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1. INTRODUCTION

Undertaking a thorough analysis of H&M's marketing tactics offers a fascinating investigation into the efficient communication of this multinational apparel conglomerate's brand identity. H&M uses a wide variety of communication techniques, including social media interaction, in-store innovation, and traditional advertising. Engaging customers at different phases of their journey, a consistent brand story is ensured through the integration of touchpoints across several platforms. In line with modern consumer standards, the company's marketing techniques include an emphasis on sustainability in addition to product promotion. H&M's market domination is aided by its wide reach and quick fashion turnover, but these qualities also present difficulties due to worries about possible brand dilution and environmental sustainability. A thorough analysis of the benefits and drawbacks will help us better comprehend the workings of contemporary fashion marketing as we dig into the details of H&M's journey map and communication tactics.

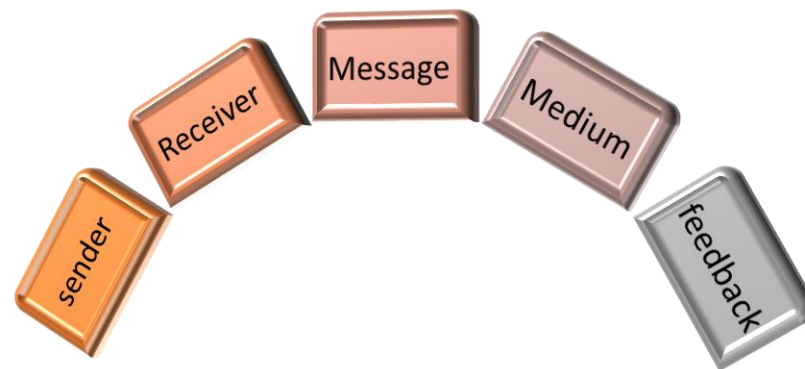
1.1. Company background

The origins of H&M may be traced to 1947, when its founder, Erling Persson, launched the first women's clothes store, named "Hennes," in Västerås, Sweden. Following the opening of Norway's first international store in 1964, Erling Persson purchased the Mauritz Widforss hunting and fishing store in Stockholm in 1968; the business recently began offering clothes for men and kids. In addition, the H&M brand portfolio was expanded with the 2007 launch of COS and the 2008 acquisition of the fashion company Fabric Scandinavian AB, which owned the brands Cheap Monday, Monki, and Weekday. New stores were opened in East Asia (Hong Kong), Shanghai, and Tokyo between 2007 and 2009. 2013 saw the introduction of the "& Other Stories" brand, the establishment of an online channel in the US, and the completion of the 3000th H&M shop. Furthermore, the addition of sportswear (H&M Sport) and cosmetics (H&M Beauty) expanded the range of items offered by H&M (Arrigo, E. 2017).

2. COMMUNICATION

2.1. Meaning

Communication is the act of providing meaning and receiving it. Members of the group must communicate and share ideas (Giffin, et al. 1976). There may be involvement from any of the various professions that deal with the distribution of knowledge such as media relations, journalism, radio, and commercial. The aforementioned demonstrates that communication is a daily activity for humans that takes place in a variety of formats and methods (Fatimayin, F.F. 2018). The elements of communication are



Source: (Fatimayin, F.F. 2018)

2.2. Shanon and weaver Communication model

The Shannon and Weaver model, a linear communication model, provides a framework for analysing message transmission as well as reception. It is primarily known for its ability to explain how miscommunications can occur during transfer and reception, causing them to become confused and misinterpreted.

Using this mathematical theory of communication, he hoped to more accurately identify the pressure regions where communication breaks down. Many believe that Warren Weaver had only a supporting role in the development of this mathematical theory of communication by Claude Shannon. It is commonly referred to as the "Shannon information theory" in scientific circles. (Mussa, 2020).

Elements of model

A. Sender (Information Source)

The sender, or "information source," is where the Shannon Weaver model begins. They are the one who originally possessed the knowledge (or item, or object, or any other source of information). The information source initiates the process by selecting a channel to use, a recipient to send the message to, and a message to transmit (Mussa, 2020).

B. Encoder (Transmitter)

The encoder is the tool (or person) that converts an idea into signals that may be sent from the sender to the destination. The original purpose of the Shannon model was to explain how humans communicate through electronic equipment like phones and computers, which encode our speech using codes like binary numbers or radio waves. (Mussa, 2020).

C. Channel

In the Shannon Weaver paradigm, the next step is called the "channel". The communication channel is the infrastructure that carries data from the transmitter and sender to the decoder and receiver. Sometimes we refer to this as the "medium" as well. (Mussa, 2020).

D. Noise

Noise intercepts a communication as it is being sent from the sender to the destination. Its name comes from the idea that "noise" might make it difficult for us to understand what is being spoken. There are two types of noise: internal and external. (Mussa, 2020).

