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Executive Summary

This report aims to discover the critical thinking approaches within the company of Tesco PLC. The choice of company was concluded after extensive research upon different sized companies in the private, public and voluntary sector. Tesco PLC became an evident choice due to the long history it has of operating on the British and international markets, during numerous existing crises in the past years. Furthermore, the company has proven to be sustainable during the pandemic and an analysis of the impact COVID-19 has had on the workplace values of staff within Tesco PLC will be conducted in this report. Moreover, to understand the impact of the pandemic, it has been necessary to analyse the current and past workplace values, beliefs, and attitudes and highlight traits, as well as advantages and disadvantages of the approach. The report will assess the functionality of the approach within Tesco PLC through application of various management theories and critical thinking models including Elton Mayo's management theory, the Taylor Scientific Theory, and the RED critical thinking model. Finally, recommendations will be made for the improvement of the workplace critical thinking for the future of Tesco PLC's operations.

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Introduction

Critical thinking as described by Chatfield (2017) is setting out actively to understand what is really going on by using reasoning, evaluating evidence, and thinking carefully about the process of thinking itself. In the workplace context, critical thinking is required for the undertaking of small and big decisions, including financing, recruitment, investment, and other operational processes. In order to understand how critical thinking is applied within the workplace context, it is necessary to use an existing company which has a chain of successful years whether it is in regard to finances or other types of success. For this purpose, the company to be analysed in this report is Tesco PLC – a British retail company providing essential products to consumers both in Britain and abroad. Tesco PLC was founded in 1919 in London as a single market stall and has expanded since to own nearly 5000 stores worldwide and employs nearly 400,000 people. (Tesco PLC, 2021) Therefore, it has become evident, that the approach undertaken by Tesco PLC towards critical thinking and market development has proven successful in the past century, since the company has become a trusted partner to consumers both in the United Kingdom and beyond. Since the business can be deemed as successful, it is a great example for analysis of the workplace critical thinking approaches, as well as approaches to management.

In 2021, one of the main issues met by businesses globally is the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic which made numerous businesses stop their operations, or re-arrange them, to minimise the spread of the virus and keep the communities safe. Since Tesco PLC is one of the main food and essentials supplier for the United Kingdom, a halt of operations was not possible, however a re-thinking of strategy for this state of emergency

was necessary. This report will analyse the impact coronavirus had upon the operations of Tesco PLC and more importantly the impact it had on the critical thinking and management approaches within the business. Moreover, to understand the span of the impact, there will be a discussion of the current values, beliefs and attitudes within the Tesco PLC workplace and analyse their efficiency for the company's success as well as the consumer and employee satisfaction.

Finally, existing management theories and critical thinking models will be analysed, applied, and compared to the current approaches towards management and critical thinking which Tesco PLC uses today. In this manner, the significance of organisational beliefs, values and value systems will be understood in comparison to the operational and management approaches the company has chosen to undertake. Overall, this report aims to develop an understanding of the critical thinking approaches within business organisations and how they impact the workforce and the organisational culture within the company.

The Importance of Critical Thinking for the Company

Tesco is one of the largest supermarket chains in the United Kingdom and they currently own over 4008 stores in the UK according to Statista (2021) and nearly 5000 stores across the world. However, the competitive advantage which Tesco PLC has created for themselves over the years is the provision of a few supermarket formats to their consumers across the globe. This includes Tesco Metro, Tesco Extra, Tesco Express, and even an ecommerce side of the company which can be found at www.tescopl.com. As mentioned by Home (2020), Tesco PLC is one of the largest supermarket chains in the world after Walmart and Carrefour. Considering all this information regarding the operations of Tesco PLC, it is

necessary to mention that during the pandemic in 2020 the group sales of the company surpassed 53 billion pounds, which has a considerable increase of 1 billion compared to the previous annum. (Tesco PLC, 2021) This is an incredible achievement considering the launch of Tesco one century ago as a single market stall in the city of London. Critical thinking has an impact on every company across the globe including Tesco PLC. This is because critical thinking is essential for the constant analysis and evaluation of the market, the internal operations and their effectiveness for the business aims and objectives to be successfully reached.

