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MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Assessment 1

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the marketing strategy of Abbey Cars Ltd, one of the biggest private hire contract operators in the United Kingdom. The study will provide the review of the communication model, promotional strategy, and brand awareness within the company. Customer engagement with the organisation should also be measured and analysed. This report's author is an independent consultant, and an ex-employee of Abbey Cars.

Introduction

The author has chosen the company as Abbey Cars, where he worked as a private hire driver. A brief introduction to Abbey 's cars. It begins as a family business that goes back to 1968. It is now one of the best-known private hire operators in Greater London and South East Anglia. Abbey Cars operates in many parts of Greater London, including Hammersmith, Chiswick, Feltham, Bromley and others. Abbey Cars have its own pick-up/drop off ranks at all major London airports. The organisation already has long term arrangements with hospitals and schools to run. 4,550 self-employed drivers serving as subcontractors, shift controllers and branch managers and head office workers represent the company workforce. As the nature of business involves constant interaction with the customer, the satisfaction and feedback of the customer are of great value to Abbey Cars' business environment. Therefore, marketing strategies, brand awareness and meeting current and future stakeholders expectations are very important factors in Abbey Cars' business strategy. The author will scrutinise all applicable components of the marketing strategy in the sense of Abbey Cars business climate in the following sections of this assignment.

Definition of communication, communication model and IMC in the context of the business environment of Abbey Cars

Communication itself can be defined as transporting information from one location, person to another. According to SkillsYouneed (2020), each communication requires one transmitter, a message and a receiver. There are four main types of communication:

1. **Verbal communication:** face to face, radio, TV, internet or telephone.
2. **Non-verbal communication:** language of the body, movements, actions or scent.
3. **Written communication:** letters, print, internet, and other media.
4. **Visual communication:** maps, graphs, logos and other visual produce.

The sender transmits a message to a recipient, or many recipients, through a communication channel. The sender will encode the transmitted message into a form suitable to the means of communication, and the receiver(s) must then decode the

message to understand its context and importance. Any stage of the communication process could fail through misunderstanding. Effective communication requires eliminating possible misunderstandings and resolving any communication barriers at each point of the communication process. Visually this process could be presented in the diagram shown below:

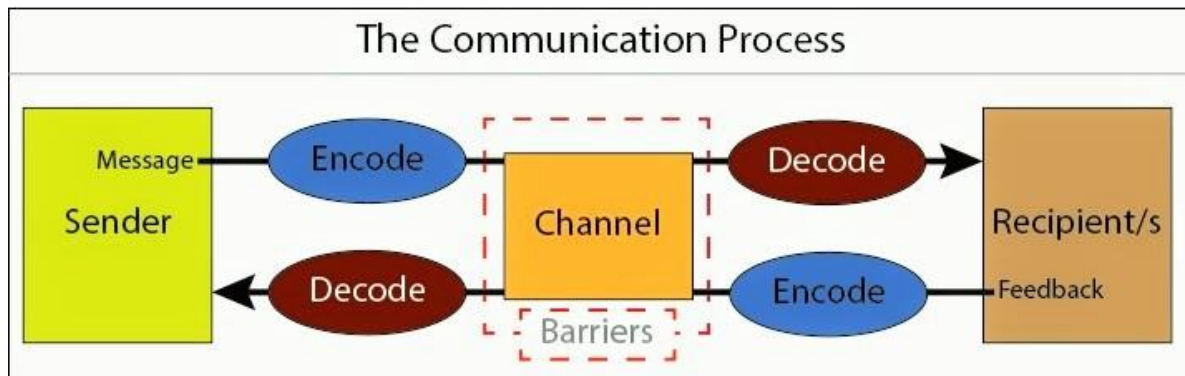


Diagram 1: *The Communication Process*, based on source: (SkillsYouneed, 2020)

When we start talking about marketing strategy, communication or marketing communication becomes a vital part of this process. Collins (2019) defines it as 'anything and everything you do to bring the message about your products or services to the world.' Marketing communication provides answers to the following questions:

1. *Why does this product need to be used?*
2. *How this product can be used?*
3. *Who can use this product?*
4. *Where this product can be used?*
5. *When this product can be used?*

In the case of Abbey Cars as the company involved in the transportation business, the main selling product would be transporting passengers via roads. Later during this report, the author will be analysing all the questions listed above in the context of the business environment of Abbey Cars in a more detailed way.

