

MARKETING MANAGEMENT MARKS AND SPENCER

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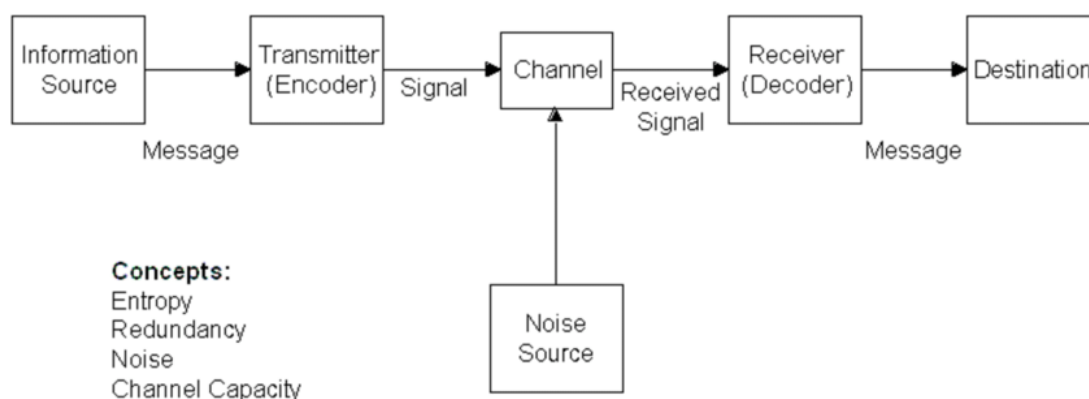
1.Introduction

Communication is a means of transferring meaningful information between groups that have a mutual understanding of semiotic rules, signs and or symbols (Craig, 1999).Traditionally, information is depicted to flow between a sender and a receiver through elements like the media, encoding and decoding(Lasswell, 1948). This process has evolved over time into process that are increasingly interactive and dynamic as posited by Kotler (2003).

1.1Communication models

There are several communication models used to as a framework for analysing the communication process, although each of the models falls under linear, transactional or the interactive models of communication with each model describing the communication process in its own unique way (Steinberg, 2007). It is imperative for a good communication model to be able to simplify and clarify the communication structure, offering clear understanding into what is being described (Mortensen, 1972).

Figure 1. Shannon and weaver communication model



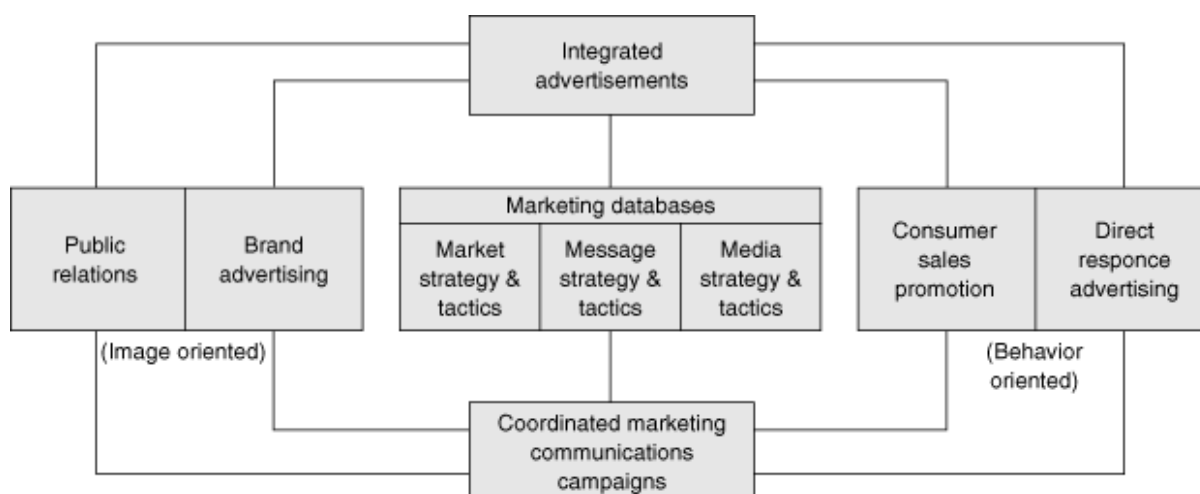
Source: Shannon and Weaver (1949)

As posited by Shannon and Weaver, (1949) the communication process involves the sender who originates the message, the encoder transmitting the message whilst converting it into signals. The decoder is used to convert signals into the understandable messages. The receiver is the destination of the sent message after which feedback is sent back to the sender. Noise tends to exist as the message moves through the channel causing distraction to the messages and hence the communication flow.