E. Decoder

It is one thing to encode, but another to decode. Shannon and Weaver created this paradigm in respect to communication through smartphones and other gadgets. Thus, with this method, it is often necessary to have an appliance that converts a

message from binary digits or waves back into a format that the recipient can comprehend. (Mussa, 2020).

F. Receiver (Destination)

The receiver marks the conclusion of the original Shannon and Weaver model of technical communication. At this moment, the individual ultimately receives the message—or what's left of it, once noise is taken into consideration. (Mussa, 2020).

G. Feedback

The recipient is the last party in the original Shannon and Weaver paradigm of technical communication. The communication eventually reaches the recipient at this point—that is, once noise is taken into consideration. (Mussa, 2020).

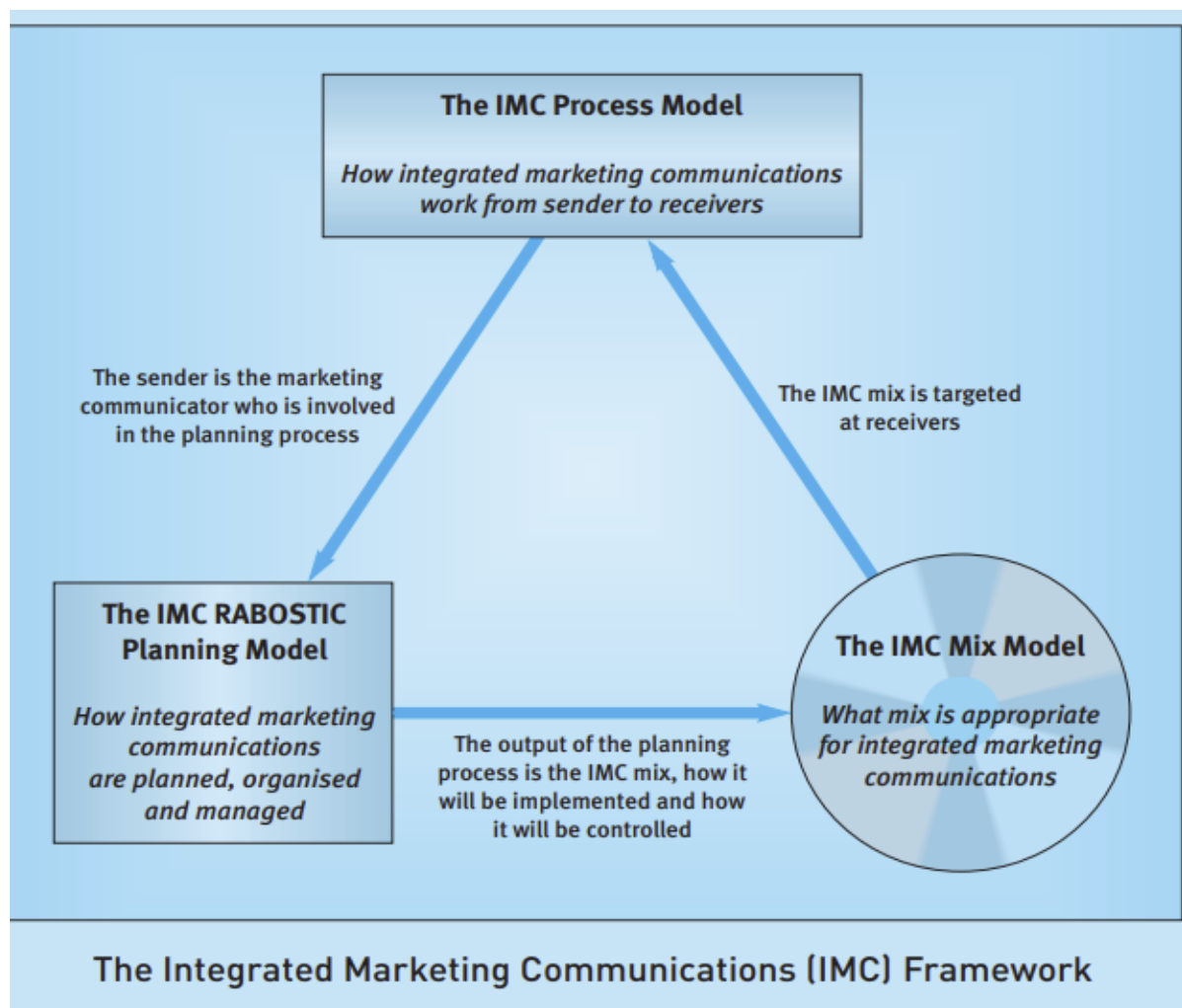
2.3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Shannon Weaver Model

- Advantages (Mussa, 2020).
 - We can examine the crucial phases in information exchange from start to finish thanks to the model.
 - The initial purpose of the communication model was to describe how people communicate using technology. But it's been applied to describe almost any type of communication you can imagine.
 - It does a great job of explaining the obstacles to good communication.

