IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT OF AI TECHNOLOGY ON VIRGIN GROUP

CRITICAL ANALYSIS WITH FOCUS ON MARKETING FUNCTION

ASSESSMENT 02

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Executive Summary

United Kingdom comprise a diverse array of businesses. It was founded in 1970 by Sir Richard Branson and is widely regarded as the premier brand name and venture capital firm. The virgin group now consists of more than 200 companies in 30 countries. Virgin Group has a clear image with consumers, which gives their brand the ability to expand into new sectors and new geographic areas.

This study examines the marketing strategy of the Virgin Group, focusing on the company's use of AI and other technological advancements. The virgin group is a multinational conglomerate of companies whose marketing strategy is centered on meeting the requirements of its customers. This report highlights the development of AI/Tech in the marketing strategy of the company, its focus on overcoming the issues raised with the adoption of AI, and finally provides recommendations for further development in the future.

When review the virgin group's marketing strategy revealed a number of faults and obstacles. Widespread use of AI tools creates integration and implementation challenges, necessitating substantial expenditures on technology and personal. It has been challenging to maintain the Virgin brand's association with human ingenuity and interpersonal connections while implementing AI technologies across diversified business sectors. The skill gap among employees makes it difficult for the company to maintain their AI-powered marketing strategy. Moreover, data privacy and GDPR compliance are crucial concerns, requiring robust data protection measures and respect to regulation to maintain customer trust.

Several recommendations have been made to enhance the Virgin Group's marketing strategy and help it overcome these obstacles. As important as the development of a detailed AI adoption strategy for the company is the cultivation of relationships and collaboration with AI technology vendors and experts. By implementing AI-driven personalization and coordinating AI-powered tools with the brand's core values, it is possible to preserve the brand's unique identity. Collaboration between AI systems and the marketing team, as well as real-time data analytics to monitor and adjust strategies, can facilitate the training of AI to adapt to shifting consumer preferences. Through employee training programs and interdepartmental collaboration, skill deficits can be filled and AI tools can be used effectively. GDPR compliance and data privacy must be given top priority through the implementation of stringent data protection measures, legal audits, and expert assistance. Overall, the Virgin Group may achieve long-term success through this strategies and gain competitive advantage.

1.1 Company Overview

Figure 1: Virgin Group Logo

The Virgin Group is the largest privately held company in the United Kingdom and comprises a diverse array of businesses. It was founded in 1970 by Sir Richard Branson and is widely regarded as the premier brand name and venture capital firm. The virgin group now consists of more than 200 companies in 30 countries (Appendix 01) (Virgin, 2023). It employed over 71,000 people in 29 countries and generated over $11 billion in revenue. Richard Branson, the company's controlling shareholder, disclosed earnings of approximately GBP 68.4 million.

The principle activities of the Virgin Group are investment management and brand licensing. Virgin Management, including the entire Virgin Team, has undertaken both activities (Appendix 02). Virgin Management operates in countries such as the UK, US, Switzerland, Australia, and South Africa (Virgin, 2023). The 50 years of the company demonstrate their success in entrepreneurship, innovation, and market reputation among a diverse group of companies. The main purpose of Virgin is to change the business for good. Virgin Group has a clear image with consumers, which gives their brand the ability to expand into new sectors and new geographic areas (Branson, 2019).

1.2 Outline of the Report

This study examines the marketing strategy of the Virgin Group, focusing on the company's use of AI and other technological advancements. The virgin group is a multinational conglomerate of companies whose marketing strategy is centered on meeting the requirements of its customers. This report highlights the development of AI/Tech in the marketing strategy of the company, its focus on overcoming the issues raised with the adoption of AI, and finally provides recommendations for further development in the future.

