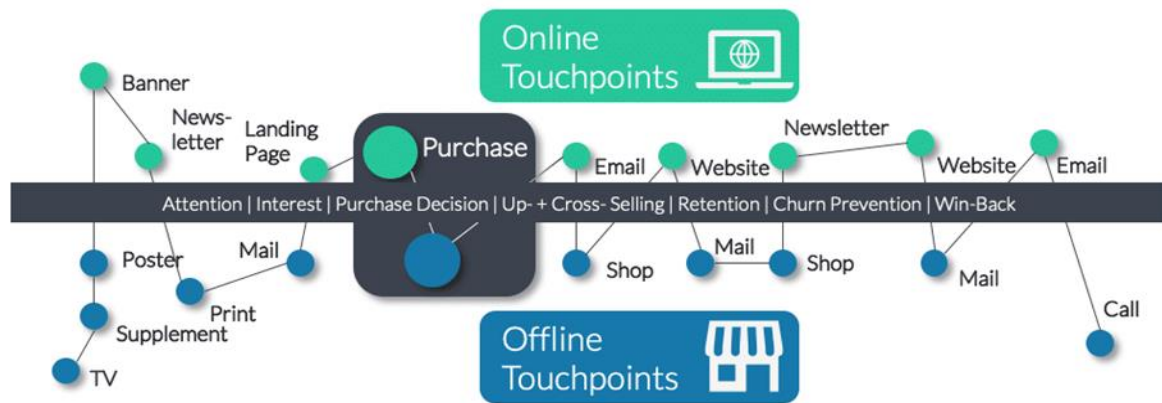


(Source: Kotler and Keller, 2016)

What Are the Customer Journey and Customer Touchpoints?

Customer Journeys is the step by step description of the experiences and the interactions that a customer goes through with a firm or its products or services (Transformation, 2019). End to end customer journey includes everything “that happens before, during, and after the experience of a product or services” as per Maechler *et al.* (2016). The journeys can vary in lengths and purpose and usually spread over multiple channels and touchpoints. Customer journeys are associated with different touchpoints. Touchpoints are an integral part of communications strategies and are the interaction points of the customer journey (Tractionwise, 2020). Due to advanced technology, M&S allows its customers to use both online and offline touchpoints. Figure 6 shows the different types of online and offline touchpoints. Some of the online touchpoints of the M&S include interacting with the ads, website visit, product view, emails, online purchase etc. Thus, off-line touchpoints might include interacting with the sales assistants, making enquiries about price, visit and browsing physical store, brand experience, in-store discounts and others as seen in the Customer Journey Map. Based on a case study made by Retail Technology (2018), M&S transformed its service and increased revenue by leveraging every touchpoint of the consumer. All channels are connected: parcels, delivery, voice, email, social media, SMS, webchat, and web engagement.

Figure 6: Online and Offline Touchpoints



(Source: Tractionwise, 2020)

M&S's Customer Journey Map

According to Maechler et al., (2016), customer journeys associated with many things, which happen before, during, and after the experience of a good or service by the end-user. Figure 7 shows the M&S's customer journey map.

