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1. Introduction

It should be known that it is immensely important for business organisation of the modern era to understand the fact that along with maximising the consumer satisfaction by emphasizing on touch points it is very much necessary to focus on the consumer's end to end journey. It is because end to end consumer journey provides the business organisations to efficiently track their advancement and how their different campaigns impact the consumer behaviours (Shavitt and Barnes, 2020). Whether or not the organisations meet the expectations of the consumers, establishing end to end consumer journey can help in gaining competitive advantage of the acquired information which helps them to improve further. Thus, considering the significance of consumer's end to end journey and the benefits it provides this particular paper will specifically evaluate and analyse how business organisations can implement various innovative marketing strategies for raising awareness of the brand along with managing and evaluating the consumer journey across various communication channels for fulfilling both present and future expectations of the stakeholders (Santos and Goncalves, 2021). To have a detailed investigation and analysis of this significant topic British multinational customer goods organisation "Unilever" has been selected. The organisation has been operating in the UK market for more than 90 years with more than 500 brands which includes beverages, food, beauty and personal care products and cleaning agents. By critically analysing the key operations of the organisation and the various strategies the organisation can opt for to resolve the issue of the consumer's end to end journey will be thoroughly discussed. Also, the detailed analysis will highlight how using various channels, theories and models can be implemented which will help both the stakeholders expectations to be fulfilled along with enhanced growth of the chosen organisation Unilever, UK.

2. Communication

Hybels and Weaver (Churiyah, 2013) critically explained the term communication as an activity or conversation in between two individuals (two sides) to share feelings, ideas and information. It is a process to acquire reciprocal understanding, analogous meaning and to alter the behaviour. Critically assessing and evaluating the scenario of Unilever and its operations to maximise consumer satisfaction and keeping an eye on consumer's end to end journey, the most important requirement is the way the organisation communicates (Krywalski Santiago, 2020).

2.1.Shannon-Weaver Model

The most effective communication model that can be proposed for Unilever, UK is the Shannon and Weaver's macro model which strategically represents the standard steps for any sort of effective communication. This particular model focuses on communication and its channels. It basically deals with key concepts such as sender, receiver and noise but stresses on the significance of encoding as well as decoding the messages that needs to be transmitted (Reyes-Rodriguez, 2020).

- ✚ **Sender:** The sender in this case is the information sources i.e. the consumers of Unilever. The message can be of any form like views, thoughts, ideas and opinions and it is the sender (Consumer) decides what information needs to be transmitted.
- ✚ **Encoder:** In this process the sender i.e. the encoder verbally transmits the message. It is the encoder (consumers) must decide how the message will be received by the receiver (Musheke and Phiri, 2021). Therefore needful adjustments are required so that the message is properly received as the encoder wants.
- ✚ **Noise:** Physical disturbances like people, environment is considered to be noise. The message for example is transmitted via telephone, and then the voice is automatically converted into wave signals and transmits via cables. So, unpleasant noises can change the meaning of the message transmitted and also the source distorts.
- ✚ **Decoder:** It is just the opposite of encoder and the decoder changes or converts the message which can be easily understandable by the receiver (Kerr *et al.*, 2023). It is basically the source from which the sender is sending the message (e.g. cell phone)
- ✚ **Receiver:** Lastly, the receiver receives the message from the sender (Consumer) and then listens, observes or reads and based on the content of the received message proper response or feedback is provided.
- ✚ **Response/Feedback:** Based on the message received proper response/feedback is generated to resolve if any queries or suggestions that needs to be provided. This is the last process of communication (Blakeman, 2023).

