

Marketing Management LCMB7001

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Explanation of Communication	2
Explanation of IMC “Integrated Marketing Communication”	3
Barlo’s S-M-C-R Model	4
Different promotional strategies that can be implemented by Unilever for increasing brand awareness	5
Aaker’s Brand Equity model	8
Branding and brand equity	9
Customer touch points	10
Total customer engagement model	11
Customer journey Map and Stages in customer journey	12
Conclusion	15
References.....	16

Introduction

Communication is a vital factor for enhancing the marketing of a business and here the purpose is to analyze the marketing communication of Unilever. The concerned company has set its strategy by focusing on a sustainable approach (Unilever, 2023). This is a British-Dutch multinational company named among the top brands for consumer goods like cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, cleaning agents, breakfast cereals, and many more. The paper aims to emphasise the marketing communication of Unilever and the way it can attract more customers by eradicating its issues, like poor brand awareness in future. Communication model is shown, along with brand equity model, and getting insights into its customer touch point is shown in this paper. Additionally, customer journey map is carved out for understanding different factors that influence customers. Finally, the focus is made on meeting future and current expectations of customers.

Explanation of Communication

The purpose of marketing of any company is to be known among the target audience and influence them before decision-making regarding any product purchase. Therefore, the purpose of marketing indicates that communication is a key factor for the marketing department of any company. In traditional advertising methods or social media marketing, in the case of direct marketing of presentation, communication is very important to understand and use by the marketing team to influence consumers' decisions (Krizanova *et al.* 2019). Communication is not only important to target the audience, but also this is very necessary for the internal stakeholders like employees, and suppliers for the transmission of effective information. Positive and good communication between management and employees is beneficial for the development of a good workforce in the company. Unilever uses different communication channels at a time (Unilever, 2023a).



Figure 1: Unilever

(Source: Unilever, 2023a)

The company mainly prefers leaflets, e-mails, careline, and websites to communicate directly with the consumers and solve their queries. Unilever declares that its focus is to develop transparent communication through which trust and responsible business can be developed (Unilever, 2023a). The company thinks through communication they can convey and ensure the quality, and safety of the products with proper information. Besides this, the company tries to be socially responsible as they challenge the stereotypical belief of beauty through Dove's marketing content (Unilever, 2023a). Through the campaign "Dirt is good", the company wants to send a message to society that getting dirty is a natural phenomenon in the journey of growing up a child.

Explanation of IMC “Integrated Marketing Communication”

Integrated Marketing Communication or IMC is approached by Philip Kotler, an American marketing expert that indicates that marketing communication should be integrated with business strategies. The purpose is to coordinate all available communication channels to reach the target audience with a clearer and more consistent message. IMC tends to follow consumer trends and their buying behaviour before communication so that the communication becomes more effective and develops stronger bonds between consumers and the company (MEHA *et al.* 2022). In the case of Unilever, the company prefers to use different communication channels simultaneously (Unilever, 2023a). On the other hand, IMC insists to merge different tools of marketing communication to work together that can increase the impact on the target audience. IMC combines direct marketing, digital marketing, content creation, and PR development according to project management, and business development management teams. Therefore, through IMC consumers get informed before the launching of any new product or availability of

any offers automatically. The consumers can feel included in the business operation as they received updated information from time to time (Pisicchio and Toaldo, 2021). Thus, this business strategy helps to influence the buying decision of the consumers and enhance the company's reputation in the market.

Barlo's S-M-C-R Model

Barlo's S-M-C-R model is a communication model that aids in providing a detailed account of different elements that affects the message that is communicated. Based on the viewpoint of Muyanga and Phiri (2020), Barlo's S-M-C-R model highlights the first component of communication, which is the source. The elements of this component highlight the communication skills of the sender, their culture and their attitude.