According to Todorova (2015), Neil Borden, the president of the American Marketing Association in 1953, first used the word "marketing mix". He first developed elements that make-up marketing programs. He also defined marketing forces that the marketer must adapt to for success. It includes customers buying power, the economy, rivals and the government. Luenendonk (2020) gives this description of the marketing mix: 'The marketing mix is a crucial tool to help understand what the product or service can offer and how to plan for a successful product offering. The marketing mix is most executed through the 4 P's of marketing: Price, Product, Promotion, and Place.' Diagram below shows the structure of the 4Ps marketing mix.



Diagram 2: *4Ps of the Marketing Mix*, based on source: (Cohen, 2019)

Marketing communications are the fourth vitally essential part of the marketing mix, states Todorova (2015). They are composed of different communication forms, known as the Marketing Communication Mix. The diagram below illustrates the Marketing Communication Mix components which are relevant to the market climate of Abbey Cars company.



Diagram 3: *Marketing Communication Mix for Abbey Cars business environment*, based on source: (Business Jargons, 2019 & Author's research)

Here is more detailed explanation of each component of the Marketing Communication Mix given by the author in the context of the operating environment of Abbey Cars:

- 1. Advertising:** It is an implied, paid method used by companies to educate customers through TV, printed media, online websites about their services and products. In the case of Abbey Cars, now, following advertising strategies are used: stickers with company logo displayed on company cars, printed leaflets are circulated frequently in the various Greater London areas. The business also

makes use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram to advertise its services. An example of the company's Facebook page is shown below:

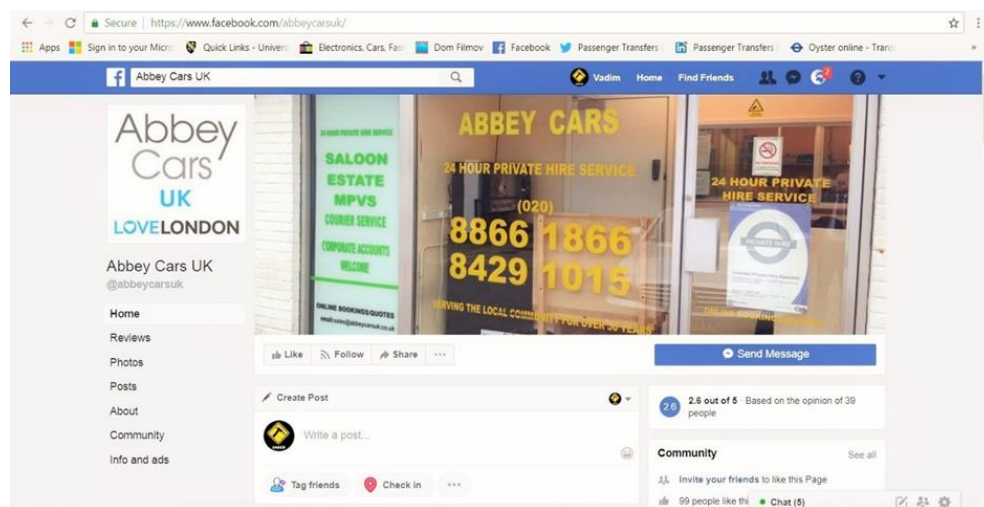


Figure 1: The screenshot of Abbey Cars Facebook account, based on source: (www.facebook.com, 2018)