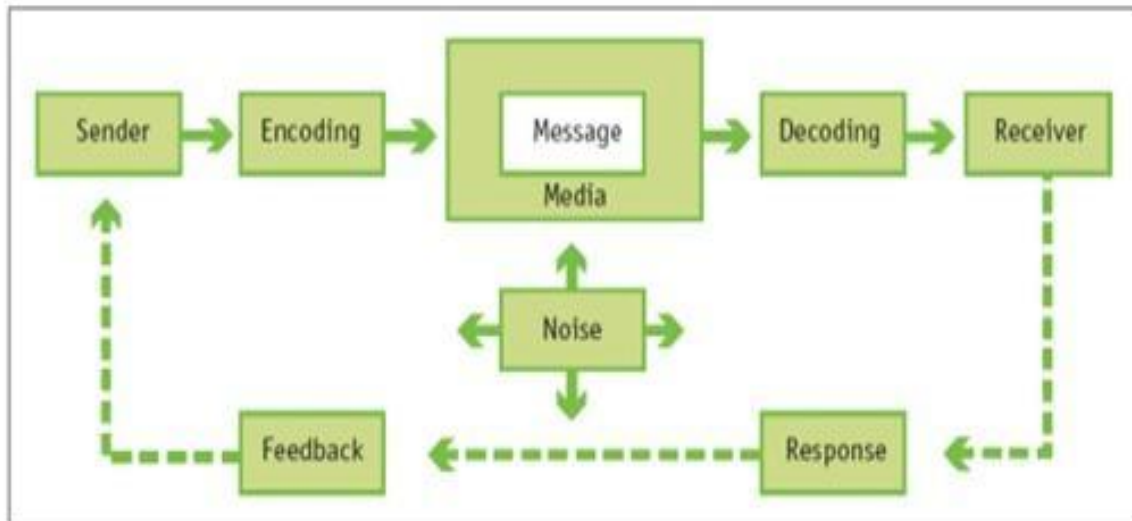


Figure 1: Shannon and Weaver's Macro Communication Model

Source: Marketing Management, by Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, 15th Edition (Global Edition), Pearson, Chapter 19, page 585

Critically analysing the significance of the Shannon and Weaver model of communication it can be evaluated that in case of Unilever, UK to attain the consumer's end to end journey implementing the this particular model can be quite beneficial. Considering the fact that Unilever needs to track the advancements of various campaigns which impact the behaviour of the consumers, this model will help in acquiring necessary information from the consumers (Muhammedrisaevna *et al.*, 2020). Opting for acquiring feedback and response from the consumers using different methods can help Unilever to enhance its operations based on the consumer's end to end journey. These feedbacks or responses from the consumers can not only meet the demands and expectations of the consumers but also help in gaining competitive advantage in the UK market. Alterations made on the basis of the consumer feedback using the communication model can help the organization in saving both time and money, along with focusing on the resources for more significant tasks. Overall it will allow Unilever to enhance the consumer loyalty by having in-depth understanding of the consumer journey and can develop a better consumer experience (Verčič, 2021).

3. Integrated Marketing Communications and Unilever's IMC Business Model

As explained by Schultz (1993) IMC is characterized as a major concept of engagement that unites and considers important aspects of distinctive correspondence disciplines for getting the uniformity, lucidity and remarkable influence. On the other hand, the

American Marketing Association elaborated IMC as a process of planning that is designed to guarantee that all the brand contacts obtained by a consumer or prospect for a service, product or organisation are pertinent to that individual and unswerving over time (Juska, 2021). The five major components that IMC comprises are personal selling, advertising, direct marketing, sales promotions, and public relations. Emphasizing on the scenario of Unilever, UK the IMC business model is immensely focused. The organisation has categorized the IMC model into five major categories i.e. strategic focus, consumer insights, collaboration, innovation, and marketing.

🌈 **Strategic Focus:** For investing in the long term brands and categories that delivers intensification to the advantages of the stakeholders Unilever focuses on delivering consistency in the growth of sales and provide leverage to invest in marketing, R&D, supply chain, and information technology. Unilever are focusing on innovation that facilitates them in bringing improvements in their services and products to make their market share enhanced and also enter various new markets (Bekimbetova *et al.*, 2021). The organisation seeks to have a prolific growth which does not impact negatively on the environment and Unilever's reputation. This particular model allows the organisation in meeting the touch points to enhance consumer satisfaction by cutting down overall costs and improvising the operations.