- Disadvantages (Mussa, 2020).
 - It's a linear model with little consideration for feedback.
 - The model does not examine how information is understood differently depending on the identities or power dynamics of the individuals speaking with each other from a social scientific perspective.
 - Regarding the problems that occur when there is a single sender and several recipients, the "mother of all models" says nothing. Use a model such as the Lasswell model of communication for a more thorough understanding of mass communication.

2.4. Integrated marketing communication

The idea and practice of proactively managing audience-, channel-, and outcome-focused corporate communication campaigns throughout time is known as integrated marketing communications (IMC). IMC oversees all observable brand communication efforts, including interactions with consumers, customers, and future clients as well as those within and outside the company. IMC handles more than just marketing communications to encourage customers to make purchases (Kliatchko, J.2005)



Source: (Pickton, et al. 2005).

- Components of Integrated marketing



Source: Myself

➤ Traditional Advertising

From the initial days of the advertising and marketing sectors, traditional marketing has been the accepted approach and one of the most established forms of advertising. anything different from using internet marketing to advertise a business's goods. Conventional marketing also includes the methods that customers utilize to locate your firm and begin purchasing your goods. Traditional marketing is present in many daily activities, such as reading the newspaper or observing some outdoor advertising. Conventional marketing refers only to advertising that reaches customers through physical channels (Kumar et al. 2020).

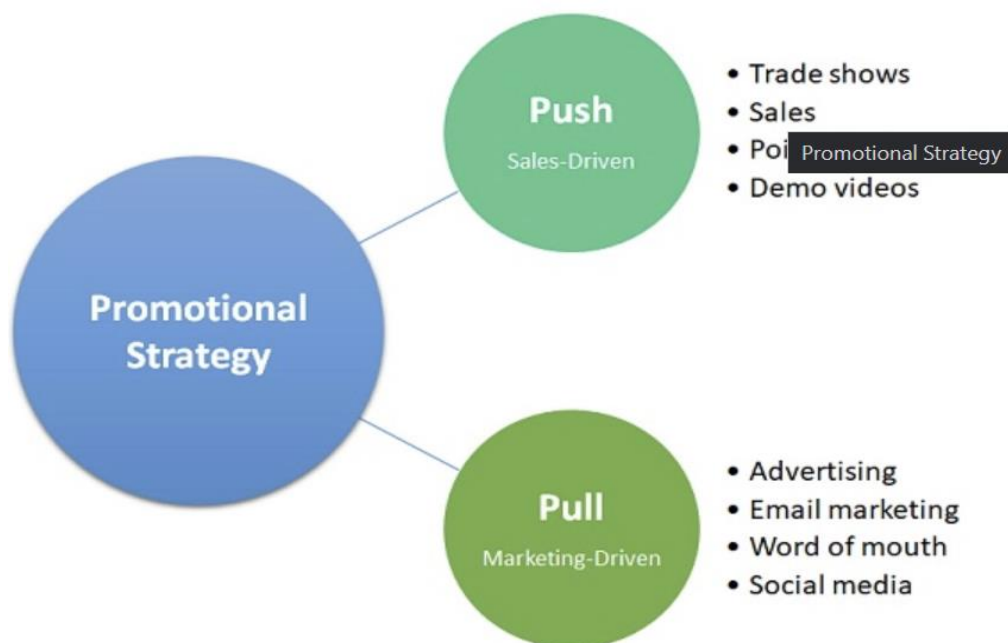
➤ Contemporary advertising

In modern marketing—a non-traditional sort of advertising—ads are delivered through digital channels including search engines, websites, social media, emails, and mobile applications. This marketing makes it easier for customers and companies to communicate with one another. Customers are more aware of companies' offerings and businesses are better able to comprehend customer behaviour as a result of technology advancements. Online marketing has contributed to the quickening of the buying process. Contemporary marketing enables companies

to surpass their rivals. As a result, contemporary marketing may be considered a revolution in the field (Kumar et al. 2020).

2.5. New Promotional strategies H&M should adopt

Companies utilize promotional strategies to market, promote, and sell their products. A business bases its choice of promotional approach on variables such as target market, marketing budget, and product kind. Raising product awareness and therefore sales is an essential task. Revenue from a good promotional plan exceeds marketing expenditures (MBA Skool Team, 2021).



Source: (MBA Skool Team, 2021).