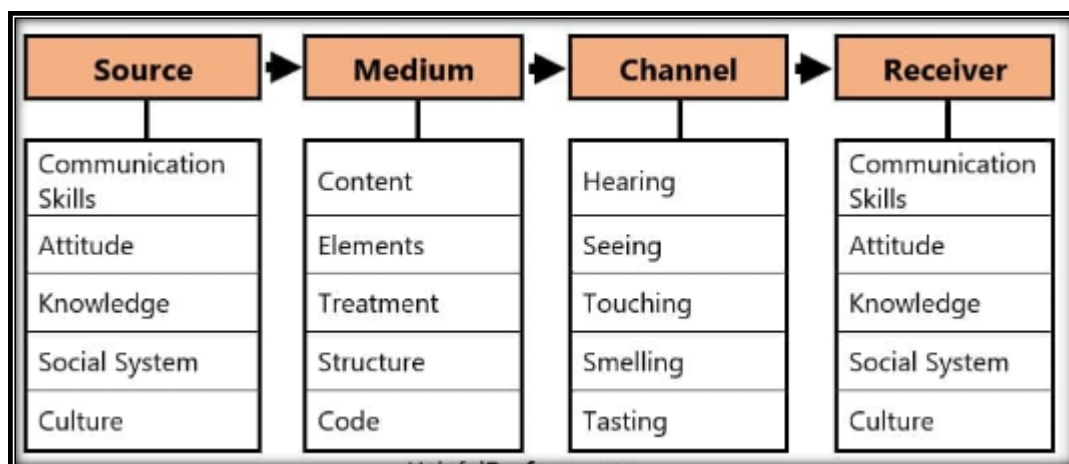


Figure 2: Barlo's S-M-C-R Model

(Source: Maneerutt, 2021)

Considering the first element (source), the communication skill of the employees of Unilever is emphasized. Their knowledge regarding the message that needs to be transmitted to their customers enables them to keep the meaning clear. It even helps the receiver to understand what is being told and develop a connection with the brand. Rubino *et al.* (2022) mentioned that the second component of the mentioned model is the medium, which highlights the element; the message, which is required to be transmitted. In the current context, this component can be applied in the case of Unilever, where the employees can focus on creating engaging content for the message.

The structure of the message needs to be clear so that the receiver (customer) can easily understand it. Muyanga and Phiri (2020) noted that the channel is the third component of the concerned model, which includes elements such as the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching. In this case, Barlo's model would enable Unilever's employees to use mediums, like seeing, and hearing. The feedback of the customers on social posts, and listening to the queries or complaints of the customers would enable the employees of Unilever to frame its message accordingly. Finally, the message would be delivered to its customers using the mentioned medium. Additionally, Maneerutt (2021) mentioned that the last component of Barlo's S-M-C-R model is the receiver, which has elements, like knowledge, culture, and attitude. These elements of the customers enable them to receive the message delivered by the employees either positively or negatively. Hence, this model stands useful here for improving communication of Unilever and bridging the communication gap between the sender (employees) and the receiver (customers). It can even make them involved in a meaningful conversation, besides enhancing its brand awareness.

Different promotional strategies that can be implemented by Unilever for increasing brand awareness

Promotional strategies are considered as the plan for creating as well as increasing product demand. Liao *et al.* (2021) commented that promotional strategy highlights the tactics that are used for raising awareness regarding the product and even make the viewer develop an interest in purchasing from it. In the present case, promotional strategies would be beneficial for Unilever to sustain the high competition in the market and even enable the company to communicate a meaningful message regarding its brand to the customers. Various promotional strategies that can be used by the concerned company are listed below:

Direct Marketing

The promotional strategy (direct marketing) enables an organisation to reach out to specific people or other companies for informing them regarding its new product, and upcoming sales. According to Ładyżyński *et al.* (2019), direct marketing forms include direct mail, flyers, phone calls, and e-mails. In the case of Unilever, direct marketing can be used by the company by using tools like e-mails, and flyers. Targeted e-mail campaigns can even be used by Unilever for

reaching easily to its customers and quickly delivering its brand message to them. This promotional strategy is selected as it is an effective and fast method for promoting the product as well as the service.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is referred to as short-term initiatives for increasing product sales and demand. Abolghasemi *et al.* (2020) stated that different sales promotional tools include coupons, giveaways, discounts, programs of loyalty rewards. Unilever can use a sales promotion strategy for announcing its new product, selling the remaining inventory of its old products and even engaging its new customers. As per this strategy, Unilever can include attractive coupons and discounts for attracting the sights of its customers. This would enable Unilever to enhance its popularity due to enhancement in the demand for its product and its competitive pricing strategy.