🌈 **Consumer Insights:** Considering the fact that societies all over the globe are dynamically changing, consumer insights do not provide in depth information that can help in predicting the upcoming trends but it helps in maintaining the competitive advantage (Widjaja, 2022). Thus, in case of Unilever, UK the organisation introduces both new as well as improved items as per the requirement of the consumers so that they stick with Unilever's branded products.

🌈 **Collaboration:** As per the IMC model, Unilever works with NGOs, government of UK and various stakeholders to bring change that is beneficial for the business as well as the society (Kerr *et al.*, 2023). Thus, the organisation constantly works with the business partners especially to improve the supply chain for creating needful innovations in the items and their packaging.

🌈 **Innovation:** One of the strong points of Unilever, UK has been the research and development. The organisation's mission of research and development is to unlock technology and innovation for bringing necessary improvements and launch new branded services and products for its wide range of consumers.

🚦 **Marketing:** It should be known that Unilever is a consumer and marketing oriented business organisation and therefore it focuses on attaining advantages from different platforms so that it can both create as well as reach engagement (Blakeman, 2023). The organisation for its marketing and promotions of products, services and brands uses digital media along with other platforms to influence its consumers via various channels.

4. Current Promotions of Unilever

Unilever being a consumer and marketing oriented business organisation, it promotes all its products and services belligerently due to the competitive challenge in the UK market. The promotional mix of the organisation uses the marketing communication tactics like advertising (primary), public relations, sales promotion, personal selling, and direct marketing. Over the years it has been observed that advertising has been the primary way of promoting the products and services of Unilever (Chen and Li, 2020). Most of the organisation's brands have different sort of advertisements telecasted on online media and television. Unilever occasionally uses various sales promotions like product bundles and discounts to attract and retain its consumers. For e.g. certain products are sometimes offered in bundles at a much less price. In a similar manner, public relations endeavours are made, together with the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) strategies and programs associated to stakeholder management for both communities and environment with the aim of enhancing the brand strength and corporate image (Rosin *et al.*, 2023). The organisation also executes personal selling sometimes collaborating with various retailers for operating kiosks for promotional events and specific occasions. Lastly, direct marketing is the promotional method which is least significant in the marketing mix of Unilever. This particular method comprises of directly connecting with the client companies for promoting the proper services and products (Jevtic ad Milovanovic, 2023). Thus, it can be said that the organisation mainly relies on the primary aspect i.e. advertising which influences the overall consumer perception about the consumer products and services offered by Unilever, UK.

4.1.New Promotional Strategies to raise Brand Awareness

Brand awareness can be defined as a measure of how well consumers recognize the brand and how aware that the brand exists. To be precise, it is more than an individual metric it is termed as a concept that considers various KPIs to enhance the brand recognition (Reza, 2020). Assessing the importance of brand awareness and brand recognition, new

promotional strategies need to be implemented in case of Unilever UK. Thus, the following are some of the promotional strategies among many that can be taken into consideration for raising the brand awareness of Unilever in the UK market.

🚩 **Creation of Shareable Infographics:** In the modern era of social media, shares are immensely important for reaching out to new audiences. The audiences ensure that the content gets viewed by many people beyond the follower base. This is quite true in case of social media platforms where algorithm help shares from various sources over posts from different brands (Iglesias *et al.*, 2023). Thus, Unilever can emphasise on infographic content formats that can be easy to understand, fun to read and visually engaging. It has been noted that adding visuals in bog posts get more engagement and Unilever can use this as a promotional strategy for enhancing its brand awareness among new consumers.

🚩 **Referral Program:** Though, Unilever performs this promotional strategy for raising brand awareness but they have the opportunity to enhance its potential. A referral program not only enhances the reach but it also brings the needful awareness from a significant source that people trust i.e. family and friends (Mañosca *et al.*, 2022). Like other organisations Unilever must offer their consumers' discounts on purchases whey they are refer anyone who also receives a discount while purchasing. This way the organisation can mobilize the brand for spreading awareness and also attract new consumers (Reza, 2020).