2. **Sales promotion:** The sales campaign involves some short-term opportunities to persuade consumers to keep on buying the products and services. Not only does this advertising strategy help keep current clients but it also draws new ones with extra benefits. Sales marketing methods include bonuses, paybacks, buy- one – get- one free scheme, coupons, etc. Regarding Abbey Cars sales promotion strategy, it will be discussed by the author in more details in the next part of this report.
3. **Direct marketing:** Using technology businesses send emails, faxes, mobile phones to connect directly with potential clients without involving any third parties between them. In the case of Abbey Cars, every client is offered by text message to sign up for the newsletter email distributed by the marketing department of the company weekly. The newsletter contains various information about new coming promotions and offers, general information about the situation on the roads of Greater London and some health and safety advice concerning the COVID-19 outbreak situation.
4. **Interactive marketing:** Lately, digital marketing has achieved recognition as a brand communication method in which consumers can communicate online with companies and be able to get their questions answered online. In the case of Abbey Cars such interaction is achieved through the company's main website (please see Figure 2 below), and through social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. All accounts are closely monitored by one member of the marketing team to make sure any issues regarding customer service quality will be resolved quickly and efficiently.

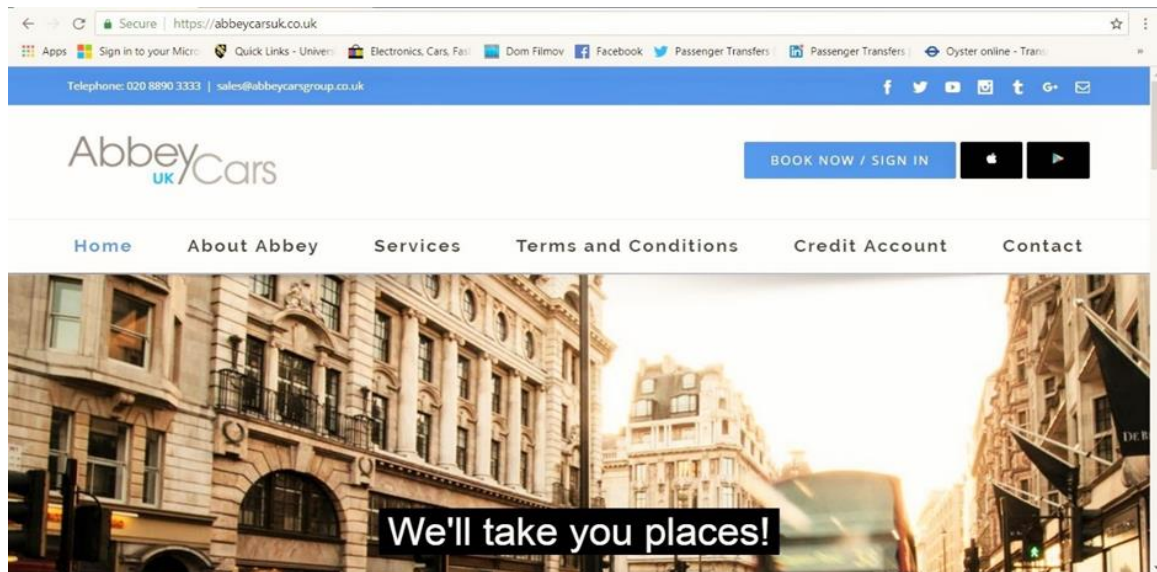


Figure 2: Abbey Cars official website with the Contact option, based on source: (www.abbeycarsuk.co.uk, 2018)

- 5. Public relations and publicity:** The companies carry out numerous social events with the goal of building their positive brand image on the market. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Abbey Cars started the new promotion called 'Driving our keyworkers'. In cooperation with local hospitals, Abbey Cars have offered a reduced price for the journeys of the medical staff to and from work. Every day each hospital provides Abbey Cars controllers with the list of people going to work or going home after finishing their shifts. Controllers then making the routes so at least 3 persons could be picked during one trip and supply this information to the drivers through their mobile devices.