- Online promotional strategies

a. Influencer Partnerships:

Join together with celebrities and fashion influencers to create special collections or campaigns. This has the potential to create excitement and draw their fans to H&M.

b. Virtual Try-On:

Use augmented reality (AR) technology to provide online buyers a virtual try-on experience. This can lower returns and boost consumer confidence.

c. Campaigns on Social Media That Are Interactive:

Start social media initiatives that are engaging. To engage the audience and foster a feeling of community, this may involve holding surveys, competitions for user-generated material, or contests.

d. Personalized Suggestions for Shopping:

Utilize data analytics to provide online customers tailored product suggestions that will improve their shopping experience and raise the chance that they will make a purchase.

e. Subscription-based boxes:

Launch a subscription box service where clients get a handpicked assortment of H&M merchandise on a regular basis. In addition to generating a steady source of income, this can increase client loyalty.

- Offline promotional strategies

a. Augmented Reality (AR) Shopping Experience:

Include augmented reality functionalities in the Zara smartphone application. Consumers can digitally put on clothing with their cellphones, see how they appear, and even post the pictures on social media. This closes the gap between online and offline channels and improves the online buying experience.

b. Customized Loyalty Program:

- Make the Zara loyalty program better by adding incentives and unique awards. Providing individualized discounts based on prior purchases and preferences might be one way to do this.
- VIP access to only-available items, deals, or occasions.

c. Green and Sustainable Initiatives:

Leverage Zara's commitment to sustainability in promotional efforts. Highlight eco-friendly practices, use of sustainable materials, and efforts to reduce environmental impact. This can resonate with the growing number of environmentally conscious consumers.

d. Limited-Edition Collaborations:

Join forces with well-known artists, influencers, or designers to create one-of-a-kind collections. In addition to giving the product an air of exclusivity, this draws in new clients who follow the partners.

3. BRANDING

The ongoing process of recognizing, producing, and overseeing the activities and assets that together create a brand's impression among stakeholders is known as branding. Because of the entire influence branding has on your organization, it is vitally essential. While branding has the power to alter consumer perceptions of your company, attract new customers, and boost brand value, if done poorly or not at all, it may also have the opposite effect (Dandu, R. 2015).