🚩 **Developing a Voice for the Brand:** This strategy can help Unilever to be sticky in the consumers' minds. The voice of the brand can be smart, emotional, funny or sentimental but it must be true and associated with the brand and the audiences (Goyal, 2022). Unilever has the opportunity to make its brand memorable and endure shareability by developing strong brand voices. In the long run, it can be immensely beneficial to create awareness in the market.

🚩 **Starting a Podcast:** Unilever can opt for creation of podcast for attaining greater brand awareness which can add more value to the lives of the consumers. Podcast can help in commenting about the industry, the products and services being offered (Kingsnorth, 2022). The main aspect is to consider the parts the team members are the experts as it could leverage and develop an appropriate content that can add value to the lives of the listeners along with creating wonders in raising the brand awareness.

5. Branding and Brand Equity

Branding is defined as the procedure of creating a positive and strong perception of an organization, its services or products in the mind of the consumers by combining key elements throughout various marketing communications. Effective branding enables business organisations differentiate themselves from the competitors and put up a loyal consumer base (Parris and Guzman, 2023). On the other hand, brand equity mainly refers to the specific value of a brand that adds to a service or product. It is considered as an emotional attachment or positive perception that the customers have towards a brand which can impact the buying decisions and loyalty towards the brand.

6. Aaker's Brand Equity Model

Evaluating the operations of Unilever, UK it can be stated that that organisation over the years have made significant advancement in branding and creation of brand equity. To have an in-depth understanding of these aspects Aaker's brand equity model will be discussed. David Aaker (1996) categorised brand equity into few key categories i.e. brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets.

✚ **Brand Loyalty:** The most effective way to measure a brand's value is loyalty that engenders among the consumers. Assessing the scenario of Unilever, UK it can be stated that loyalty reflects a competence motive (Górska-Warsewicz, 2020). The organisation over the years has been quite good and this has automatically led to attract and retain the consumers. It should be known that the strongest type of loyalty is attachment and the organisation has been able to create channel created loyalty where the consumer looks for product due to the deference to the role in previous situation (Ahmed et al., 2023) This sort of loyalty level has insulated Unilever, UK from competitive pressures and led to higher profits and revenue margins.

✚ **Brand Awareness:** Familiarity is considered as the simplest type of brand equity. A brand with which the consumers are familiar provides a feeling of risk reduction and thus is more likely to be chosen. It is similar with the case of Unilever as the consumers trust as well as familiar with the products of the organisation (Pina and Dias, 2021). Choosing the brand allows the justification for the decision made by the consumers and it also give out a social role, specifying that the consumer has purchased something valuable.

- ✚ **Perceived Quality:** Unilever, UK has been a known brand and it often expresses an aura of quality. The quality association can be of general sort, category or attributes specific and in some scenarios synonymous category or strong price association that can impact the perceptions of the quality (Cornwell *et al.*, 2023). In case of Unilever the association is category specific as it deals with various brands that offer distinctive value. Thus, the strong quality association of the organisation exists for the brands and the products which help the organisation gain a competitive advantage.
- ✚ **Brand Association:** Unilever specifically focuses on both personal and emotional associations along with geographic region. The organisation focuses on segmenting its consumers based on their requirements and needs. This aspect provides the organisation in forming a brand personality for every situation for which a certain brand is suitable (Marques *et al.*, 2020). As, the brand Unilever has strong foothold in the UK market it utilises all these associations that can help the user of the products satisfied.
- ✚ **Brand Assets:** Unilever emphasizes on brand assets like trademarks and patents as they are immensely valuable to the organisation. The patents and trademarks help the brand to be unique compared to the competitors in the market (Ekinci *et al.*, 2023). But, these are excluded from brand equity as they are fixed to the physical process and product and not any specific brand but it adds to the credibility of organisation as development of these assets helps Unilever to gain a competitive edge over others (Doddy *et al.*, 2020).