Digital marketing

Digital marketing includes web or online advertising, like SEO "Search Engine Optimisation," affiliate marketing, social media marketing. As per the opinion of Saura (2021), companies implementing the digital marketing strategy establish a connection with a wide range of customers. Implementing this strategy would enable Unilever to improve its performance on social media, such as Facebook, and Instagram. In addition to this, Unilever can develop ads on YouTube or pop-ups that customers can see while browsing the website. Social media marketing can be especially focused on by Unilever as 4.26 billion people make use of social media worldwide, according to the record of 2021, and is expected to increase by 6 billion by 2027 (Statista, 2023). Thus, focusing on constantly updating social media posts would enable the company to boost its awareness level.

Personal Selling

The strategy of personal selling includes person-to-person communication. Blessing and Natter (2019) stated that personal selling enables the organisation to directly contact the customers over phone or face-to-face. Unilever can focus on personal selling strategy for forming a meaningful relationship with its clients or customers. Developing a healthy relationship with the customers would aid Unilever to bit its challenge of enormous competition and even boosts its sales rate. Moreover, customers would know more about its products, which would thereby help in raising brand awareness and managing its organisational reputation.

General Advertising

Unilever can focus on mass media advertising of their products for which newspapers can be utilised (Influenced by Hackley and Hackley, 2021). Apart from this, magazines, television, and radio channels can be used for promotion. A certain amount of money can be given by the company to the promotional channels for this reason and based on it; the product promotion can be developed. It may give brand recognition to the company and quickly, it can be reached the customers (Lee and Kim, 2020). Based on this promotional strategy, Unilever can certainly encourage the existing as well as new users towards their new services by which purchasing decisions can be met. If the customers' awareness is increased hugely, the new product launching can be easier for the organisational team.

Public relations (PR)

On the other hand, the marketing team of Unilever can depend on the PR strategy to raise customers' awareness. As per the opinions of Bakir *et al.* (2019), PR is mainly the preservation of a company's public image and when an organisation develops the PR, it practically wants to influence the audiences. Therefore, Unilever needs to arrange PR campaigns and provide publicity stunts within which social media presence can also be broadened. While providing the advertisements of Dove or Rexona, they have to create the stunts through their promotions, which can easily influence customers. This method can also support the organisation to protect its reputation because constant promotion in this way can help the consumers to focus on their products constantly (Saura, 2021). While implementing the promotional process, the company can also focus on the investments properly and the insurance of the models that are hired for the promotions. Without such focus, any type of accident can take a place while providing promotions and it can negatively influence the customers toward the brand. Hence, information management is possible for Unilever through this strategy.

Aaker's Brand Equity model



Figure 3: Aaker Model

(Source: Prachaseree *et al.* 2022)

Aaker has identified brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association, and others as important components that have the power to control brand equity (Prachaseree *et al.* 2022). The components have been discussed below:

Brand awareness: It predicts the visibility or familiarity of the brand in a particular community that helps in enhancing revenue.

Brand loyalty: Measurement of consumer support towards the brand can be considered brand loyalty.

Perceived quality: A consumer's understanding of the products and services of a company where a consumer may assume that product and services of the brand are reliable and authentic which leads to repetitive buying of the products.

Brand associations: Customers often gather company information from advertising and others that make these consumers measure the brand.