Now it is time to look at Integrated Marketing Communications or IMC. Harvey (2017) calls it a strategy 'about integrating the different promotional tools, strategies, and materials that you use, so that they work together as a "branding suite", rather than a loose collection of ideas.' Marion (2015) defines the meaning of brand as 'the idea or image people have in mind when thinking about specific products, services and activities of a company, both in a practical (e.g. "the shoe is light-weight") and emotional way (e.g. "the shoe makes me feel powerful").' Thus, it is not just the physical characteristics that establish a brand but also the emotions that customers grow towards the business or its product. This mixture of physical and emotional signals is activated when it is conveyed to the name, image or visual identification. Many players in a market can effortlessly copy a product but a brand will still be unique. Being unique is the ultimate winning tactic when it comes to surviving on the market, this also applies to the tough environment of the taxi industry.

Before going to present *marketing communication plan* specifically tailored to the needs of selected company, the author will try to establish the meaning of the word 'branding'. Marion (2015) gives this definition of branding: 'Branding is the process of giving a meaning to specific organization, company, products or services by creating and shaping a brand in consumers' minds. It is a strategy designed by organizations to help people to quickly identify and experience their brand.' The branding aims to

draw and retain loyal customers and other stakeholders by providing a product that is always in line with the commitments made by the company, according to Marion (2015). First, branding affects consumers by giving them the ultimate drive to make choices while they are still unable to choose the same product from different companies. Secondly, it impacts staff and customers, as positive branding campaigns contribute to the image of an organisation as well.

An integrated *marketing communication plan* tailored for the needs of Abbey Cars will be consisting of the following points:

- 1. Company branding and brand message:** The branding of Abbey Cars needs to be the same in all platforms, from its social media tools to the company's official website and even printed flyers. No matter what communications company use, they must support the same image. However, that does not mean that Abbey Cars marketing team cannot develop segmented promotions for different audiences and different services.
- 2. Relevancy and personalisation:** Integrated marketing campaigns predictably relate with the methods of personal contact. If you target a specific audience on social media by creating a customised ad, you can also make sure that the same language is spoken everywhere you lead your customers after clicking on that ad.
- 3. The customer journey:** At some point of the time, an integrated marketing communications strategy will ease the company's branding activities by ensuring they provide their customers with a seamless experience. Which means that the marketing team need to first understand precisely where their customer comes from, and where they want them to go and what customer journey is all about. It will be discussed in more details later due to the course of this report.

Brief description of current promotions applied by Abbey Cars, including new promotional strategies

Ahmed (2018) confirms the importance of the promotional strategy: 'Regardless of what your company sells or does, it's important to learn about who your consumer is so you can effectively target them with your promotion strategy.'

In this part of the report, the author will briefly describe two promotions ongoing within the business environment of Abbey Cars, the relevant promotional strategies will also be shown in the table presented below.

<i>Promotion description</i>	<i>Driving Our Keyworkers (current promotion)</i>	<i>New User-Friendly App (new promotion)</i>
Marketing Communication Mix		
1. Advertising	• Online (company's website, social media accounts). • Displaying banners in the organisations involved. • Radio adverts.	○ Online (company's website, social media accounts). ○ Magnetic banners on the company cars. ○ Printed leaflets. ○ Advertising in branches
2. Direct marketing	• Newsletter emails. • Text messages to the keyworkers involved. • Online notices through company's website and social media accounts.	○ Text messages to all the registered customers. ○ Newsletter emails.
3. Interactive marketing	• Feedback option on the company's official website • Discussion groups created through social media accounts. • Online surveys.	○ Appstore feedback and review online. ○ Discussion groups created through social media accounts. ○ Online surveys.
4. Public relations and publicity	• Creating awareness about promotion through specially made videos shown on YouTube.	○ The app includes option to donate some money to selected charities before completing the payment.