2. Integrated marketing communication (IMC)

Integrated marketing communication is defined as a range of processes used in communication a brand to prospective consumers, organisation employees, customers and associates as well as any targeted internal and external audiences with the intent to persuade them into liking or even buying the brand's products and services. Such processes may include brand communication programs that are well coordinated and persuasive as well as measurable by means of thorough planning and development before execution Schultz (2004a).

Figure 2. A typical setting of Integrated Marketing Communication



Kitchen and Burgmann (2010)

IMC can also be defined as the marketing communication plan concept that acknowledges the value added by comprehensively planning and evaluating the strategic role of several communication practices such as advertising, sales promotion, direct response as well as public relations, combining them to develop consistency, clarity and a lasting communication effect (Caywood *et al.*, 1991b).

2.1 Integrated Marketing Communication plan

Although M & S has made substantial progress, the company still wants to convert more of their changes in the cloth and home products into sales and customer loyalty. The company has however reported an increase in the number of customer and subsequent growth in the online sales from the clothing and home products in comparison with their competitors such as Waitrose, Next and Zara. Marks and Spencer is considered to be at the early stages of their marketing programme as per their strategic report (Marks and spencer, 2019).

2.3 M &S' IMC plan

According to Belch and Belch (2003) the six stages in an IMC plan include, situational or contextual analysis, target markets, communication objectives, budget, marketing mix strategies, and evaluation of the entire program as indicated below.

1. Situational or contextual analysis

At this stage of the IMC plan, the company would have to carry out a situational analysis both on a macro and micro level using tools and techniques such as SWOT analysis to examine both the company's internal and external environments. M & S capitalises on its strengths such as Strong brand recognition, along side the diverse group of popular brands such as Par Un and the classic collection. Furthermore M&S should take this opportunity to improve its declining positive brand perception.

2. Target Market

Companies use this stage to decide on the segmentation and targeting strategies, clearly defining whether to focus on the psychographic or demographic level with the aim of communicating the benefits of using the products or services. In the case of M & S more emphasis is put on the

demographics particularly capitalising on age, income and gender as evidenced in their women, and men's lingerie and home as well as the kids wear (www.corporate.marksandspencer.com, 2019).

3. *Communication objectives*

At this stage, the company has decided the brand communication objectives that need to be communicated to the selected target audience such as brand image enhancement, awareness development, increasing sales, reinforcing purchase decisions and changing customer beliefs. In this case M & S has the objective of increasing in sales, reinforcing purchase decisions and changing customer beliefs with the introduction of the Par una brand for the younger generation and kids wear (www.corporate.marksandspencer.com, 2019).

4. *Budget*

The company draws a budget based on the percentage profit, percentage of sales and objectives and tasks. According to M& S's strategic report, and an invest budget was setup to cater for the customer experience measurement by introducing the end to end promoter score programme that is multi-channelled (www.corporate.marksandspencer.com, 2019). Moreover, M&S passed a marketing budget of £88.9M in the year 2019 with the aim was of increasing its presence to access prospective customers on digital channels.

5. *Marketing mix*

The company selects the required marketing mix that matches the set communication objectives that is within budget. M&S applies a product marketing mix which capitalises on range branding and line extension. When it comes to the product mix, M & S uses direct channel distribution in which they sale products in their own stores as well as online. M&S uses the pricing strategy whereby the focus mostly on the sale of high-quality brands at a high price. Such brands include the classic collection and Par Una. M&S promotes its products through social and print media, mobile adds, website as well as TV channels, and celebrity endorsements (www.corporate.marksandspencer.com, 2019).

6. *Evaluation of the programme*

This final step involves evaluation of the IMC programme. The company employs the use of social media metrics, and analysing online traffic using google analytics track customer engagement with items. Marks and Spencer takes time to evaluate its IMC plan to ensure that it fits in line with the organisational design, objectives and model which aims at making M & S a digital first business that is customer centric. And for this to happen the company need to have a cross functional marketing strategies with measurable customer experience (www.corporate.marksandspencer.com, 2019).