Proprietary assets: Intangible assets of a brand such as trademarks, "intellectual property rights", patents, and others add value to the company and are considered by consumers as well (Prachaseree *et al.* 2022).

Dove has attained a turnover of around €5 billion and therefore, has been supporting renovation of various core products that include "Dove Care & Protect" in around 50 countries (Unilever,

2021). Consumers have developed brand loyalty towards Dove as measured through turnover whereas the consumers have achieved a perceived quality through its clinically proven product and service. However, Unilever has to manage brand awareness of Lifebuoy which has witnessed a decline in sales during the time of the pandemic through hand washing campaigns that have contributed towards increasing the brand power of Unilever towards this brand.

	€ million 2020	€ million 2019
Goodwill and intangible assets	34,941	31,029
Other non-current assets	16,561	17,347
Current assets	16,157	16,430
Total assets	67,659	64,806
Current liabilities	20,592	20,978
Non-current liabilities	29,412	29,942
Total liabilities	50,004	50,920
Shareholders' equity	15,266	13,192
Non-controlling interest	2,389	694
Total equity	17,655	13,886
Total liabilities and equity	67,659	64,806

Figure 4: Proprietary assets of Unilever

(Source: Unilever, 2020)

Perceived quality of consumers towards Lifebuoy indicates that consumers have understood the brand as unhygienic, unlike perceived quality of Dove. Brand associations reflecting company information gained by the consumers have affected sales of Lifebuoy negatively and Dove positively. Goodwill and also intangible assets have increased from €31029 million in 2019 to €34941 million in 2020 which also adds competitive advantage to the company through its personal care, hygiene, and other brands (Unilever, 2020). These components are effective for adding value to the brand and its products and services.

Branding and brand equity

Branding is described as a specific process of creating a brand identity to make the consumers and audience identify the brand in the competitive market (Parris and Guzman, 2023). Company logo, mission, and visual design make the target audience identify the brand among every brand in the competitive market. In stark contrast, brand equity is defined as the value that is associated with a brand evaluated through the perception of the consumer according to its quality and also desirability of the brand (Unilever, 2023). Unilever is a brand that possesses a purpose where

there are 400 brands under Unilever out of which around 28 brands such as Knorr, Persil, Dove, Lipton, and others have undertaken certain actions associated with people and the planet (Unilever, 2019). Due to such actions by these brands, these brands have witnessed a growth of 69% in 2019. These brands have been identified as "sustainable Living brands".

Brand identity of Unilever has been enhanced with positive changes that these brands have brought towards both people and planet which has grown from 47% in 2017 to 69% in 2018 and has eventually boosted growth by around 75% (Unilever, 2019). Target audiences and consumers have been recognising positive changes brought through these specific brands to improve the brand identity of Unilever as a whole. Brand equity can be identified with commercial value that consumers feel for the brand by identifying a specific product and service equivalent to the brand (Gul *et al.* 2021). Two-thirds of the organisational customers have been selected for the product and service of the sustainable brand with social issues while 90% of generation Z have decided to switch to products and services of the brands with a cause. For example, Dove has helped around 35 million of those young people to provide self-esteem education since around 2005 (Unilever, 2019). Therefore, consumers have been buying Dove through identifying this social cause.

Customer touch points

Marketing strategies of the company are always in the form of adoption of marketing campaigns to ensure brand attractiveness and improve brand power of the brands in the competitive market. Customer touch points can be defined as the brand's points associated with customer contact from the phase of starting to its end (Zollo *et al.* 2020). Thus, customer touch points such as sanitation, hygiene, safety, security, and others are required to be more associated with personal and beauty care products to improve brand. For example, Unilever has launched the soap bars and body washes of Lux through promoting its superior benefits such as promoting long-lasting fragrance (Unilever, 2021). However, it is a soap that needs to be hygienic as well to further consider its customer touch point therefore; this attribute of Lux has somehow been ignored by the company while launching its bars and washes.