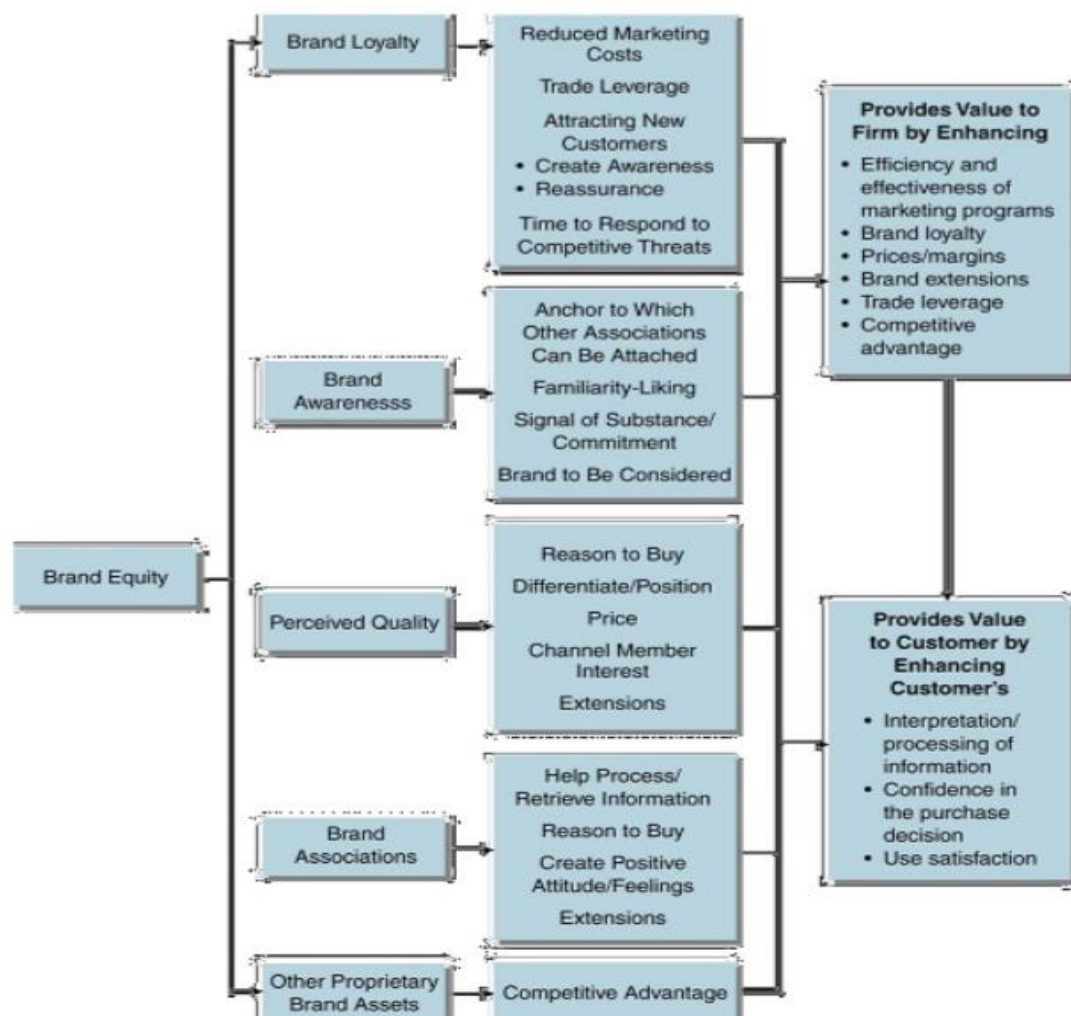
3.1. Brand Equity

Brand equity is the value of having a well-known and considered brand, as well as the extent to which a brand name affects consumers' perceptions. Companies establish brand equity via delivering excellent client service that motivate consumers to select them over competitors offering similar products. The standard methods of building brand equity include raising awareness through marketing that speaks to the values of the target consumer base, keeping your word when consumers utilize the product, and emphasizing customer loyalty and retention. (Marketing Evolution, 2022).

The advantages on return on investment (ROI) that come with building favourable brand equity are significant. Businesses that use branding to their advantage frequently outperform rivals in revenue generation while spending less on advertising, production, and other expenses. Positive brand equity, for instance,

allows companies to demand higher pricing. Customers are willing to pay more for a brand when they respect the principles the company upholds and the Caliber of the goods it produces (Marketing Evolution, 2022).

3.2. David Akars brand equity model



Source: (Chandra, A. 2018).

This model may be used to understand the equity of a brand and provide insight into the relationship between the many components of brand equity and the brand's success in the future. In addition to the five elements, the model additionally represents markers (and/or outcomes) of the adopted branding strategy. Naturally, as brand loyalty, brand name knowledge, perceived quality, and brand connections

become stronger (and more positively), as well as as the quantity of brand-related IP assets rises, brand equity will rise. The model also sheds light on the parameters that specify the extent to which the company's pursued branding approach actually creates value for both customers and the business (Aaker, D.A. 1991)

3.3. Utilisation of model with H&M

a. Awareness of Brands:

The degree to which customers can identify and remember a brand. As a well-known brand around the world, H&M concentrates on raising awareness through advertising, in-store presence, and internet exposure.

b. Brand Presence:

The general opinion that customers have of the brand. H&M makes an effort to uphold a contemporary and favourable reputation connected to reasonably priced and stylish apparel.

c. Brand Allegiance:

The degree of loyalty and recurring business shown by customers. H&M strives to foster loyalty with its loyalty programs, high-quality merchandise, and customer support.

d. Brand Connections:

The associations that customers have in their minds between a brand and particular qualities. H&M could try to project an image of being stylish, reasonably priced, and socially conscious.

e. Brand Perception:

How consumers interpret a brand's values and personality. H&M's marketing and communication efforts contribute to shaping the way customers perceive the brand.

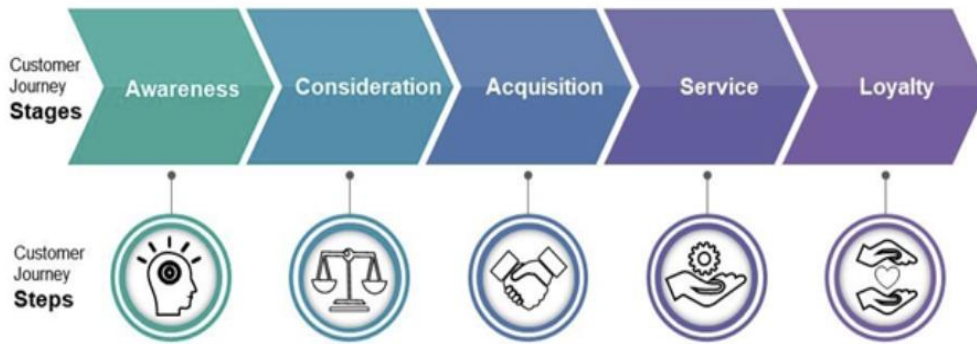
3.4. Advantages and disadvantages of model.

- Advantages
 - Since customers are provided with comprehensive information about a brand, the strategy could help them develop in-depth understanding about the brand.

- It could also help persuade customers to adopt your brand because of their level of brand awareness, as seen in the Aaker brand awareness section.
 - As a brand, customer satisfaction may benefit from the perceived quality of your items. Considering that your customers believe your products offer the most value for their money.
 - By taking into account all of the important facets of brand equity and providing a comprehensive framework for assessing and improving brand performance, the Aaker model provides a detailed framework for understanding and effectively exploiting brand equity.
- Disadvantages
 - A specific level of familiarity with marketing and branding concepts is required to effectively use the Aaker Brand Equity Model. As such, it could be difficult for those new to the field to understand and use.
 - The concept's primary source of uncertainty is client ideas, which can be difficult to assess and measure. Personal prejudices and convictions may also have an impact.
 - The significant outlay of funds required to develop this idea. This is true since advertising is a costly undertaking that requires a large quantity of continuous media coverage.

4. CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP AND STAGES OF CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

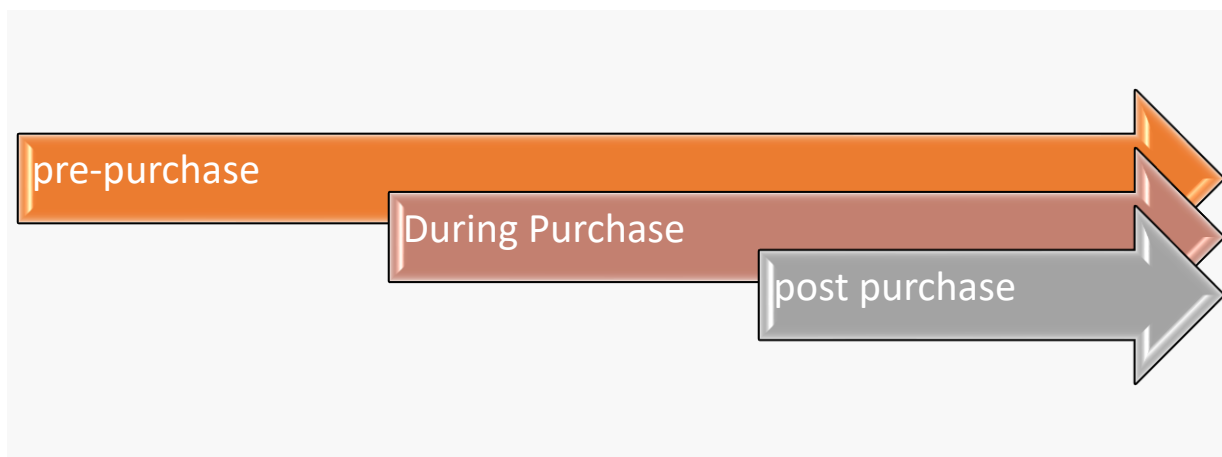
When attempting to enhance the customer experience, one of the first things that comes to mind is a customer path map. It serves as a road map for all of your communications with customers, from the first time they discover about your company until the point at which they choose to renew (or not). It's a crucial tool for operationalizing your customer success program and shows you where there are chances to strengthen your bonds with your clients or where engagement gaps exist. To put it briefly, trip maps are excellent (McBee, K. 2023)



Source: McBee, K. (2023)

The more phases a company chooses to research, the more intricate the map gets. According to one study, managers should concentrate on certain decision-making periods rather than the amount of money spent on different media platforms like the internet, television, and radio (Edelman, D.C. 2010).

4.1. Customer Touch Points for H&M



- Pre- purchase
 - a. Marketing and Advertising:

Creating awareness and interest in H&M's newest collections by interacting with consumers through a variety of media, including print, social media, television, and internet advertising.

b. Mobile application and website:

Offering consumers an easy-to-use internet shopping experience where they may peruse merchandise, verify costs, peruse evaluations, and investigate vogue statements. During the pre-purchase stage, H&M's mobile app and website are essential resources.

c. Social Media Awareness:

To engage the target audience and create anticipation, share promotions, fashion inspiration, and interesting information on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

d. Campaigns using Email:

Notifying subscribers about future deals, new arrivals, and special offers through newsletters, promotional emails, and tailored suggestions.

e. Influencer Partnerships:

Collaborating with celebrities and influencers to promote new collections and highlight H&M merchandise. This has the ability to greatly affect how prospective consumers view you.

- During – purchase

a. In-store encounter:

Providing a warm and interesting in-store experience, with attractive displays, helpful staff, and a carefully considered layout to encourage browsing and purchasing.

b. The Online Shopping Experience:

Offering a variety of payment options, easy navigation, clear product information, and a safe and secure online shopping experience. Virtual try-on features and product recommendations can enhance the online shopping experience.

c. Customer Service:

providing excellent customer service across a range of channels, including online chat, customer service hotlines, and in-store help, in order to promptly address queries and problems.

d. Payment Method:

Simplifying the payment process to make online or in-store transactions for customers simple and quick.

- Post – purchase

a. Notifications of Order Confirmation and Shipping:

Providing clients with information about their purchases and delivery status, such as order confirmation emails and shipment alerts.

b. Consumer Opinions and Reviews:

Encouraging consumers to provide comments and reviews in order to establish credibility and trust.

c. Programs for Loyalty:

Promoting client loyalty with loyalty programs that allow users to accrue points or get special discounts for returning consumers.

d. Follow-Up Communications:

Thanking consumers for their purchase and keeping them informed about future deals or new arrivals are examples of post-buy follow-up with customers.

e. Exchanges and Returns:

Offering a simple return and exchange procedure that includes detailed information on how to send back products and helpful customer service for any issues that arise after a purchase.