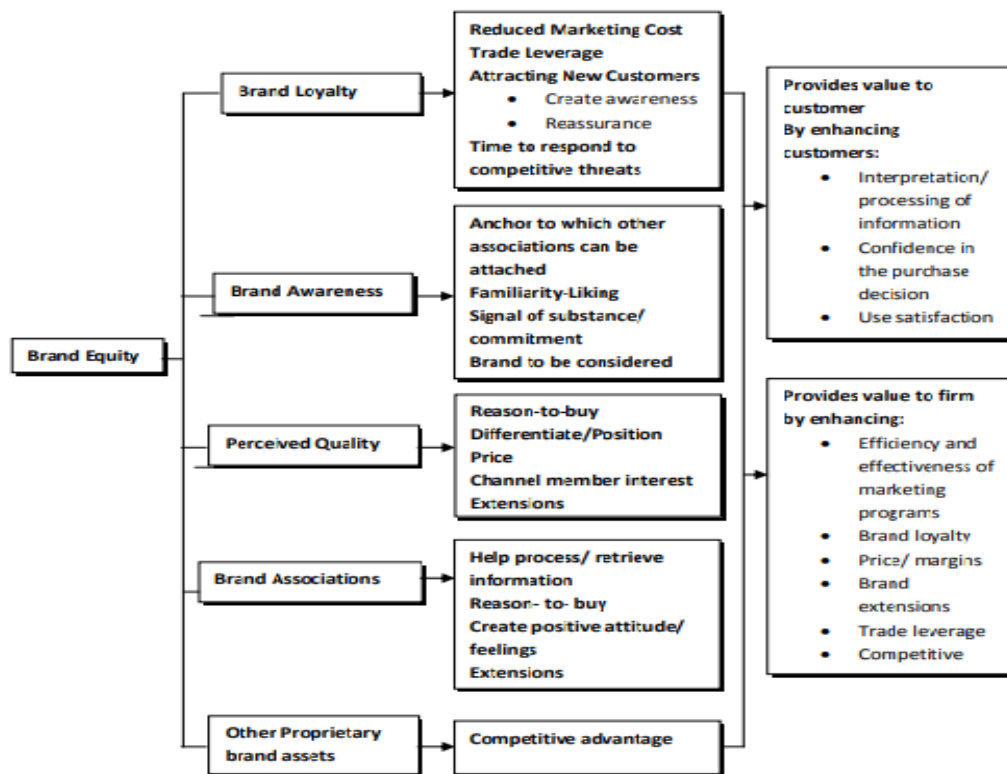


Figure 2: Aaker's Model of Brand Equity

Source: David A. Aaker, 1996

6.1. Advantages and Disadvantages

Analysing the brand equity model of Aaker it can be stated that, there are certain advantages and disadvantages associated to it. Firstly, the model proposed by Aaker is a equity model based on consumer satisfaction and loyalty which provides value to the consumers. It allows getting deep insights about the brand and identifies the position and the way its performing compared to its competitors. Aaker considered it to be a significant concept that helps building the brand identity and the elements adds value to the products and determine the brand equity. Although, Aaker in his proposed model did not point out a sole measure associated to brand equity, but categorised into five different dimensions. To be precise, this model only provides an indication towards a group of items that can be added to be determined. It is not at all clear which and how of these items can be collective to acquire the brand valuation.

7. Consumer Journey

Consumer Journey is defined as the distinctive experiences that an individual goes through while the interaction process with the business organisation or brand. Apart from looking only into experience or transaction the consumer journey entirely assesses the

experience of being the apparent customer (Tueanrat *et al.*, 2021). Evaluating the scenario of Unilever the following critically highlights the organisation's consumer journey in detail.