Figure 7: M&S's Customer Journey Map

PROJECT M&S MAP Copy of Customer journey Marks & Spencer								
	AWARENESS		CONSIDERATION		DECISION		SERVICE	
	Awareness	Visit physical store	Browse in store	Choose and try on clothes	Purchase or order in store	Use & customer service	Customer Service	Loyalty and Advocacy
CUSTOMER ACTIVITIES	TV ads, retailer websites, hear from friends, reads from social media, marketing campaign	Search for the closest store Get in the car, bus, train etc Travel Look for store Walk to store	Browse sections in the store Ask sales assistant for help Search through shelves and racks Look for displays and mannequins Look for in store offers	Take items size and color desired Carry them until finished browsing Find changing room, wait in line Try on, change back	Review items in hand Review cost and decide Go to checkout counter Order unavailable sizes/colors wanted Wait in the line and pay	Take the product home Enjoy the purchases	Contact customer services if needed	Revisit store and buy again Collecting points using Sparks rewards Deciding to look for a similar brand/item Share experience Give low to negative feedback for the product & Give positive feedback for customer services
CUSTOMER GOALS	To purchase a fashionable and good quality product	Where is the closest store? Will the store be busy? What is the best time to go?	Which item look more interesting and trendy? Speaking with a sales assistant Choice not to talk with a sales assistant Like or dislike the item/material	Which size? More than one item? How it looks and fits To be allowed more items in the changing room Does item matches other own clothing?	Have the right and best quality clothing Best deal for a particular item	To look and feel good about themselves and item purchased	Get help if any problems with the items Request for refund or exchange	Repeat a good customer experience Find another in brand brand as not so happy with the styles Buy items in the seasonal sales Share feelings on social media & with others
TOUCHPOINTS	Word of mouth, traditional media, TV campaigns, browsing online, PR, website	Customers can experience the brand Can shop with family and friends Have quickly and easy access to customer support	Customer can touch and feel the product Seeing the clothing physically can convince customer to make a purchase	Customers can try as many items they want Interaction with sales assistants and others	Checkout desk In store rewards	Clothing products Customer support	Phone Email In store approach online chat	Review pages Cues low or neutral feedback for product and positive feedback for the customer service Social media Word of mouth
EXPERIENCE								
BUSINESS GOAL	Increase awareness and interest increase online and in store sales	Increase number of store visitors	Increase awareness about the in store clothing brands increase number of store visitors	Increase in store sales	Improve in store customer experience Increase awareness about Sparks reward system for new customers	Have more trendy items to match customer expectations	Increase customer service satisfaction Retain existing clients	Offer more discounts to loyal customers through Sparks Rewards Retain existing clients Attract a younger audience Turn customers into brand ambassadors Turn negative experience into positive
PAIN POINTS	Unsuccessful marketing campaigns in the past	Customers don't always have time to travel to a physical store	Not all the items are in line with the latest fashion style Fashionable items out of stock	Less selection available sometimes in stores Some items not in line with the new trend in fashion	Waiting lines	The cost and the 'non trendy' look of the product doesn't always match customer expectation	Customer service waiting lines in store	Others competitors have similar products at lower prices New and trendy apparel brands appear every year It is unlikely that this customer will recommend the fashion
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	Create new and attractive marketing campaigns and content both offline and online	Provide an easier way for customers to browse digitally (catalogues, Argos) improve search engine on website	Provide an easier way for customers to browse digitally (catalogues, Argos) improve search engine on website	Install 'press' buttons for service Order larger amount of popular items in store	Improve check out points by introducing more self check out points	Redefine the M&S clothing brands Manufacture new stylish clothing lines	Reorganize customer services in stores to minimize waiting times	Change clothing lines Make attractive marketing campaigns Offer discounts for 'retired' fashion lines increase awareness for the brand on digital channels improve online sales