Table 1: Promotional strategies of Abbey Cars, based on source: (Ahmed, 2018 & Author's research)

Brief description, analysis and selection of the brand equity model suitable for the selected organisation of Abbey Cars

Shaw (2018) identifies brand equity as 'the total value of the brand as a distinct asset. It can be rendered as the aggregate of assets and liabilities that are associated with the brand name and symbol which brings about the relationship customers tend to create with the brand.' Brand equity is reflected in the way customers see, feel and behave against a given brand. Besides, the influence of these intangible assets is very evident in terms of stock values, securities, productivity and demand, according to Shaw (2018). Farjam and Hongyi (2015) established three methods or perspectives for evaluating brand equity. They are presented in the diagram shown below.

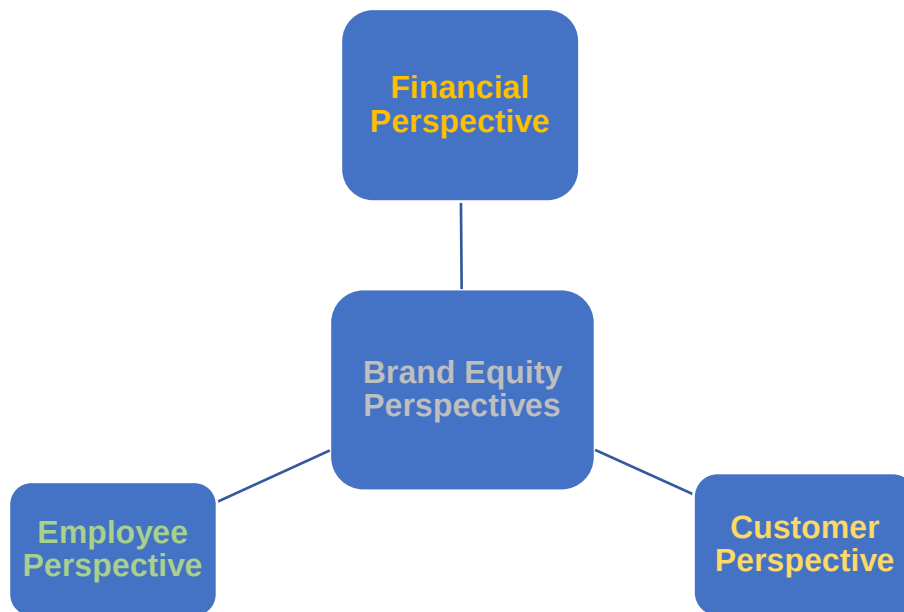


Diagram 4: Brand equity perspectives, based on source: (Farjam and Hongyi, 2015)

1. **Financial perspective:** Calder and Frigo (2019) are confirming the growing importance of this perspective: 'Finance should recognize that brand is about value creation. Brands exist in the minds of targeted customers.' A brand is a value that the consumer attaches to the value of the product. Any product would have a tangible worth due to the consistency of the product. This can be believed of as the positive value of the commodity, according to Calder and Figo (2019).
2. **Customer perspective:** The customer-based brand equity (CBBE) approach is the leading perspective, state Farjam and Hongyi (2015). It is based on the consumers' familiarity with the brand and therefore holding some solid and unique memories in their minds about the brand association, according to Farjam and Hongyi (2015). Bekmeier (1995) also calls it 'The crucial point is that consumers are regarded as the source or origin of brand-equity evolution, whereas in a second step the returns achieved by the brand are capitalized.'
3. **Employee perspective:** Often referred to as Employee Based Brand Equity or EBBE. It is different from a consumer perspective. From a customer's perspective, the company needs to create long-term consumption behaviour. In the other hand, from an employee's point of view, the behaviour is a work-related activity, based on delivering on the promise of the company. Irrespective of how these patterns are expressed, the fact remains that the source of knowledge from which these patterns derive is the same, according to King and Grace (2009).

Now it is time to take a closer look at the brand equity model selected by the author as the most suitable model for the business and market environment of Abbey Cars. The author has chosen Keller's model. The author of the model, Kevin Lane Keller, is a promoting teacher at the Fold Institute of Business at Dartmouth School. In 1993, Keller identified consumer-based brand equity at an individual level, taking brand recognition as a starting point, which is designed and created as an associative

network, according to Farjam and Hongyi (2015). In authors opinion, Cottan-Nir and Lehman-Wilzig (2018) presented the most detailed diagram of Keller's brand equity pyramid, displayed below.