Rexona has launched core deodorant products ensuring 72-hour protection from sweat and also body odour however, touch points such as safety, hygiene and others of the deodorant products

have not been considered, unlike Lifebuoy. Lifebuoy's 2020 encompass "Hand Hygiene Wipes", "Hand Sanitiser Gel", "Hand Sanitiser Spray", and others therefore; the brand's campaign has promoted hygiene rather than fragrance and other aspects to boost sales in the UK (Unilever, 2020). However, the promotional strategy of Lifebuoy is enhanced as Unilever is promoting an important message describing the significance of hand washing through soaps and the number of times it needs to be performed by students in around 4000 schools (Unilever, 2020). Promotional strategy of Dove also proves that products and services as clinically proven similar to strengthening the promotional brand strategy of Lifebuoy as compared with Rexona and Lux.

Total customer engagement model

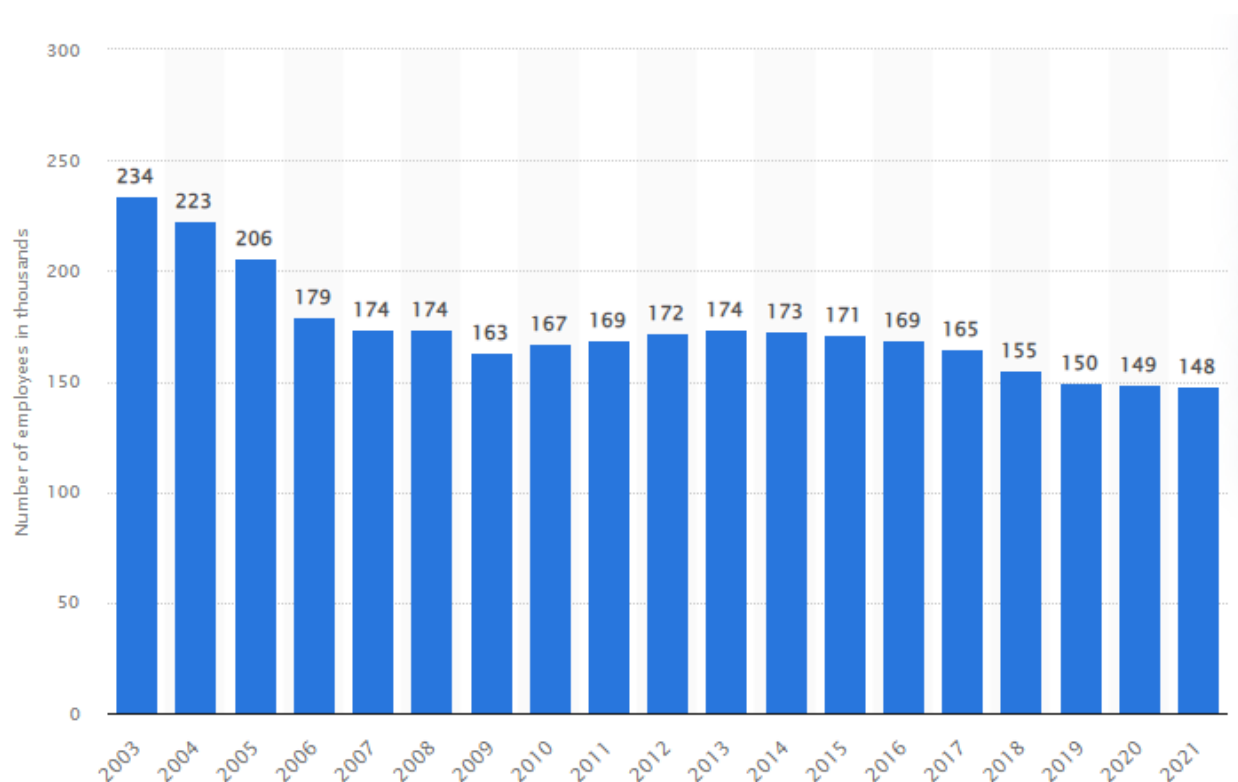


Figure 5: Decrease in employee numbers in 2021

(Source: Statista, 2023)