This is closely interrelated with the organizational culture of the company or in other words the way Tesco PLC presents itself both internally and externally. The organizational culture is essential for the development of a work environment where the employees are satisfied, as if they are not satisfied, they will not be as productive as they can and they will not necessarily find benefits in the work, or motivation. On the other hand, if the workforce is satisfied, the work being done will be more efficient and can lead to successful outcomes for such a large company as Tesco PLC is. However, for such results to be achieved, Tesco PLC requires an internal analysis of operations and employee engagement, alongside an evaluation of the external impacts the company is facing. This will lead to an examination of the company's current and future opportunities and threats, which will be analysed through a SWOT Analysis. Furthermore, after Tesco PLC has evaluated its current resources and a strategic plan has been developed, resources can be spread accordingly for the long-term advantage of the organization. This will then further examine the efficiency of managing functions and will lead to the opportunity to organize the company in the most successful way.

Overall, the importance of critical thinking for the company is severe, as without it, the management of the organization would not be able to take decisions upon any of the organizational functions including human resources, operations, sales, finance and accounting, and customer service. Furthermore, if the critical thinking of various leaders and management is lacking in the organization, they would not be able to perform equally as well during the COVID-19 crisis in the past year. Hence, they would not have been able to engage the necessary protective actions in their stores for the well-being of the workforce and the community. Therefore, the critical thinking and decision-making in different departments made the transition to a different style of product delivery to the customers who required it. This ability to cope in a crisis led to the turnover of over 53 million pounds. In the next section, there will be a discussion and analysis upon the workplace values, beliefs, and attitudes in Tesco PLC, especially considering the past difficulties experienced by the business and the community.

Workplace Values, Beliefs and Attitudes Analysis

“Organizational culture is defined as a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are shared by members of an organization.” (Gregory, 2009) The workplace values, beliefs and attitudes are extremely important to an organisation, especially one with the scope of operations and sales as large as Tesco’s. Therefore, the understanding of smooth behavioural patterns which involve productivity and motivation is necessary for an exact understanding. Tesco Careers (2021) examines the approach which the company has chosen to adapt towards its employees, and it involves the following. Firstly, the business respects diversity and is focused upon providing an equal opportunity to the individuals who need it

and are looking for professional development. Secondly, Tesco PLC has intense focus upon the well-being of all employees of the business and approaches employee training through developing a sense of togetherness in all employees, for the shared purpose. This shared purpose is the third approach Tesco PLC has taken towards business values and beliefs, and it involves the delivery of the necessary products and services to consumers for their happiness and satisfaction.

Tesco PLC ensures all employees are motivated to arrive to their job, despite of the level or department they are working in, through the provision of a package of employee benefits from the initial day of work. These incentives include discount card for the employee and a second card for a family member after three months of employment. (Tesco Careers, 2021). However, despite of these monetary and non-monetary incentives which Tesco PLC provides its employees with, this does not necessarily provide all employees with equal levels of satisfaction. Hence, this entails that not all employees are equally motivated and productive in their daily responsibilities, which means that the employee results are not the same. However, in the case of Tesco PLC it will be beneficial to discuss the differences between workplace values, beliefs, and attitudes.

The values of the company include the basis upon which it has set all its operations including the importance of tolerance of diversity, equal rights despite individual background, the dedication to ethical and environmentally friendly production and delivery of goods to its consumers. Through these values are then created the beliefs of each employee based on their personal viewpoints and understanding. However, certain beliefs are required for the individual to be able to perform according to company values and to not execute wrong doings which are not in accordance with the company and employee

code. According to Mullins and McLean (2019) the study and understanding of individual and group behaviour and patterns of structure and management is necessary in order to help improve organisational performance and effectiveness. This study provides a close viewpoint upon the shared organisational behaviour and the traits in employee attitude. Organisational behaviour is extremely important as it combines traits such as the purpose of the organisation, the formal structure and relationships, the social responsibilities undertaken and the ethics of the company towards the external entities or stakeholders it influences.

The attitude of employees cannot be formed without the set of values which the company has provided at the start of their employment. However, whether or not the individual respond to their values is based not only on the individual, but also on the representation of said values by the team he is surrounded with and trained by. Hence, Tesco PLC can be impacted both positively and negatively through the lack of value recognition of employees, and the wrong attitudes being executed by the employees of any department of the company.