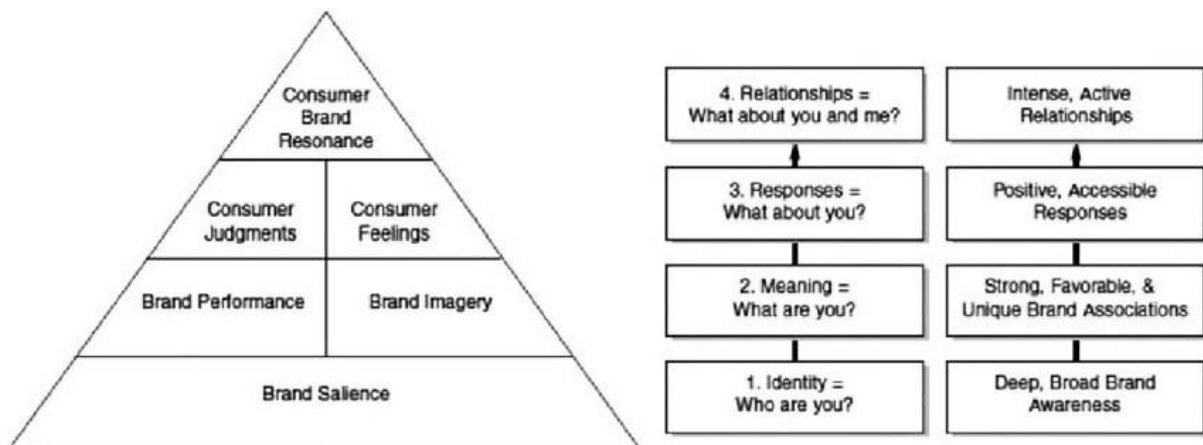


Diagram 5: Keller's brand equity pyramid, based on source: (Cottan-Nir and Lehman-Wilzig, 2018)

Hawker (2019) gives more detailed explanation of each level of the pyramid:

1. **Identity:** The key question to be answered is, "Who are you?". Brand Salience refers to the way the brand is viewed by the consumers.
2. **Meaning:** The next question to answer in this stage 2 is "What are you?". It is divided in two subcategories: *Performance* and *Imagery*. *Performance* covers all the functional areas of the product, including ease of purchase, product efficiency and customer care along the journey (Frampton, 2020). There are five specific *performance* indicator characteristics, according to Hawker (2019):
 - ✓ *Primary features* and characteristics.
 - ✓ *Product* reliability.
 - ✓ *Service* empathy and efficiency.
 - ✓ *Style* and design.
 - ✓ *Price*.

The imagery refers to the social currency of your company. How does your brand look to consumers or to prospective consumers and how are they going to feel about you? Sending message to customers is a very delicate process, including the composing of the message, its possible interpretation, the aim of the message and the audience the message will be targeting.

3. **Response:** This stage aims to react to the responses of customers in stage 2 and enable them to become brand ambassadors who will spread your product or service through personal advice, states Frampton (2020). It is divided into 2 subgroups: Consumer judgments or "rational route" and Consumer feelings or "emotional route":
 - ✓ **Rational route:** Consumers continuously make decisions about the product or service during the journey of the consumer. Based on the social media reviews, the effectiveness of targeted advertisement

campaigns and, of course, the actual product, consumers are deciding if the brand is the right choice for them. They build these decisions on whether the product is of good quality, meets their specific requirements and whether it is better or worse than rival goods, according to Frampton (2020).