This model adds value proposition to the brands where the factor of customer value proposition has been revolving around ensuring sanitation and hygiene for improving better health of the people. Unilever is fighting against unsafe sanitation and also poor health to offer enhanced products (Unilever, 2023). Branding ensures high brand value where Unilever has witnessed

high value because of performance of sustainable brands. Elements associated with internal culture specify meeting stakeholder (employee) requirements where the number of employees has reduced from 149000 in 2020 to 148000 in 2021 (Statista, 2023). A decrease in employee number means there are some issues in the internal culture of the company. However, customer experience has been enhanced through focusing on school visits, online and traditional mediums.

Customer journey Map and Stages in customer journey

Customer journey offers a visual representation that helps in understanding the customer interaction with the products and services of a brand (Beig and Nika, 2019). There are five stages to describe buying journey of the customers as follows:

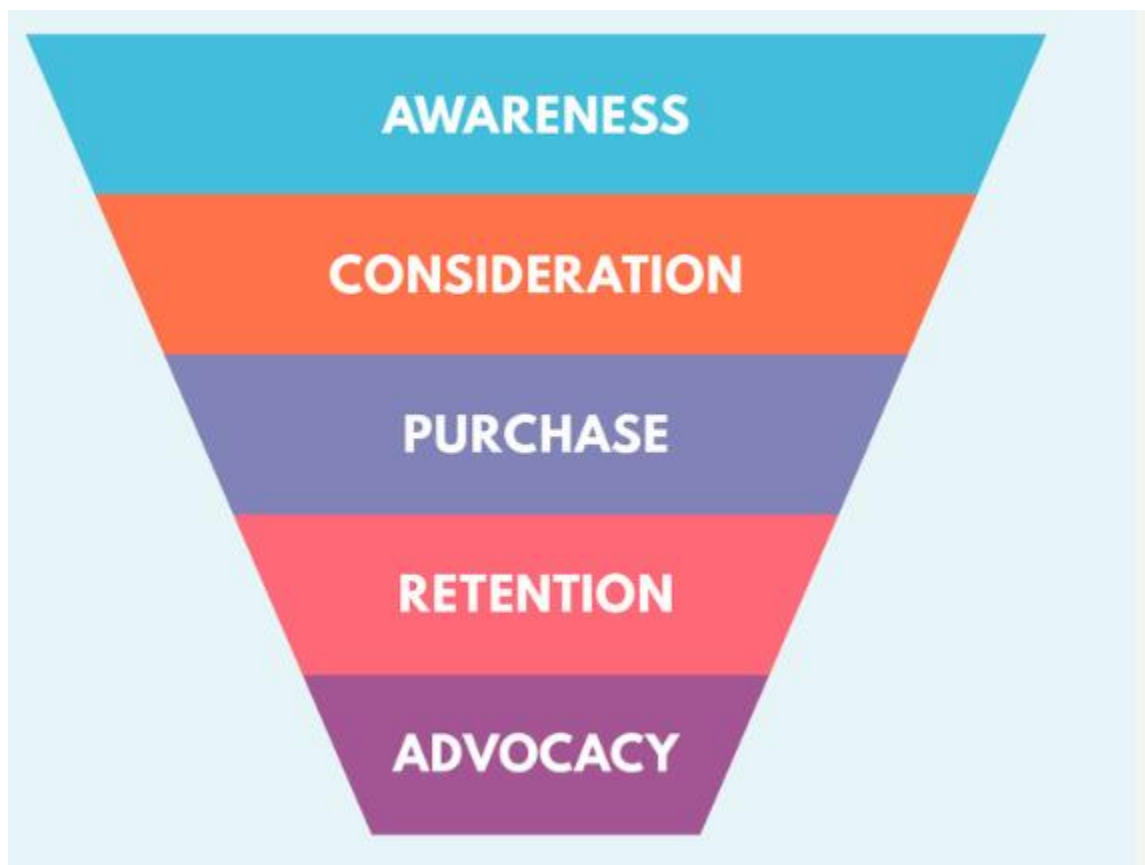


Figure 6: Five stages within customer journey

(Source: Tueanrat *et al.* 2021)