The first section of this report includes a critical analysis of the current marketing strategy of the company, which is AI-based. This section describes the marketing related investments, examines its macro and micro marketing, and assesses the company's STP model and

Marketing Mix. Although the selection of media channels and how the company measures the success of its marketing efforts through the use of AI analytics. The second section of this report highlights the challenges and shortcomings of the current marketing strategy of the company identified in the previous section. By examining the shortcomings and challenges faced by Virgin Atlantic in relation to AI adoption, brand creativity, customer perception, the skills and talent gap, GDPR, and other concerns, recommendations will be provided in Section 3 of this report. Section three provides the recommendations from a broad perspective by separating the recommendations into the challenges. Finally, the aim of this report to enhance the Virgin's marketing strategy and enable the company to leverage AI and technology effectively to increase customer experiences and satisfaction.

02. Critical evaluation of Virgin Atlantic's Current Marketing Strategy

2.1 Marketing related resource investments

The Virgin Group has a customer-based approach as its marketing strategy. The fact that Virgin Group is an International Company with customers located in various countries. The company strategizes in a competitive market when trying to capture new customers (Branson, 2019).

The Virgin Group has made strategic investments in its marketing infrastructure to strengthen its customer-centric approach and attract new customers in an extremely competitive market. To better serve its customers, Virgin Trains has made major investments in customer-facing technologies such as Chatbots and automated call centres (Boothby, 2009). Additionally, the "Concierge" chatbot and other AI-powered solutions are used by Virgin Pulse to provide users with real-time health advice and assistance in selecting a health insurance plan for themselves and their families. Overall, the company invests a lot in AI and other technologies to improve its long-term ability to treat its customers.

2.2 Macro and Micro Marketing environment

2.2.1 SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEEKNESSES
Strong brand value	Challenges in implementation of AI technology
Extensive customer Base	Data privacy concerns
Data Driven decision making	Employee training and up skilling to use AI properly
culture of innovation	Resistance to adoption AI technology by employees
Use of AI to implement a cohesive and integrated marketing strategy	Credibility of information by AI for marketing department
High investments for data security issues	
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
More targeted and enhanced customer insights	Increased competition
Custom contents generation, automation and efficiency by using AI	Ethical and legal considerations about the use of AI in marketing regarding data and privacy, responsible use of AI
Real time optimization of marketing campaigns automatically by AI technology	Resistance form customers
AI powered tools can be used for innovative marketing campaigns	Dependency on technology of AI providers

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

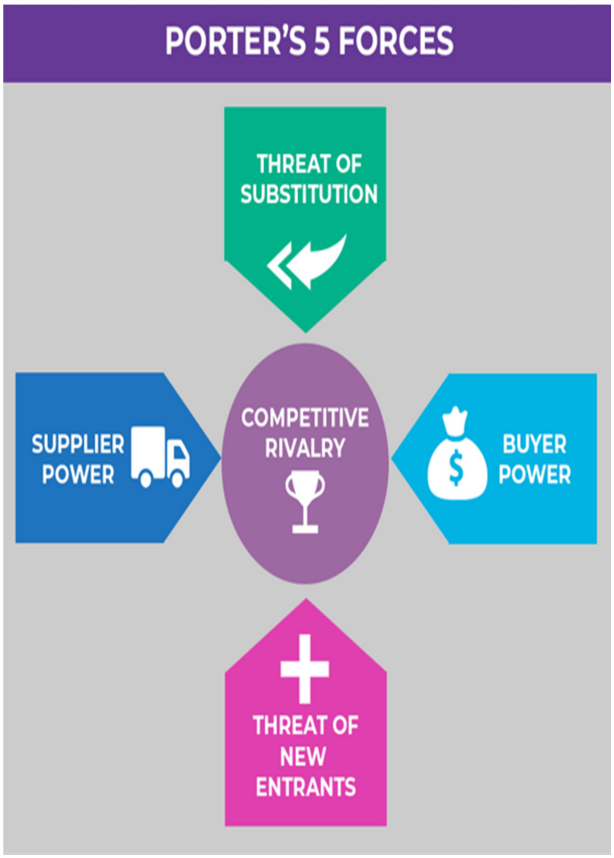
Source:(Adamkasi, 2017)