The Impact of Workplace Values During the Pandemic

The set workplace values at Tesco PLC have had incredible impact on the company's operations during the response to the outbreak of the international pandemic. Interestingly, the company was affected in various countries, not only one, because of the nature of their international operations. This impact has been severe, as the different countries where the business has stores and branches, operate under different governments, hence have a different reaction to the pandemic outbreak. While some immediately introduced lockdowns and safety measures, other nations responded to the virus a bit slow, which

means that the company was not obliged to follow the same set of actions in all branches and stores.

However, due to the organisational values Tesco PLC has created during the years, the company and its board of directors aimed to make the gathering of necessities and provision of services as safe as possible during the pandemic. Furthermore, the company has dedicated a page on their website (Tesco PLC, 2021) which shares news of the actions being taken by the company to make the store operations easier and safer during these times. Such actions include the provision of a larger number of slots for home delivery of online orders, which provides the company to cover a larger amount of the consumer population and deliver their needs, while staying protected from the virus. Moreover, the company has provided a 'one-in, one-out system in every store which makes it possible to continue limiting the number of people in stores at all times. They have also created a traffic light system in the entrances of larger stores, as well as busier Tesco Express stores, which provides the customers with constant information of when it is safe to enter the store. (Tesco PLC, 2021). The company has also ensured that protective signs have been put in stores, for the continuous keeping of safe distances between people, as well as the implementation of hand sanitiser stations around the stores, for the use of both customers and workforce. This is beneficial, as it allows consumers to use the hand sanitiser for the cleaning of trolley which have been previously used by other customers. Lastly, Tesco PLC has equipped all Tesco delivery drivers with disposable gloves, alcohol-based hand gel and wipes, face coverings and cleaning equipment. (Tesco PLC, 2021).

This continuous action taken by the company for the ensuring of employee and consumer safety from the coronavirus is an evident portrayal of following their organisational values

despite the crisis and the use of critical thinking for the benefit of the company's stakeholders. This commitment is surely evident in the eyes of customers and has affected the positive outcomes for the company both financially and the community-based opinions and loyalty.

Assessment of Management Theories

The assessment of various management theories will provide the opportunity to evaluate the various approaches in the current state of the company. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, two management theories will be considered. Firstly, the examination of Frederick Taylor's scientific management theory will be conducted as it is seen to be the classical management theory used by businesses across the globe. Taylor's scientific management theory focuses on the efficiency of a company, where employees are highly regarded, and even though there is an authoritative approach, the management does not have the practice of scolding employees or firing them based on small mistakes made by them. Taylor's management theory is a worthy reference, as the management of employees use both financial and non-financial rewards to increase and improve employee productivity and motivation. In this manner, if a person makes a mistake, he will not have to worry about getting fired, but instead, he receives the focus and attention he requires to achieve his work efficiently in the future.

Taylor's scientific management theory has a close interlink to Tesco and its management approach, as the motivated individuals usually are so due to the external incentives provided by the company. Similarly, Tesco provides a variety of benefits to all its workers to ensure their contentment and motivation once they enter the workplace. For example,

Tesco has been using an employee reward program which has been previously mentioned in the report, and it provides financial aid to employees who are thus motivated through said incentives. Nevertheless, Tesco not only supports its employees financially, but they also have an increased interest and focus on providing support for the interests of workers, through their provision of various benefits. Through this approach, it can be stated that the employees of the international conglomerate can and will have developed loyalty towards the company and the brand, which will be noticed in the improvement of customer service activities and internal communications. It is evident that Tesco aims to support and take care of its employees through which an impact can be noticed on the job satisfaction levels, as well as the decrease in employee turnover levels. Through creating a pleasurable working environment, Tesco states to their workforce that they wish for them to feel valued and believe that the employees understand their importance in the achieving of organisational goals.

According to Taylor's scientific management theory, each worker has a specific skill set which should be regarded as unique and work regarding their skill set should be provided to employees. This can have a beneficial impact on teamwork, job satisfaction, as well as the execution of work responsibilities by staff across the chain. Interestingly, Tesco is a believer in team communication, and they insist upon healthy communication between different levels and departments, which has a serious effect on the performance of the company. Through these communicational methods, Tesco PLC ensures that all employees have a healthy environment, free of any bias, and beneficial outcomes. As Tesco is a very large business organisation, it must have an increased focus on the training, learning, and development of employees within the company. This provides them with the ability to build and craft an equal understanding between all employees, assist them in skill gathering or

improvement, and leads to job satisfaction. Furthermore, Tesco is known for the conduction of constant surveys for the workforce, for the achievement of shared views across the chain. Through the surveys, all employees are invited to share their personal opinions about the job and the operations of the company, through which Tesco can assess its operational efficiency. With the assistance of said surveys Tesco can identify the areas where the business requires further attention for its operational improvement, as well as for the job satisfaction of the workforce.