4.2. Customer Journey Map of H&M

H & M	Awareness	Consideration	Decision	Service	Loyalty
Touch points	Instagram shopping	In-Store mode	Click & Collect	Online returns in store	Customer loyalty programme
Customer Actions	Customer discover H&M products and shop directly from instagram	Customer check item availability in the store they are shopping in H&M app.	Customer order items online and pick them from store	Customer return online purchases in physical store	Customer earn points for purchases and redeem them for bonuses and discounts
Experience	Interested hesitant	Curious excited	excited	frustrated	Satisfied, happy
Pain Points	Limited awareness of new collections	Uncertainty about in-store stock	Challenges in online-to-store transition	Complicated return process	Unclear programme benefits
Potential Solutions	Use Instagram for Active and engaging promotion	Train staff for exceptional in-store assistance	Simplify click and collect process for convenience	Make online returns in store more straight forward	Clearly communicate The loyalty programs benefits

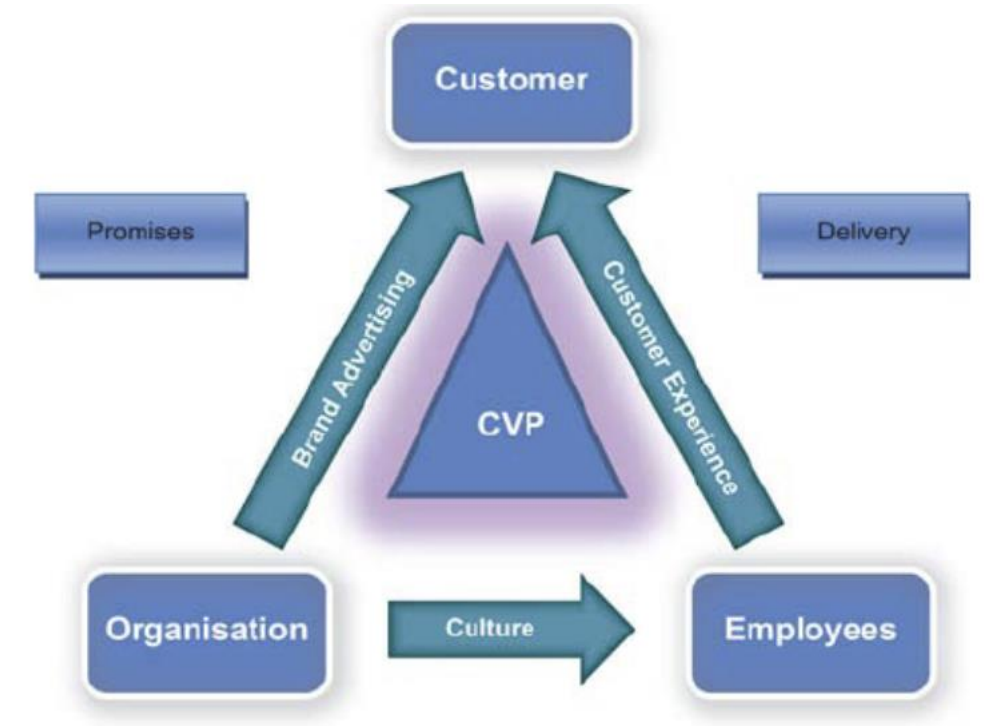
Source: (Velazquez, A. 2023).

5. TOTAL ENGAGEMENT MODEL

An engaged employee is one who is genuinely invested in the success of the company and who has a clear understanding of your strategy and direction. In general, they are more devoted to resolving conflicts amicably, more productive, and more devoted to their employer (LaMalfa, 2008). If you want to achieve long-term success, it is essential to create a purposeful and cooperative relationship between engaged consumers and engaged staff.

The complete engagement approach, which focuses on harmonizing the four essential components of brand advertising, culture, customer experience, and customer value propositions—defined as follows—brings these connections together.

- Your brand is more than simply your name or logo—it's the culmination of who you are and what you stand for. Your brand's core must include your value proposition.
- "The way we do things around here" is what is meant to be understood when one speaks about an organization's culture, which includes its internal behaviours, beliefs, and goals. This has to be prepared to provide an atmosphere where employees can reliably provide your value proposition and the intended customer experience.
- Your consumers' interactions with you consist of both tangible and intangible aspects; in other words, your customer experience is what you truly give.
- 4 Simply said, your customer value proposition is the value you provide to your clients. Put differently, this is the rationale behind why clients ought to choose you above your rivals. (Alpert, et al. 2010).