When referring to the SWOT Analysis of Virgin Group, it is an innovative business with a large customer base. By incorporating AI into its marketing strategy, the company can better understand its consumers, streamline its operations, and fine-tune its campaigns. In order to maintain its competitive advantage and ethical standing in the market, Virgin Group must manage potential vulnerabilities and risks. These include difficulties in implementing AI, concerns about data security, resistance from employees and customers, and reliance on technology providers (Adamkasi, 2017).

Numerous aspects of the company's micromarketing initiatives have been transformed by AI. For example, Wayve's self-driving automobiles demonstrates the incorporation of AI into transportation services, by partnering with ASDA to make grocery deliveries (Carey, 2018).

Similarly, Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Holidays have used Phrasee's AI-powered marketing strategies to enhance their e-mail marketing campaigns.

2.2.2 Five forces analysis



- Competitive Rivalry
  - Differentiation through technology
  - Collaboration and partnerships
  - Strong brand value of Virgin Media
- Potential new entry
  - Technological advancements
  - High cost of technology adoption
  - Strong established network of Virgin Group
- Buyers
  - Market competition increases buyer's power
  - Technological innovation and differentiations
  - Buyer information and substitute products
- Substitutes
  - Technological disruption
  - Impact of switching cost
  - Customer loyalty
- Suppliers
  - Dependence on technology suppliers
  - Customization and integration
  - Competitive supplier market

Figure 2: Porter's Five Forces

Source: (Mustafa, 2023)

According to five forces analysis, technological collaborations and collaborations and capitalizing on the company's strong brand value, Virgin group can accelerate innovation, improve consumer experiences, and differentiate itself from competitors. To remain ahead of the competition, the company must make strategic decision regarding the partners it selects, implement robust governance structures, and consistently deliver high-quality products and services (Mustafa, 2023).

The rise of AI and other technologies has significantly changed Virgin's marketing landscape. Globally, Virgin Hyperloop, which utilised AI-powered solutions like Databricks to accelerate operations (Virgin, 2023). Moreover, Virgin Group has partnered with Made by

Dyslexia to advance innovation through the use of AI and dyslexic thinking. These images illustrate how AI and technology influence the social and technological variables that govern the advertising campaigns of Virgin Group (Branson, 2023).

2.2.3 STP model

Segmentation	AI based tools enable for more precise customer segmentation. For example, Virgin Australia, for instance uses DataRobot and AI platform develop prediction models to determine the travel expectations and price sensitivity of customers. As a result, Virgin Australia is able to better target its customers.
Targeting	With the adoption of AI, Virgin Group able to provide each customer with unique experience.
Positioning	The Company can modify their marketing strategies to improve the brand's market position with the AI technology.

Table 2: STP Model

(Kaput, 2022)

2.2.4 Marketing Mix:

Product	AI enables, enhanced personalization, product innovation and effective product management.
Price	Dynamic pricing in real time by AI & personalized pricing offers.
Place	Strong online presence, enhanced customer experience and efficient distribution channels.
Promotion	Targeted Marketing Campaigns, Automation of Marketing Process & repetitive tasks, Influencer Partnerships identified by AI.
People	Customer Relationship Management, Human Resource Training & development, Consumer Insights etc.
Process	Consumer Analytics, Continuous Monitoring of Marketing Campaigns.
Physical evidence	Branding, Sentiment Analysis of feedback

Table 3: Marketing Mix

(Branson, 2020), (Kaput, 2022)