5. *Makerting communication*

Market communications are used to control how prospects or customer get into contact with the brand. Such ways include interactive advertising and direct responses, media advertising, advertising through point of purchase, place advertising, consumer and trade promotions, public and publicity relations, sponsorship and event marketing as well as personal selling according to Keller (2001). Companies such as M & S use marketing communication as to develop a strong customer brand equity (Keller, 2003). Moreover, IMC is more than a just communication process; as such it is related to development and management of brands Kitchen *etal* (2004).

3 .M&S promotional strategies

M& S' marketing strategy has shifted from using TV ads to further investment into digital as well as social channels as the main promotional strategies. In 2019, M&S was observed to have reduce its

offline Black Friday promotional activity by 37% as well as the actual sales stock to a maximum of 25% (Faull, 2019).

3.1 Online promotions.

As M&S continues to push for the store closure program, the innate plan is to move a small percentage of its business online by 2024 (Faull, 2019). Furthermore, M&S should continue maximising the use of celebrity endorsement such as Holly Willoughby the creator of “Must Have”, who uses her social media channels to endorse M&S. Her endorsement of M&S on her social media channels such as Instagram can grant M&S access to approximately 3 million customers as posited by Faull (2019).

Moreover, the M&S has been reported to have funnelled a sizable amount of money into digital marketing as well as making online videos broadcasting several celebrities trying out M&S food products and giving their views.

3.2 Offline promotions.

The application of offline promotions to compliment online promotions forms a strong marketing strategy may give the brand bigger mileage (Montgomery, 2015). Several offline strategies could be adopted to M&S as shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Offline (face to face) and online promotion strategies



(Montgomery, 2015)

Speaking engagement

M&S could consider the use speaking engagements to promote its products through seminars conducted by associations. M&S could capitalise on the its wealth of experience in the industry to command respect and audience and this gives it access to its targeted audience.

Cold calling

M&S could also consider setting up a team of salespeople to make cold calls and engage prospective customers with the aim of selling M&S products to the customers. This could include the use of surveys to engage the customers.

Networking

M&S could capitalise on the strength of the brand to promote its products and services through meetings and associations. M&S could invest more in the network promotions.

4. Branding and Brand equity

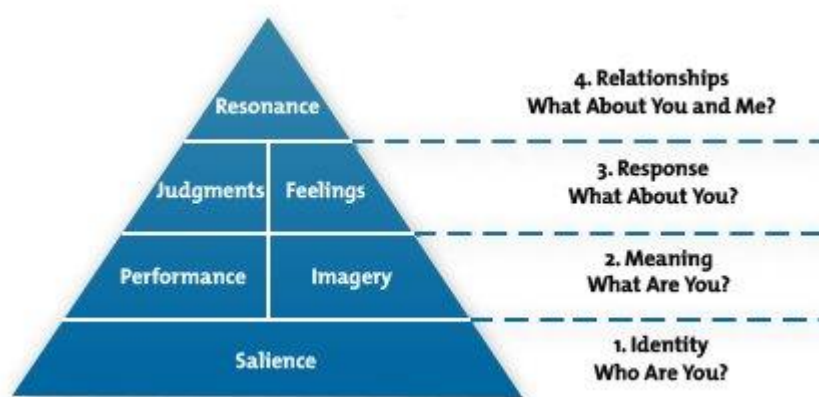
A brand is associated with a symbol, feature, name, design or term used to identify the difference sellers' products and services between according to Govers (2013). Branding involves the endowment of the brand power on the products and services (Kolter & Keller, 2015). Brand equity is defined as that brand knowledge aspect that enables the consumers to respond to the different marketing strategies of the brand aimed at creating the brand image and awareness and thus creating an image in the customer's mind (Keller, 1993).

Other researchers used to term brand equity to refer to the assets and liabilities related to the brand name, symbol and as such they may add or reduce the value of the product provided to the company's customers (Aaker, 1991). Moreover, in his definition, brand equity is broken down into the brand loyalty, awareness, perceived quality and associations.