- ✓ **Emotional route:** In addition to judgments, consumers base their buying decisions on how the product makes them feel, as the product itself and how it impacts on them. The question to answer here is: is the fact of spending money on our company product makes consumers happy and excited or disappointed and embarrassed?
- 4. **Resonance:** Hawker (2019) says following about this stage 4: 'There is a reason resonance sits atop Keller's pyramid. It's, more often than not, the most difficult level for a brand to reach.' Brand resonance is how the consumer associates himself with the brand. This is a solid, long-lasting partnership that your brand aims to build with and every customer you receive on your business journey. The theory is that your brand is resonating with consumers so much that they do not just keep coming back, but they are actually your brand's campaigners and supporters, according to Hawker (2019).

Like all the other existing brand equity models, Keller's brand equity pyramid has some disadvantages, according to Kuhn, Alpert and Pope (2010). They are naming four main disadvantages of the model:

1. Keller's model focuses mainly on consumer impressions of brands in the evaluation of brand equity, although in the B2B (Business-To-Business) environment, some other influencing parties may also affect brand equity.
2. Attributes such as technological capabilities, reliability of delivery and responsiveness were not included in the Meaning stage.
3. The model appears to neglect elements related to support services (specifically the relationship between the service provider and the customer) and the business (such as value and reputation) that may be of greater significance in the sense of B2B environment.
4. Keller's model does not focus enough on the customer relationship with the sales team due to its main focus on consumer markets.

Table shown below presents Keller's brand equity model specifically adapted by the author to the business environment of Abbey Cars.

Consumer Brand Resonance	1. Identifying the factors enabling the customers to feel the resonance. 2. Constant work on improving product add-ons and little extras to make it more attractive. 3. Establishing sector of "VIP" experience such as meet and greet chauffeur service at Heathrow Airport.
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	4. Online discounts for frequent travellers. 5. Family trips discounts. 6. Reduced rates for hospitals and care home workers.
Consumer Brand Response	1. Constant analysing customers feedback and collecting the product data. 2. Adjusting the price policy on some routes to make them more attractive. 3. Evaluation of the feelings produced by the product by feedback monitoring and conducting relevant surveys.
Brand Meaning	1. Identifying the points where the product is not meeting customer needs and expectations. Fixing those problems through online meetings with the sides involved. 2. Adjusting the brand image to match customer experience and expectations. 3. Adding some little extras to the product such as designated pick-up points in airports and major train stations.
Brand Identity	1. Identifying unique selling point: safe transportation of the customers via roads. 2. Conducting marketing research of customers' needs: street surveys, online questionnaires through social media resources and mobile apps. 3. Targeting potential customers with advertising campaigns: banners on the cars, street advertising and online advertising through the company's website and social media accounts.

Table 2: Keller's brand equity model adapted to the business environment of Abbey Cars, based on source: (Hawker, 2019 & Author's research)

Description and analysis of the customer journey and customer touchpoints in the context of Abbey Cars, including customer journey map Sorman (2020) defines customer journey as 'the complete sum of experiences that customers go through when interacting with your company and brand.' Instead of

looking at only a part of a purchase or event, the customer's journey records the entire experience of being a customer. The customer journey can be represented as a map, it makes the whole process much easier to understand and being visual is much easier to analyse. The example of the customer journey map is displayed below.



Figure 3: Customer journey map, based on source: (Rajec, 2017)

To build a customer journey map for the business environment of Abbey Cars, the author needed to develop customer touchpoints as suggested by Sorman (2020). These phases apply to every time the consumer comes into contact with the brand. Customers can connect with different touchpoints along the way, such as an ad or company's website. The author established main touchpoints as:

- ✓ Abbey Cars website
- ✓ Social media reviews
- ✓ Customer service team
- ✓ Follow-up customer feedback surveys

The diagram displayed below is presenting customer journey map specifically adapted for the context of Abbey Cars.