2.2.5 PESTEL analysis

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	LEGAL
Government stability	Economic Growth	Changing Consumer Behavior	Rapid Technological changes	Sustainable Technologies	Data Protection & privacy Laws
Tax policy	Consumer Spending	Technological Awareness	Cyber Threats	Climate/Recycle Regulations	Intellectual Property Laws
International Trade Policies	Foreign Exchange Rates	Ethical Concerns	Technological Infrastructure	Energy Efficiency for minimum Carbon Footprint	Employment Laws
Intellectual Property Rights	Inflation	Demographic Shifts	Integration & Compatibility of Technologies	E-Waste Management	Consumer Protection Laws
Political Stability	Employment & Skill Overhauling	Impact on Society	Intellectual Property Protection	Consumer awareness for sustainable AI	Legal control towards responsible AI

Table 4: PESTEL Analysis

(Team, 2021)

2.3 Selection of Media

Technology and AI have transformed the media landscape of the company. They have access to a variety of channels and platforms through which to communicate with their audience. Companies like Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Holidays use AI-powered technologies like Phrasee to increase their e-mail marketing content. These programmes use AI to create compelling subject lines and handle the e-mail marketing process thereby relieving personnel of their duties (Gordon, 2014).

2.4 Measuring Success

AI and all other technological developments have made it simple for Virgin Group to evaluate the effectiveness of its advertisements (Team, 2021). Using analytics solutions powered by AI, KPIs can be monitored and analysed in real time. For example, Virgin Australia has the ability to predict its customers' behaviours using DataRobot's predictive modelling. AI enables Virgin Group to optimise its marketing efforts based on real data, resulting in improved outcomes and increased customer satisfaction (Gordon, 2014).

03. Shortcomings of Virgin Group's Marketing Strategy

After reviewing the current marketing strategy for the Virgin Group, some shortcomings were identified. Those shortcomings can also be identified as the challenges for the company in relevant to AI and technology development. There are five main challenges for the company, such as adoption of AI, brand creativity, customer perception, skills and talent impact, and GDPR concerns.

3.1 Rapid adoption of AI Tools

Some companies adopt AI heavily, while others do so less. Adoption of AI means they need to quickly adopt AI-based tools to thrive in the competition, for example, using 'Phrasee'. The Virgin Group encountered challenges during the rapid adoption of AI tools as they had to seamlessly integrate and implement these technologies across their diverse businesses. Heavy expenditures on hardware, software, and human resources were needed for this process. For example, the company had trouble guaranteeing smooth integration with current systems and efficient training personnel when they introduced an AI-powered inventory management system into their retail outlets (Branson, 2020). On the other hand, competition pulls them towards AI adoption. For example, British Airways adopts AI tools like chatbots to handle customer inquiries and the online flight booking process. Similarly, Tesco, one of the retail competitors of Virgin, used AI-based customer analytics to identify purchasing patterns and preferences (Team, 2021).

3.2 Maintaining brand identity

It can be difficult to maintain consistent brand messaging across all possible touch points when interacting with a large number of distinct companies and projects. The foundations of the Virgin brand are the ideas of human creativity, close human connections and unparalleled service (Virgin, 2023). The difficulty emerges when trying to apply AI to different parts of the company. When using AI algorithms for customer support, Virgin mobile for example, had to strike a delicate balance between the benefits of AI-powered chatbots (Virgin Trains) and the need to maintain human touch and connection customers had come to expect from the company (Team, 2021).

3.3 Training AI to adapt to changing consumer preferences

The ability of marketers to predict their customers' preferences increases with the adoption of AI technologies. On the other hand, training AI to adopt to changing consumer preferences is another challenge for the Company. In order to effectively understand the responds to

consumer preferences systems require substantial training on massive datasets. However, customer tastes can shift quickly, making it difficult to train AI models to be flexible. The choices made by customers are not habitual, routine, or unchanging preferences for their products and services (Whitehead, 2021). As an example, when Virgin Media used AI algorithms to recommend content, they had to regularly, update and change their models to account for viewer's shifting tastes and keep their recommendations fresh and interesting (Gal & Simonson, 2020).