- ✚ **Awareness:** Unilever focuses on enhancing the consumer awareness and focuses on understanding the needs of the consumer. Thus, the organisation performs research and acquires relevant information based on which advertising on various platforms are done so the consumer can be targeted (Koch *et al.*, 2023) By advertising on distinctive platforms the consumer becomes familiar about the brand Unilever and the products being offered.
- ✚ **Consideration:** It has been observed lately that the consumers have lost faith on marketing communications and advertising. Instead of that they trust the opinions and words of the peers, mainly family and friends while purchasing. Thus, Unilever, UK has prominently features testimonials on different channels (Ludwiczak, 2021). The organisation provides information about how it has helped other customers has helped to gain trust among the consumers. Also product demonstrations, blog posts, FAQs and reviews. These key factors provide the consumer of the organisation realise the need that must be met which leads to actively considering purchasing form Unilever.
- ✚ **Purchasing:** This stage is termed as the decision stage where the consumer finishes the decision making and considers buying the product they need. Unilever has been quite transparent about the costs providing authentic pricing along with outstanding features of the product. This helps the customers to gain the trust and faith over the organisation and also opting for buying products of Unilever over its competitors.
- ✚ **Retention:** Unilever values its consumer immensely and therefore the organisation looks forwards in providing proper guidance to the consumers or the communities. The organisation provides assistance both online and offline modes as per the convenience of the customers (Tanveer *et al.*, 2021). The organisation strictly emphasizes on after sales services and assistance which has helped in retaining its old consumers and attracting new considers. This highlights how important long term loyalty can be effective for the business.
- ✚ **Advocacy:** Unilever's flawless products and services is the main USP and the huge consumer base of the organisation spreads the word about the products and the services. The organisation has opted for various advocacy strategies to deal with any

sort of criticism; in case of any negative feedback the organisation tries to accurately solve the issue in a positive manner (Tueanrat *et al.* 2021). Unilever also keeps close eyes on the digital media platforms so that any issues persisting can be resolved instantly.

8. Consumer Touchpoints

Consumer touchpoints are defined to the interaction points of the consumer and the brand. Consumer touchpoint is developed every time he audience or consumer interacts with the service or brand. The touchpoints are categorized in three sections i.e. touchpoints before purchasing, touchpoints during the purchase, and touchpoints after the purchase (Koch and Hartmann, 2022). In case of Unilever before the purchase there are five major touchpoints which are company website, consumer reviews, social media platforms, advertisements and friends and family. These touchpoints play a crucial role to provide relevant information about the products or services the consumers seek to purchase. For example, consumers before purchasing researches about the products or services from various digital media platforms like company blogs, reviews given by other consumers and social media engagement (Beverland *et al.*, 2023). These platforms provide all sorts of relevant information to the consumers to gain relevant knowledge before proceeding with the decision to buy the product or not. In similar manner ads running on television also provides the information about various products and its uses by which the consumers understand about any product launch or the new trends in the market (Sulaiman, 2022). Lastly, the peers are also considered as a major touchpoint as in the modern era consumers tend to buy products trusting the opinions of their peers before purchasing a product. During the purchase, the touchpoints associated to Unilever consumers include conversations with the organisation representatives, product reviews, product catalogues and point of sale. The most significant touchpoint is the conversation with the company representatives where the consumers are eager to get some relevant information and knowledge about the product and various ways it can be beneficial (Rodrigues and Coelho, 2021). Also, the consumers go through the catalogues and seek information about the reviews associated to the product being purchased. Lastly, the touchpoints after purchase are immensely important for the organisation and therefore Unilever focuses on product feedback surveys, subscription renewals and thank you e-mails (especially for online purchasers). The feedback surveys allow the organisation to get a feedback from the consumers based on which needful alterations can be made to enhance the consumer

experience (Mu and Zhang, 2021). Renewing of subscription for the consumers helps in gaining trust from the consumers and they feel valued. Also thank you e-mails for online purchasers gives the consumers the sense of being valued and feels acknowledged being a part of the Unilever family.

9. Consumer Journey Mapping

Unilever, UK has different types of consumers, and each has their unique journey. This section will evaluate and map the consumer journey of the organisation. The quality of the product and maintaining it is immensely crucial. Unilever work with the supply chain and manufacturers of different brands to assure quality products are produced every time and also enforce various rules as per the new standards, trends and requirement of the consumers to increase the quality of the product (Thomas et al., 2020). Unilever spends quality time on training and coaching of the representatives. For providing seamless consumer experience in all outlets, every representative is provided with proper training to provide all information and help the consumers while interacting (Ludwiczak, 2021). Considering the fact that Unilever's focus is consumer happiness the organisation's staffs and representatives are friendly and shows interest in assisting the consumers. These aspects of Unilever are applicable of consumer journey map.