4.1 Keller's brand equity Model

When a brand becomes the consumer's preferred memorable brand and hence creating a feeling of somewhat strong associate in the mind of the consumer according to Keller (1993) that brand therefore has attained brand equity. Furthermore, the CBBE model suggests that a strong brand goes through four main stages to attain brand equity; these stages include brand identity, brand meaning, brand response and lastly relationships. Essentially the four building blocks breakdown further into the six blocks of salience, imagery , performance, feelings, judgements and lastly resonance ultimately reaching the top of the CBBE pyramid where a relationship is established between the brand and its customers as shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 4. Keller's brand equity model



Source: Keller (2013)

Brand Identity: Salience

Building a strong brand requires one to make sure that the right identity is projected by the brand (Keller, 2003). Therefore, salience features such as category identification and customer satisfaction are used to create awareness as well as the consumption and purchase triggers to bring the brand to one's mind. Brand identification is created whereby the customers associate a class of product or need with their brand. As per M & S, the customers attach the quality, innovation and value to the M & S brand and according to the M&S strategic report (Marks and spencer, 2019).

Brand meaning: performance and imagery

At the second stage the company seeks to give the brand meaning in form of either intangible or tangible customer brand association. Features of the brand meaning include image and performance associations. The main attributes of the performance brand meaning comprise of the product serviceability, reliability and reliability (Keller, 2003). Other features include service empathy, efficiency and effectiveness as well as style design and price.

The images associations include intrinsic product properties such as usage and purchase situations, user profiles, values and personality, experiences, heritage and history (Keller, 2003). As per M&S they capitalise on the value and personality as well as the style price and design attributes of the

products. This is evidence in their brand collection such as Par Una, classic collection and in the general their stylish Menswear, Womenswear, Kidswear, Lingerie, and Home products (Marks and spencer, 2019).

Brand response: Judgement or feelings

Keller's brand response represents the evaluations and opinions customers have about the brand based on the associations generated by the brand meaning after it has been identified. The brand responses come as a result of a judgement based on the brand superiority, quality, considerations and credibility. Although at this stage customers tend to respond based on the feelings based on the fun, warmth, security, excitement self-respect and the social approval they derive from the product (Keller, 2003). As per M&S' strategic report, most of their customers respond to their brand because they believe the brand offers them quality and high price of M & S' products given their customers a feeling of self-respect as it is respected brand (Marks and spencer, 2019).

Brand relationships: Resonance

At the final stage in Keller's model, known as the brand relationship stage, the previous attained brand response is used to create an active relationship between the brand and the customers. The created loyalty relationship is giving the customers an attitudinal attachment, behavioural loyalty, active engagement and sense belonging in the communication (Keller, 2003). M&S' brand resonance is built on the notion that their customers are convinced that the M&S brand is authentic and there tend to listen, purchase and recommend the brand to others (Marks and Spencer, 2017).

4.2 Advantages and disadvantages of Keller's Brand equity model

Advantages

- The resonance stage in Keller's brand equity model can be used to assess the intensity of the impact of marketing communications on brand equity and loyalty relationships (Keller, 2009).
- Keller's brand equity model is can be used in strong brand development, which interns gives the company competitive advantage. The competitive advantage is convertible into financial rewards in turn (Keller, 2003).

Disadvantages of Keller's brand equity model

- Keller's brand equity model appears to be arbitrary because it bases on invalid assumptions to convert brand equity dimensions into a strong brand equity. The model explicitly negates the possibility of the company's investments in the marketing programs while confirming to subjectivity and thus confusing intangible strengths of company with brand strength with brand equity (Keller, 2007).
- The model does not highlight the casual relationship between the independent building block in the pyramid (Keller, 1993).
- The model does not put emphasize the main factors which influence the consumer's buying decision, such as consumer behaviour and performance of the brand in the market. Moreover, some dimensions such as brand awareness indicated consumer attitudes but does not necessarily explain consumer behaviour (Keller, 1993).

5. The customer Journey

A customer journey comprises of the three stages that a customer goes through during the buying process. These stages include the prepurchase, purchase as well as the post purchase as posited by (Pucinelli *et al.*, 2009). Recent research has tried to delve deeper into the entire customer journey.

Prepurchase phase.

This is the first stage in the customer's buying process where the customers interact with the brand, environment and products and services category prior to the purchase as suggested by (Pieters *et al.*, 1995). The customer interacts with the company through several touch points that lead to precursors to their purchase decision.