3.4 Employee Training and skill gaps

Virgin employees typically need to learn new things and adjust to different ways of doing things as a results of AI integration. For instance, the goal of the CRM systems of the Virgin Group is to enhance interactions with customers and ultimately increase revenue (Chowdhury et al., 2023). To confirm that their staff could make effective use of these technologies, the Virgin Group funded additional training programmes. Employees at Virgin holidays which uses AI-powered chatbots to respond to customers' requests were given training to work with the chatbots. Training employees to make efficient use of AI tools and technology was a difficulty for the Virgin Group. For example, it is difficult to resist changing and improving their skillsets (Suseno et al., 2021).

3.5 Data Privacy and GDPR compliance

With the expanded use of AI, Virgin Group collects a huge amount of data. Data privacy and compliance with regulations such as GDPR have become significant concerns. Using AI algorithms for targeted marketing campaigns, for example, the company established comprehensive data protection measures, implemented secure data storage methods and ensured compliance with GDPR. If they fail to overcome these issues, the company could face legal action, reputational damage and loss of consumer trust (Burgess, 2022).

For example, from the history of Virgin Group, Virgin Media is anticipated to be examined under the GDPR in 2019, after notifying for a data breach that affected more than 900,000 customers. Although, company discovered a cyber-security breach and closed down access to a marketing database containing customer information according to an email sent to affected customers (Brasseur, 2022).

Finding solutions to the identified issues in Virgin Group will contribute to the long-term prosperity of the company globally. Rather than finding one strategic solution to Virgin's marketing activities, it is better to develop separate suggestions for the identified problems in task 2.

4.1 Recommendations for rapid adoption of AI Tools

Virgin Group needs a comprehensive AI adoption roadmap. To adopt AI solutions across all its operations, the Virgin Group should create a comprehensive plan for implementation. To assure a smooth transition, the roadmap must include well-defined objectives, milestones, and deadlines. For instance, one milestone for the company is to conduct an AI Readiness assessment (assess the current infrastructure and capabilities of the company and identify areas for AI solutions) (Bughin & Seong, 2018).

In addition to that, by fostering partnerships and collaborations, AI adoption will become easier. Partnerships should be formed with AI technology providers and experts to facilitate effective AI integration (Kendrick, 2021). This collaboration with external parties will provide expert knowledge to overcome implementation challenges and accelerate the adoption process. However, the company needs to invest in infrastructure (Miklosik et al., 2019). For instance, acquiring robust servers, storage systems and network infrastructure increase the ability of handling the data processing and storage requirements of AI applications. Resource allocation for HR hiring including data scientists, AI developers support the implementation of AI projects (Rasheed et al., 2023).

4.2 Recommendations for maintaining brand identity

AI-powered tools at Virgin Group should align with the core values of the brand, including human creativity, human connections. For instance, chatbots at Virgin must have efficient and helpful responses in a friendly and personal tone to customers. Thus, it reflects the brand's commitment to personalised service. Indeed, AI should be used for personalization at Virgin Group (Ameen et al., 2022). Additionally, Virgin needs to implement AI-driven personalization. It means to increase the customer's experience by providing personalised recommendations and interactions. For example, to provide each customer with a more interactive and personalized experience, Virgin needs to develop AI algorithms to anlyse customer data and recommend products and services.

The company can't overcome these challenges through the above suggestions alone. They need continuous monitoring and optimisation. Regular review of customer feedback and sentiment to gather information on the impact of AI-powered solutions on brand perception. From there, only they will succeed in identifying potential mismatches in the brand image and AI-driven interaction (Wire, 2021).