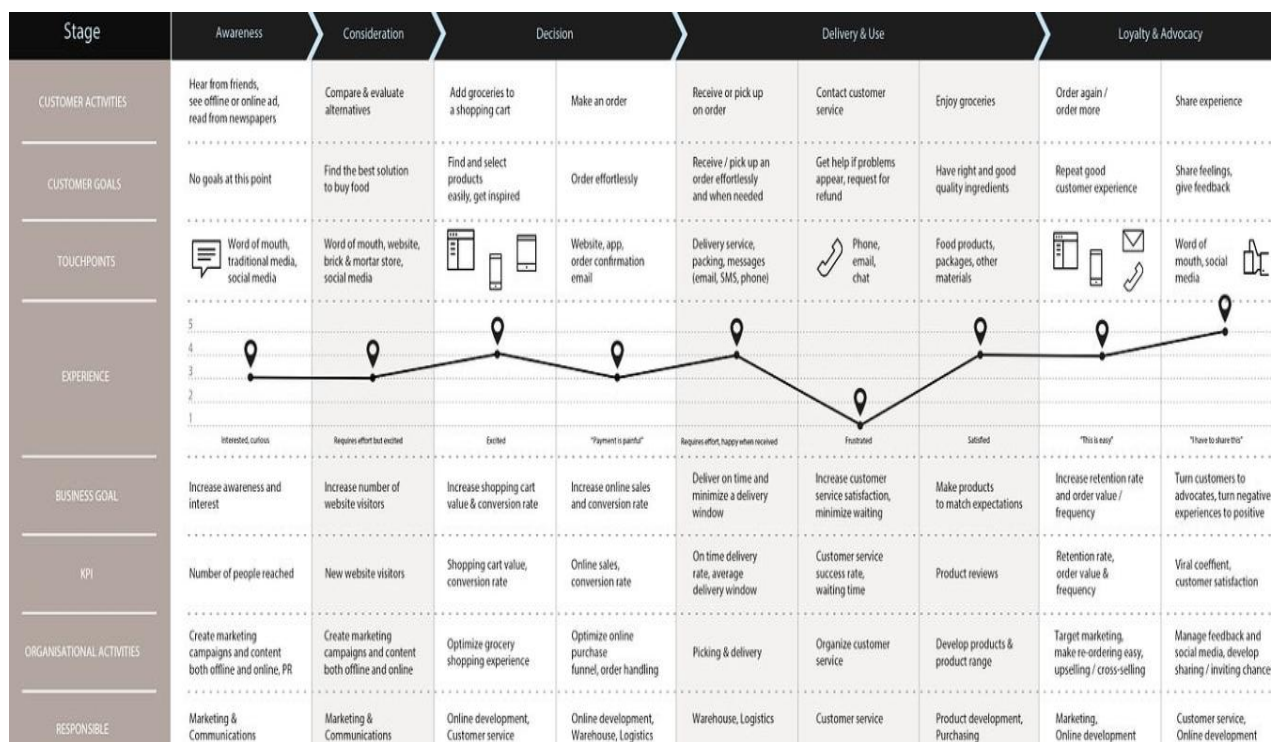


Figure 3: Customer Journey Map

Source: (Self-Developed)

10. Total Engagement Model

To have in-depth insights about consumers' end to end journey of Unilever, UK it is immensely essential to understand how an engaged consumer is loyal to the brand and actively refers the services and products of the brand to others (Lee *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the total engagement model is the most suitable model that would highlight the creation of engaged consumers. This model mainly emphasizes on four key aspects i.e. consumer value propositions, brand advertising, culture, and consumer experience.