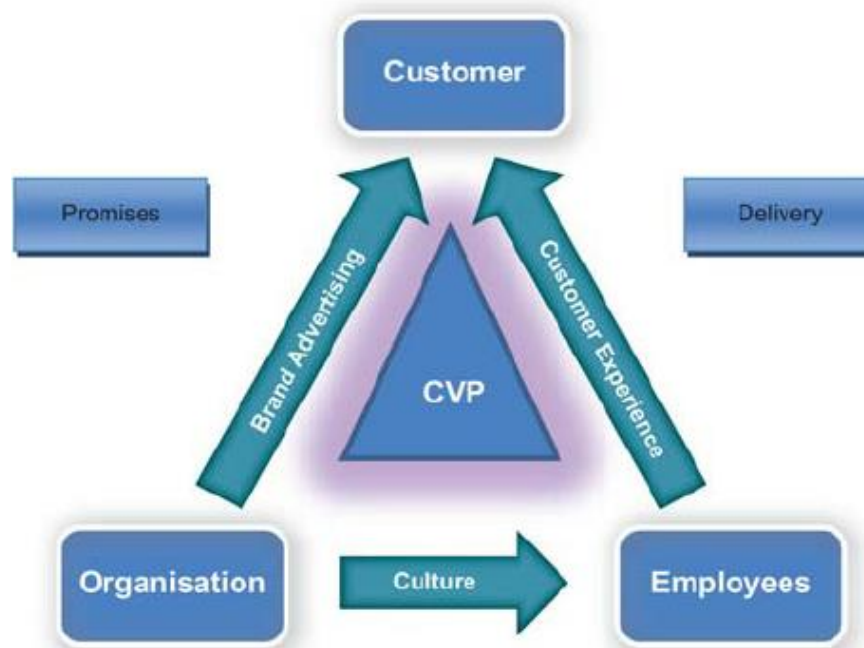
The customer end to end journey has several stages, each with their substages. This customer journey map was adapted to fit the model for an instore experience at Marks at Spencer. Awareness is the stage where the customers become acquainted with the brand through ads, TV campaigns and word of mouth. Consideration is the moment when the consumer realises that they need to be met, and he is actively considering whether to buy the advertised item. Consideration for this case has the following substages: visit the physical store, browse in-store, choose and try on products. The decision is the moment when the client makes the acquisition. Service is the stage where the customer uses the product, sometimes seeking advice from seller, usually the Customer Services Department. Loyalty and Advocacy, “the customer, spreads the word about the product – whether their opinion is positive or negative”. At this stage, customers could become the potential advocates of the brand (Exchange, 2019). The main advantages of creating a customer journey are to get more valuable insights, understand customers’ expectations and predict and influence their behaviour. A good customer is based on a persona, characters who are trying to achieve something specific by interacting with your business (Mallia, 2017). Take for example Mirela, 38, single, general manager of a consulting business, who is a loyal M&S customer for both food and clothing products, but in the last few years all she can buy from M&S are jumpers and black cardigans which she uses for office purposes, and she thinks that “Per Una is the heroin of middle-aged women's clothing”(The Guardian, 2013). She also travels a lot within London, so she has access to several M&S outlets, uses social media, blogs, and mobile apps. Personality is extrovert, intuitive, archetype: advocate. She enjoys M&S customer services, she connects with most of the touchpoints, but at the end of her customer journey, the conclusion is that Mirela got the product, but she wasn’t entirely happy with her customer experience. Their clothing range is out of fashion and turns again to other similar in trend brands like Next, Zara. Emoji marketing is rapidly becoming as an actual term in digital marketing. (Campaignmonitor, 2019). Following this persona interaction and emotions during her journey is noted that her emotions start changing to negative from the item choosing decision.

M&S’s Total Engagement Model

The basis of the total engagement model is formed by the successful alignment of the following elements: Customer Value Proposition (CVP), brand, culture and customer experience. The Total Engagement Model requires a complete picture of what a company does in order to be successfully implemented. Figure 8 shows a simple total engagement model. In M&S case, this model could be used successfully as it will help recover a damaged clothing brand from being

the worst to being the best and will bring stakeholders satisfaction by the harmonious alignment of its elements.

Figure 8: Total Engagement Model



(Source: Researchgate, 2020)

Stakeholders

The current stakeholders of a company typically consist of managers, employees, shareholders, and other individuals. The future stakeholders of the organisation are individuals such as government, consumers the media houses, general public etc., The current stakeholders are related with the company from the initial stages, and they are directly involved in providing increasing production, finances and other departments of M&S. These people have a direct stake in the organisation and expect profit or dividend from the operations that are being managed. Future stakeholders expect accountability from M&S at different stages of the company life cycle. Consumers desire that they get a high-level quality product that will help them obtain higher margins of usefulness. M&S management has the responsibility to provide high-quality customer service and good products or services (Johnson-Cramer *et al.*, 2017).

Conclusion

M&S is a brand who did not advertise much, either improved their fashion range as being a long-time established name on the UK market they thought the clothing from their selves would sell themselves. It is only recently they started massive marketing campaigns to show off high

profiles wearing their clothes and showing their fashion lines. In their faltering period also did not advertise and they lost much from their spark but based on the above findings and analysis M&S through these new campaigns with contents online and offline, hopes to be in the spotlight of British Fashion once again.

An interesting, innovative strategy to increase brand awareness and loyalty would be the use of new or already sponsored influencers and celebrities wearing M&S products at different events and post the pictures on digital channels like Instagram and Twitter. These hugely popular social media platforms will help M&S to interact more with customers also by publishing news, future proposed clothing range and by responding to all media mentions about the brand positive or negative. Ultimately some of the users or influencers would become brand advocates. By using several marketing frameworks applied to M&S apparel retail arm in this report, a conclusion would be that M&S started to use successfully all the important tools to improve customer journey experience, touchpoints and revive the name of the brand.

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Appendix 1: Marks and Spencer: The Group map



(Source: Marksandspencer, 2019)