4.3 Recommendations for Training AI to adopt changing consumer preferences

AI can't provide insight into consumer preferences alone. Hence, it needs human skills, and awareness should still play a significant role. Therefore, it is essential to promote collaboration between AI systems and the marketing team in the company. Human interaction helps to verify AI-generated suggestions and make informed decisions (Goods, 2023). For example, Virgin can implement processes that require human marketers to review and enhance AI-generated recommendations prior to their implementation. Although, (Zaki et al., 2021) by utilising real-time data analytics to monitor and uncover changing consumer preferences. Virgin is able to keep up with changing consumer preferences by routinely analysing data such as customer purchases, website visits, and social media activities. They can adjust their AI models and advertising strategies to better reflection on current customer preferences (Tobey, 2022).

4.4 Recommendations for Employee Training and skill gaps

AI cannot be successful if employees do not get it correctly, which is common to every organisation, not only Virgin. Creating comprehensive training programmes that address the requirements of all levels and departments of employees is one way Virgin can address the skills gap (Keegan et al., 2022). AI training must include both technical components like data analysis and machine learning and human centric skills like communication and critical thinking. AI has already become an essential part of the UK business environment, and companies like Virgin can assist by offering workshops, online courses, and certifications to their employees (Yu et al., 2022).

Further, (Kolbjørnsrud et al., 2017) by promoting a holistic perspective of AI's prospective applications by encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing across departments and teams training and skill gaps can be filled. Involve individuals from diverse departments and background in AI-based initiatives. For example, Virgin can form cross-functional teams comprised of marketing, data analytics and customer service to implement AI based customer segmentation strategies.

4.5 Recommendations for Data Privacy and GDPR Compliance

Data privacy should be given the highest priority when companies go with AI. On the other hand, it is important to remind customers that the company used modern technologies with respect to the GDPR complaint as wel (Smuha, 2021). As per the recommendations, it is important to implement robust data protection measures. It is essential to prioritize data security and privacy when working with AI. Protects Virgin customers with encryption, secure data storage procedures and restrictive access controls. Maintaining a secure network by evaluating and enhancing security measures on a regular basis (Lauri et al., 2023).

Moreover, Virgin has to ensure that their AI projects and data handling processes comply with the law (GDPR). Implement systems to track when consumers provide consent, how they are informed about how their information is used, and how they can modify or delete their information. In addition to that, consultation provides additional touch points when complying with laws and regulations (Mikalef et al., 2022). AI initiatives that interact with the GDPR or other data protection laws require expert knowledge. Consult with them for guidance on established data privacy best practises and monitoring legal changes. By adding regular audits to those suggestions, the company needs to evaluate the legal compliance of the company from time to time. This includes reviewing data processing activities, conducting privacy impact assessments, and identifying areas for improvement (Andraško et al., 2021).

05. Conclusion

In conclusion, the marketing strategy of the virgin group reflects the company's concentration on its customers and its use of artificial intelligence and other technologies to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. The virgin group has incorporated AI-Powered solutions in a variety of areas, including transportation services, email marketing, and client segmentation. This is emphasized by the SWOT, Five Forces, and PESTEL analyses of the company.

However, when review the virgin group's marketing strategy revealed a number of faults and obstacles. Widespread use of AI tools creates integration and implementation challenges, necessitating substantial expenditures on technology and personal. It has been challenging to maintain the Virgin brand's association with human ingenuity and interpersonal connections while implementing AI technologies across diversified business sectors. The skill gap among employees makes it difficult for the company to maintain their AI-powered marketing strategy. Moreover, data privacy and GDPR compliance are crucial concerns, requiring robust data protection measures and respect to regulation to maintain customer trust.

Several recommendations have been made to enhance the Virgin Group's marketing strategy and help it overcome these obstacles. As important as the development of a detailed AI adoption strategy for the company is the cultivation of relationships and collaboration with AI technology vendors and experts. By implementing AI-driven personalization and coordinating AI-powered tools with the brand's core values, it is possible to preserve the brand's unique identity. Collaboration between AI systems and the marketing team, as well as real-time data analytics to monitor and adjust strategies, can facilitate the training of AI to adapt to shifting consumer preferences. Through employee training programs and interdepartmental collaboration, skill deficits can be filled and AI tools can be used effectively. GDPR compliance and data privacy must be given top priority through the implementation of stringent data protection measures, legal audits, and expert assistance. Overall, the Virgin Group may achieve long-term success through this strategies and gain competitive advantage.