🚦 **Consumer Value Proposition (CVP):** Unilever, UK is immensely focused in providing adequate value for money to its wide range of consumer. The products and services offered by the organisation meet the demand and requirements of the consumers. It is one of the most significant factors which have helped Unilever in gaining consumer trust and faith (Bilro and Loureiro, 2020). It can be said that the consumer value proposition is the USP of the organisation which attracts the consumers to purchase Unilever products compared to the other competitors operating in the market.

🚦 **Brand Advertising:** Unilever, UK has utilised this strategy to build consumer loyalty and enhanced its consumer base. The organisation especially telecasts advertisements on television and various online media platforms. The organisation targets the psychology of the consumers and uses various sales promotions like product bundles and discounts to advertise the brand (Kelley *et al.*, 2022). The organisation regularly updates their websites and social media platforms to enhance the consumer engagement with the intention of reaching more people.

🚦 **Culture:** The organisation has been quite prolific in maintaining both the internal and external culture. Over the years the organisation has designed the goals, values and behaviours for creating an environment which has helped the staffs in increasing their capability to continuously deliver quality consumer experience and value proposition of the brand (Carvalho *et al.*, 2019). For this the organisation provides training to its staff and representatives on regular basis which helps in assisting the consumers and resolving their issues. Unilever, UK also provides their employees, staffs and representatives with added benefits like gift hampers, bonuses, increments etc. which boosts their morale and dedication towards the organisation.

🌈 **Consumer Experience:** To consistently provide quality consumer experience the organisation provides after sales services and seeks to gain feedbacks. The main motive is to understand the things that need to perform better (Hu and Chaudhry, 2020). Considering the fact, that consumer experience is an amalgamation of both emotional and physical elements, when they interrelate with the organisation and the brand. Thus, Unilever's consumer development team works together with the consumers to initiate new concepts, products and categories that enable to understand the needs of the consumers.

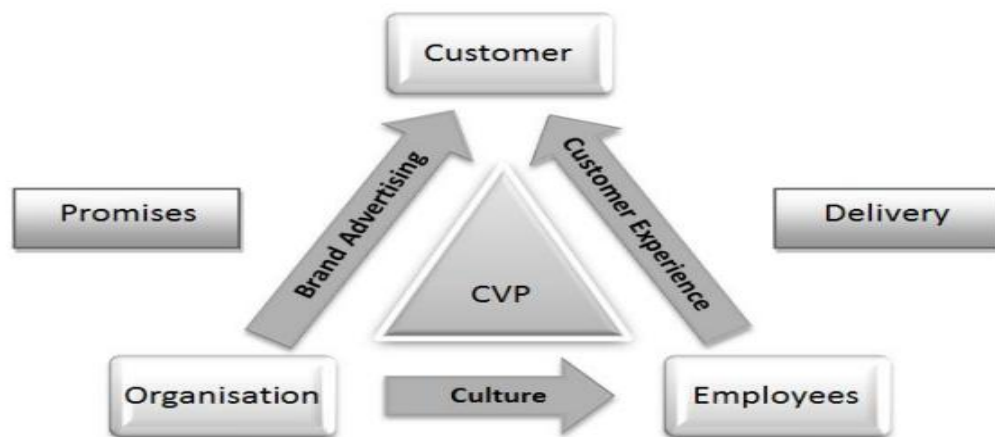


Figure 4: The Total Engagement Model

Source: Roberts and Alpert, 2010

11. Conclusion

Critically analysing and evaluating the operations of Unilever, UK it can be hereby concluded that the organisation has been quite significant in regards to consumer satisfaction by emphasizing on the key touchpoints. But, on the other hand it is necessary for Unilever to put more attention on the end to end journey of the consumers. Though, it has been observed that the organisation utilises all its resources to facilitate the journey of the consumers but more modifications and strategy implementation are required that will help in creating a balance among both consumer satisfaction and consumer's end to end journey. The paper therefore highlighted key concepts and models that can be quite favourable for Unilever, UK in the long run to enhance the consumer experience understand the behavioural pattern of the consumers.

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