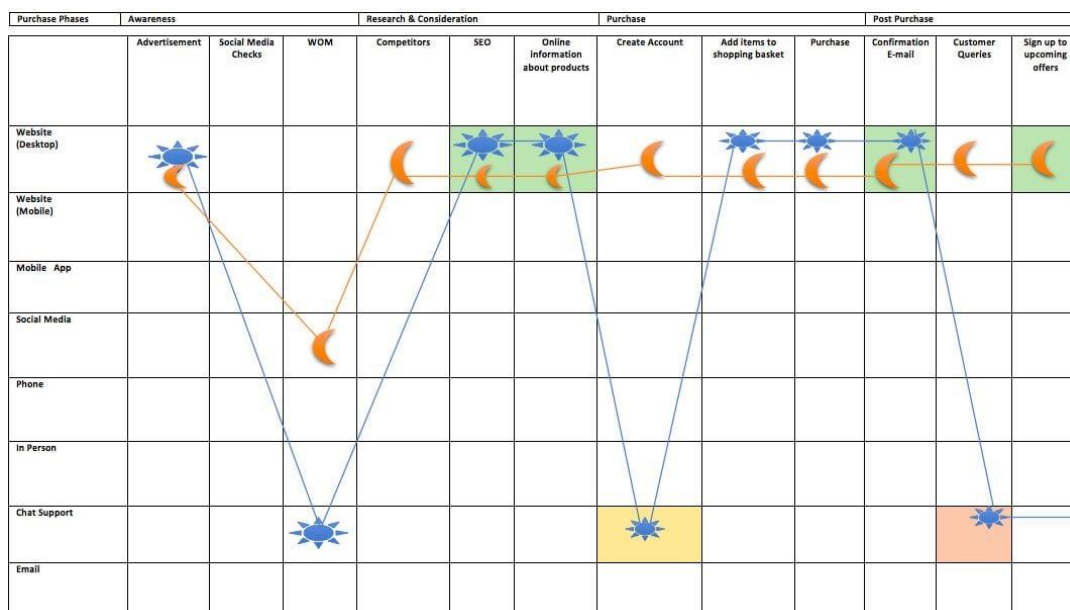
Purchase.

This is the second stage of the buying process where customers interact with the brand as well as the environment during the actual buying process. It comprises of activities and behaviours like ordering, choice as well as payment. Marketing literature has accorded this stage a lot of attention because of the marketing activities involved (Kotler and Keller, 2015).

Post purchase

This is the final stage in the purchase process where the customer interacts more with the brand after the purchase of a product or service is done. Behaviours and activities such as services and maintenance requests, post purchase customer engagement, and consumption are prevalent at this stage (Kelley and Davis, 1994). See figure 3 below for an example of Marks and Spencer's journey map.

Figure 5. Marks and Spencer's journey map



Source: Ward (2018)

As shown in figure 1 above, M & S' customers interact with different touch points throughout the customer journey.

The main weakness of M&S' customer journey is that, it is shrouded in strengths and weaknesses, that cannot be ignored if the company is to improve and maintain its competitive advantage. Although M & S' customer journey map may be essential for the success of the business, it fails to provide actionable insight based on the customer's needs. This may be because at the prepurchase stage, there

is no clear definition of the needs and desires or the presupposed customer but rather relies on generalised data and statistics as posited by Pachauri (2001). This makes it impossible to understand customers' needs since these needs evolve.

The customer journey map seems to ignore the actual activities that the customer carries out considering the probability that customers' purchasing decision may be far beyond the scope of the M&S's ability to influence the buying process as suggested by Meyer and Schwager (2007).

However M&S can capitalise on its customer journey map strengths such as that fact that M&S' customer journey map considers the awareness emphasis and thus justifying that marketing direction taken by the company such as focusing more on digital and online marketing as suggested by (Baker, 2014). Furthermore, the customer journey map enables structural changes that are in line with M&S's closure strategy and does not affect the future programming of the business as it continues to venture more into digital sales.

5.1. Customer touch points in M & S

The customer journey is a series of events that customers go through while interacting with an organisation in the process of purchasing a product (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the customer journey involves a number of touchpoints encountered during the purchase process. And thus, getting a clear understanding of the customer touch point enables management to implement service innovation tactics, to enhance interactions between the customer and the company capitalising on customer satisfaction at every touch point. Several customer touch points are encountered by a customer during the customer journey; categorised into the customer, partner, brand owned and external, social or independent touch points (Baxendale *et al.*, 2015).