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Appendix 01:

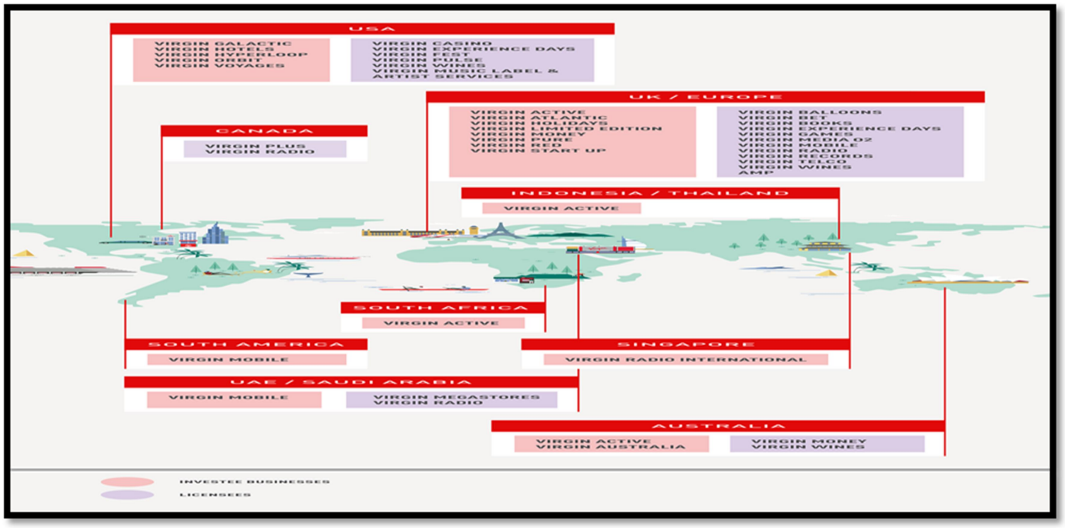

Figure 3: Virgin Global Expansion

Source: (Virgin, 2023).

Appendix 02:

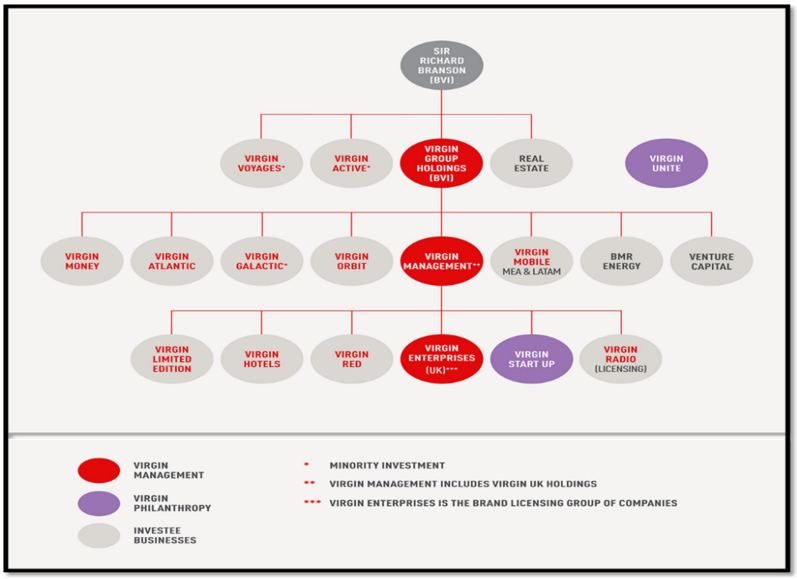

Figure 4: Virgin Management Team

Source: (Virgin, 2023).