Awareness: Consumer familiarity grows through the help of advertising, social media and others (Tueanrat *et al.* 202). Unilever has been focusing on marketing as well as advertising where the

company has promoted the benefits of some products through different channels of brand communication such as television, newspaper, billboards and others (Unilever, 2023). In order to promote its brand, the global consumer company has used both traditional and online mediums as it has been reported that some local and global online publishers will be working on online advertisements. However, for Lifebuoy campaign, the company has visited UK schools as well.

Consideration: Customer requirements are required to be met by considering and evaluating whether customers have been actively engaged in buying products and services of the brand or not. The company is not only meeting existing customers and customer requirements however; the company through its brand is challenging stereotypes and also social norms where the company is involved in building diverse business. Diverse business is built by involving women and also under-represented groups who have been considered as models to bring a change through advertising in traditional mediums. There are 74% of consumers expect brands to take a stand against different issues such as racial discrimination, inequalities and others. The brand is therefore considering inclusion and diversity through fighting these challenges where 40% of the women have not found relatable with these women from under-represented groups which means that 60% have found themselves relatable with these advertising (Unilever, 2023).

	€ million 2021	€ million 2020	€ million 2019
Operating profit	8,702	8,303	8,708
Non-underlying items within operating profit (see note 3)	934	1,064	1,239
Underlying operating profit	9,636	9,367	9,947
Turnover	52,444	50,724	51,980
Operating margin	16.6%	16.4%	16.8%
Underlying operating margin	18.4%	18.5%	19.1%

Figure 7: Increase in operating profit from 2020 to 2021

(Source: Unilever, 2021)

Purchase: Consumers are the ultimate decision-maker involved in the purchasing decision. According to the above image, both operating profit and turnover of the company have increased from 2020 to 2021 which indicates that customers have bought products from sustainable brands. However, transition from traditional medium to online mediums have improved customer experiences and purchasing behaviour.

Stage	Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Retention	Advocacy

Customer Actions	Television, newspapers and school visit	Women and people from under-represented groups	Increase in operating profit (Unilever, 2021)	Passing on vital information	Sharing experiences
Touchpoints	Important message through campaigns	Online mediums,	Visiting stores	Social media platforms, phone, and others	WOM
Customer experience	Frustrated	Increasing curiosity among 60% of women unlike 40% (Unilever, 2023)	Interested	Excited	Enhanced
KPIs	Reaching to customers	Website visitors	Increase in turnover	Customer reviews	Retention rate
Goals	Brand awareness	Buying products from brands	Increase in sales	Increase in customer satisfaction	Positive experience

Table 1: Customer Journey Map of Unilever

(Source: Self-developed)

Retention: The users or the provider establishes a connection with the customers in a way to encourage them to buy the products and services of the brands of the company. Increase in operating profit of the company means that consumers have passed on information about products after using it to another one leading to increase in customer retention rate.

Advocacy: Word-of-mouth (W-O-M) is always helpful for spreading information about the products and services of the company in the market (Tueanrat *et al.* 202). Unilever has successfully created a positive experience for online consumers through 3Vs such as “Viewability”, “Value standards” and also “Verification” to prevent fraud and ensure brand safety (Unilever, 2019).

Conclusion

Unilever has developed as a global company because of its different brands where Lifebuoy and Dove have enhanced their markets by enhancing the sanitation and hygiene of the products. However, it has been after analysing that Rexona and Lux have somehow failed to meet those standards through products and services under this brand. Use of both traditional and online mediums has been helpful for the brand. Both customer engagement and Aaker models have been utilised to understand the brand and the company. The customer journey can be well-understood through customer experiences.

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