It is worth mentioning that Tesco provides its workforce with a paid holiday between four and twelve weeks in a year, depending on the position of the employee and their contract, alongside another list of benefits that all employees receive. This is an evolved version of the Taylor scientific management approach, which is in accordance with the evolving of markets, businesses, and consumer needs, as well as workforce requirements. It is evident that Tesco wishes to take the best care of their employees, which is closely intertwined with their desire to support customers and make them satisfied with their experiences within the company.

Tesco can motivate its employees further through the application of Herzberg two-factor theory which is used for the assistance of motivating and empowering employees. This motivation is done through the implementation of effective communication and the efficiency of internal processes. The importance of employees within this theory is vital, as they can influence important changes within the company including the products which the business offers to its consumers. Hence, it would be beneficial if the company would regard its employees as representatives of the various aspects of their target segments. This would provide them with the opportunity to scale further by applying employee thoughts and

advice on the products and services they offer to customers from different segments. This will not only be beneficial for the levels of customer satisfaction, but it will be equally beneficial for the workforce of the company which is being asked for their opinion.

Furthermore, employees will feel encouraged towards the making of decisions which can lead to an improvement in operational practices across Tesco stores.

Evidently, Tesco PLC has recognised that employees need to fulfil their personal potential in order to feel motivated and productive in the workplace. As the business is continuously evolving and improving its operational approaches on various levels, it has become a leader in the food industry, and it has gained a fantastic reputation across job seekers looking to enter the industry. All managers should have an understanding of the different management theories and knowledge of how to apply said theories to the diverse employees of the company. In this manner, all managers would learn how to motivate their staff, hence maximizing their productivity. It is necessary to mention that all management theories applied in the context of Tesco PLC are regarded as different when the impact of coronavirus is analysed. Therefore, the outbreak of the pandemic has had severe effects on the managers of the company who have had to transform the operating processes of the stores across the world. In order to motivate employees despite the crisis, Tesco PLC has had to introduce health and safety regulations for the safety of their staff, alongside the ability for additional benefits to those who remain on the front line during the pandemic. Tesco PLC is one of the little chains which has continued to work during the pandemic, without having to close down their stores. Hence, they have experienced increased levels of stress since March 2020, when the global community was panically buying basic products to stock up for the months to come.

Critical Thinking Models Application

In the words of Cottrell (2017), critical thinking provides the tools for the use of skepticism and doubt constructively, so that an analysis of the occurrence can be conducted.

Furthermore, it provides the ability to make better and more informed decisions about whether something is true, effective or productive. Therefore, through the application of critical thinking models in regard to effective management theory execution, the managers of Tesco can effectively manage and control the work of their staff. Moreover, this will inherently lead to the achievement of goals and objectives and the efficiency of all aspects of the business during their working hours. The use of critical thinking models such as the RED model and SWOT analysis is necessary for the making of recommendations for the future of Tesco in accordance with its employees, its consumers and its operating processes. According to Talent Lens (2013), critical thinking can be organised into a "RED Model," an organising framework to facilitate learning. The RED model includes three sections which stand for each letter – 'R' stands for the recognition of assumptions, hence noticing and questioning the made assumptions for the revealing of information which may have been missing in the past. Evaluation of arguments is behind the 'E' in the RED model, and it considers the art of evaluation of arguments for the accurate and objective analysis, as well as the questioning of evidence quality. Finally, the 'D' is constructed to draw conclusions through gathering the diverse information together and to decide based on the good judgement of the analyst.

Recognise Assumptions

The key issue for Tesco PLC today is to cope with the increase of consumer demands and train its employees efficiently, for there to be a lack of burnout and efficient operations

within the company. While the market segment interested in Tesco's products and services is broad, the needs and requirements of all people remain similar. The key stakeholders of the company's issues are all suppliers, employees, owners, consumers, and importantly – the government. Should Tesco PLC stop its operations abruptly, the government might experience increased issues as there will be a lower number of available products for the basic needs of staff. Therefore, it would be positive to both Tesco PLC and the British government, if a practice is introduced for the support of the business increased demands during the pandemic.