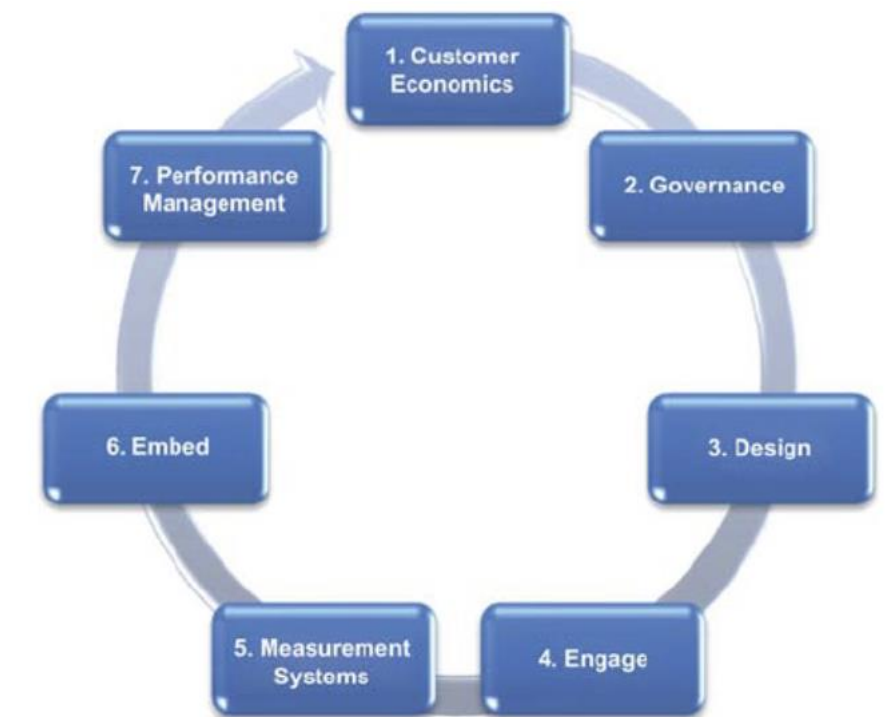
Source: (Alpert, et al. 2010).

An organization should put the following strategies into practice to develop engaged customers:

- Create a distinctive value offer that is grounded in solid client insight.
- It should then use brand advertising to constantly convey this value offer to customers.
- Employees who support, comprehend, and—most importantly—understand their own part in ensuring the strategy's success are thus most suited to fulfil this commitment.
- Because of this cultural basis, a designed customer experience is provided that significantly lives up to the advertising's claim. (Alpert, et al. 2010).

5.1. TOTAL ENGAGEMENT MODEL ACTION

Organizations with linked customer value proposition, brand, culture, and experience tend to have more prescriptive and customer-focused leadership. They ascertain the organization's operational structure, the value it provides, and the manner in which this value is provided.



Source: (Alpert, et al. 2010).

5.2 ACTION OF MODEL ON H&M

a. Omni-Channel Presence:

Establish a smooth and consistent presence across numerous channels, including in-store, internet, mobile apps, and social media. No matter the channel the client chooses, make sure they receive a consistent brand experience.

b. Client Persona Development:

To generate comprehensive client personas, comprehend and divide up the target market. Analysing demographics, tastes, actions, and purchasing trends is required for this.

c. Tailored Promotion:

Use client data to implement tailored marketing tactics. Promotes, suggestions, and material should be customized to each customer's unique tastes and habits.

d. Social media that is interactive:

Make use of social media channels to create dynamic and captivating content. To foster a feeling of community, promote user-generated material, hold competitions, and actively take part in discussions.

e. Sustainability Initiatives:

Use them to connect with your consumers. Spread the word about H&M's dedication to fair trade, environmental responsibility, and ethical behaviour. When consumers are socially conscious, this can increase brand loyalty.

f. In-Store Experiences:

Smart mirrors, interactive displays, and in-store events may all improve the in-store experience. Establish a space that promotes discovery and offers benefits beyond conventional retail.

g. Customer feedback:

Methods should be put in place in order to get input from customers. Utilize social media listening, reviews, and polls to learn about consumer opinion and make data-driven decisions.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by implementing smart communication techniques and leveraging Shannon and Aaker's models to bolster its brand positioning, H&M has effectively negotiated the ever-changing fashion scene. Shannon's Communication Model, which emphasizes message encoding, transmission, and decoding, has been used by H&M to communicate its brand identity consistently via a variety of mediums. Furthermore, Aaker's Brand Identity Model has been essential in helping the business develop and maintain a unique brand identity, relationships, and values. H&M's creation of an engaging customer journey map is evidence of their dedication to comprehending and improving the whole customer experience. The customer journey map is in line with H&M's brand story from awareness to post-purchase interactions, which encourages engagement and loyalty.

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