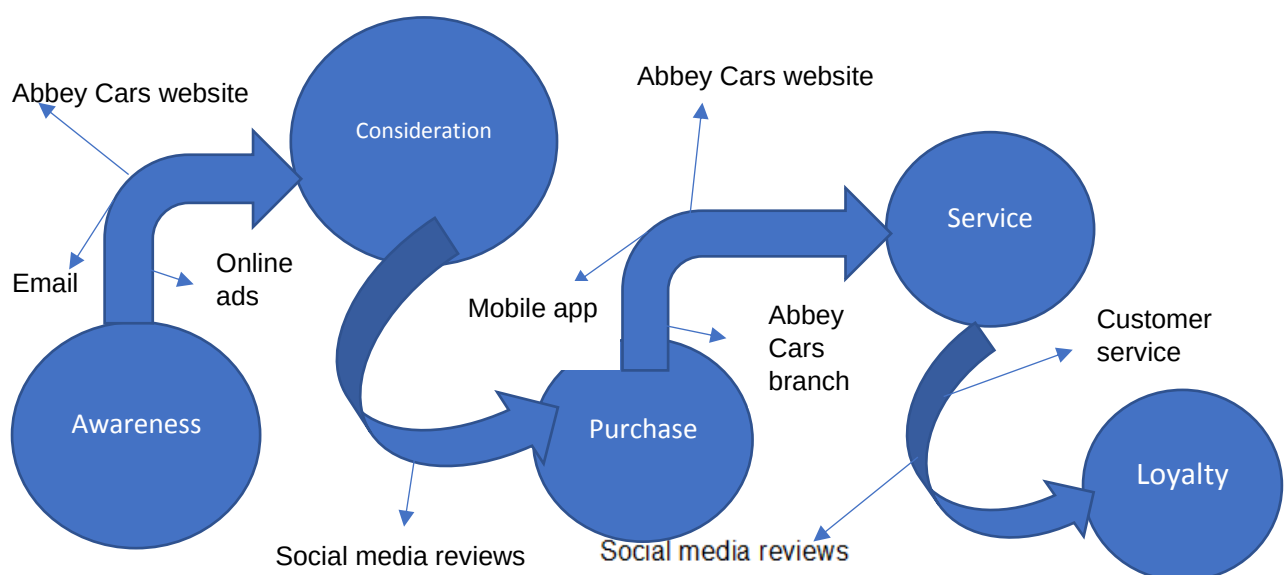


Diagram 6: Customer journey map applied for the context of Abbey Cars, based on source: (Ross, 2020 & Author's research)

Explanation of the Total Engagement Model concerning Abbey Cars business environment

According to Roberts and Alpert (2010) Total Engagement Model 'focuses on aligning the four key elements of brand advertising, culture, customer experience and customer value propositions.' They are proposed the following type of Total Engagement Model, displayed below.



Figure 4: Total Engagement Model, based on source: (Roberts and Alpert, 2010)

In the case of Abbey Cars this model could be applied by making following statements:

1. **Organisation:** Abbey Cars Ltd, also the name of the brand Abbey Cars.
2. **Culture:** 'refers to "the way we do things around here" and refers to the internal aspects of the organisation such as its goals, values and internal behaviours.' (Roberts and Alpert, 2010). According to the author's research, most of the workforce is aware of the culture of the company, which means that formal communications within the organisation are formed and work well. 75% of drivers do respect the company's values and beliefs, a good sign of a well-thought-out company code of conduct and attempts by management to explain it. Most drivers (87.5 per cent) are willing and have been successful in trying to promote the culture of the company to the customers.
3. **Employees:** drivers, shift controllers, branch managers, head office management.
4. **Customer experience:** 'is a combination of physical and emotional elements your customers experience when they interact with you – in other words what you actually deliver.' (Roberts and Alpert, 2010). It is assessed through feedback given through social media channels and mobile app.

5. **Customer value proposition:** the value of the service offered to the customers of Abbey Cars. According to author's observation the value is stands high at the moment.

Conclusion

Within this report, the author researched and analysed the communication, communication model and defined the meaning of Integrated Marketing Communications and applied them to Abbey Cars. It also provided a review of the current and future promotional strategies that will take place within the chosen company. The Keller brand equity model and the Total Engagement Model were discussed and analysed. Also, the customer journey, the touchpoints and the creation of the customer journey map have been completed. The relevant online research, combined with online and home studies, was completed at the conclusion of this report.

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