Evaluate Arguments

The benefits and drawbacks exist for any strategy implemented by a business, despite the time and place. In the case of the above proposed strategy some advantages include the stability of the company due to its partnership with the British government to introduce all products the community needs without straining its operational abilities. On the other hand, the government's assistance would lead to higher expectations and a further increase in consumer demands. Therefore, the choice of whether to partner with the government should be made after a critical analysis of the pros and cons and an evaluation of the best practices to be taken. Should the company decide to operate in partnership with the government, this would lead to severe changes in the operational layer of the company, alongside a change in management approach and employee relations. This could be dismissed in the case of a silent partnership from the side of the government. This partnership does not necessarily involve monetary investments by the government, but alternatively the proposition of easing operational difficulties through suppliers, tax relief or others.

Draw Conclusions

The arguments provided lead to a positive conclusion for the future dealings of Tesco PLC.

The opportunity to work in partnership with the government would be beneficial for the business, for the government, and for the customers. However, decisions must be made about the benefits for the employees of Tesco PLC in the event of partnering with the government. Such decisions should be made in no more than a month so that further action can be taken by the company.

SWOT Analysis of Tesco

As previously mentioned, Tesco is one of the world's largest supermarket chains that operate on several continents. For the continuous and sustainable maintenance of a leading position in the industry, the company should annually assess its internal operations and external impacts through the conduction of a SWOT analysis. This SWOT analysis will introduce the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the company today and forecast future threats.

Strengths

Strengths of Tesco PLC include its leading position in the product and service industries, as one of the biggest and most successful supermarket brands in the world. Furthermore, due to brand recognition and sustainability, the company has gained the loyalty and trust of consumers across the globe. Tesco is considered one of the most valuable brands in the world and it is recognized as a brand that provides value to its customers through introducing quality products at attractive prices. The company continuously introduces new

brands to the market including smaller chains such as Tesco Express, which is innovative and beneficial.

Weaknesses

As Tesco is one of the largest brands and provides a variety of goods to its consumers, this can lead to a series of disadvantages. Tesco Bank can lead the company to severe debt in the following periods and the company would have to deal with unnecessary losses. The company aims to continuously grow and improve, however through entering diverse markets, the company is risking its success through its lack of knowledge of the needs and requirements of the industry. Lastly, their e-commerce website is not as functional and efficient as it could be, which affects their customer relationships.

Opportunities

The business has diverse opportunities including the possibility of entering various industries and growing further. An opportunity for the company would be its digital expansion and its focus upon the digital world, which has become increasingly alluring to consumers across the world. Furthermore, Tesco should consider opening stores in developing countries such as Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thailand, Cuba, and more.

Threats

New threats are discovered every day, and as Tesco is a large business with many competitors it has various threats. The threat of competition being more lucrative to Tesco consumers remains a risk, due to the lower prices of stores such as Asda and Aldi. Due to the severe digital marketing presence of said companies, Tesco has been losing the

consumer base to its competitors. Lastly, the company is facing an urgent environmental threat which should be considered.

Recommendations

Each company should consider its current strengths and weaknesses when creating a strategic decision based on the crisis occurring. In the case of Tesco PLC, it would be beneficial for the company to focus upon its e-commerce presence, as this would not only provide the opportunity of reaching a larger segment but can also lead to a decrease in costs. Said decrease can continue if the company chooses to close some of its physical stores for the benefit of its digital presence. Such closing of stores would lead to an improved environmental presence, which could give the company a competitive advantage, which is competition is lacking. Lastly, a continuous and sustainable focus should be given to the company's employees across the globe and an assessment of employee efficiency should be conducted.

Conclusion

Through the acknowledgement and application of various management theories and critical thinking models, Tesco PLC can understand further the importance of leadership and management. Through this analysis, an evaluation has been made upon the efficiency of Tesco PLC in regard to the pandemic and the crisis introduced to the company by the coronavirus. In conclusion, recommendations have been made for the future improvement of the company's operations and the increased satisfaction of company employees.

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