Brand -owned touch points

The brand owned touch points are those touch points under the control of the company that the customer interacts with during the customer experience process (Baxendale *et al.*, 2015), such as own all branded media like the www.marksandspencer.com website, Marks and Spencer loyalty cards, advertising media and well as other branding elements like branded shopping bags, customer service I branded uniforms across the M&S stores (Marks and Spencer, 2017).

Customer-owned touch points

The touch points under this category spread across the entire customer experience process in the company although the company and its partner do not have direct influence over these touch points. Such touch includes situations where the company cannot control the customer's thoughts regarding their desires at the purchase stage (Howard and Sheth, 1969). In this stage the customer chooses their own payment method and thus this becomes their own touch point. However these customer owned touch points are more prevalent during the post purchase stage. As per M&S, these may include the customer's use of credit and debt cards or PayPal to make payments for their products.

Partner-owned touch points

These type of touch points are jointly owned touch points between the firm and its partners. The partners such as multichannel distribution partners, marketing agencies, communication channel partners and multivendor loyalty program partners influence and control the design and management of these touch points (Dorotic *et al.*, 2011). Marks and Spencer recently appointed a creative agency called Indie shop ODD changing from the previous agency called Grey London to design, manage and control M & S' food and other products' advertising strategies (Stewart, 2019).

External/social touch points

In these touch points, every one's role is acknowledged and respected throughout the entire customer experience. External and social touch points include peer influencers, environments, other customers and independent information services such as google search engine that may have an influence on the customer's buying process (Baxendale et al., 2015). Other customers such as celebrities who may endorse the products tend to influence the buying process. Peers may as well influence the buying process negatively or positively too. Through proximity and behaviours other customers may also influence the buying process. M & S has employed this strategy in the food industry for example a case when Amanda Holden and Emma Willis told the public where they buy their food (Corner and Rach, 2018). Furthermore, Marks and Spencer has also launched an Instagram page to aid the marketing.

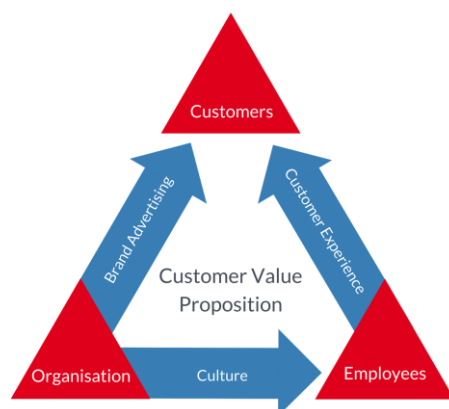
6. Total engagement model

The alignment of several organisational activities to enable the company stand out in an industry saturated by high media dilution, increased communication, competition and commoditisation by engaging company staff and customers leads to total engagement (Roberts and Alpert, 2010). For any organisation to fully engage its customers as illustrated in figure 3, it need follow several steps as shown below.

1. Use the strong customer insight to develop a value proposition that is unique.
2. Ensure consistent communication of its value proposition using brand advertising.
3. Use staff who have been empowered with the knowledge about the company strategy, to support the delivery of the value proposition.
4. Using the foundation of culture, to deliver the strategically planned customer experience to back the advertised promise.

The idea is to essentially make a relevant and unique brand promise whilst engaging the company staff so that they are empowered to deliver according to the brand promise. As shown in figure 6 below, total engagement model is used to build customer trust.

Figure 6. The total engagement models



Source: Engaged Strategy (2019)

Using the total engagement model, companies are able to navigate market competition and increase sales revenues by investing in sales incentives, price promotions, and advertising to increase brand awareness.

7. Conclusion

Communication is essential for business continuity both internally and externally. Therefore, it is inevitable that the company chooses the right means and model of communication, capitalising on one that can give M&S competitive advantage. It may involve the selection of an appropriate integrated marketing communication plan in which the company may strategically communicate, its overall goals and objectives in terms on the future and benefits of their products and services. The company is required to choose the most viable promotions strategy that may increase revenues, as it strengthens the brand equity of the company.

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