

**Module Name/Code: Building a Sustainable Leadership and
Management/BMSW5007**

Title: The Importance of a Sustainable Customer Relationship

Host Organisation: Marketing Week

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Executive Summary

Sustaining customer relationship with organisations especially loyalty and satisfaction plays a pivotal force in future proving long term growth and longevity. Customer loyalty is a strong indicator in predicting future behaviours where it be growing or declining in the current market. Sainsbury's believe that to prolong a sustainable customer relationship long term the retailer needs to build on the uses of Nectar programme to more of a data driven organisation for all its customer base including the brands. Sainsbury's recognise that it is not enough to only be an ethical grocer but to go further and beyond to meet the needs of customers while satisfying the changes in climate. So, what strategies have Sainsbury's put in to place to achieve sustainability?

Contents Page

1.0 Introduction.....	4
2.0 Findings.....	5
2.1 Overview of Sainsburys.....	5
2.2 Customer Data Information (CDI).....	6
2.2.1 Reichheld’s Research.....	8
2.2.2 Humby’s Scoring Points Model.....	9
2.3 Segmentation, Pricing Strategies and Differentiation.....	9
2.3.1 Porter’s Generic Analysis.....	10
2.4 Ethics and Sustainability.....	10
2.4.1 Ethics.....	10
2.4.2 Sustainability.....	11
2.4.3 Triple Bottom Line.....	12
2.4.4 Carroll’s Pyramid of CSR.....	13
3.0 Conclusion.....	15
4.0 Reference List.....	16
5.0 Appendices.....	20

1.0 Introduction

On the 5th of October 2022 the author has been requested by the Marketing Executive Officer of 'Marketing Week' an online journal produced by Sainsburys to report its findings on sustainable relationship practices that can impact organisational performance. The author who compiled this report is Masuk Ali. The report is to be submitted by the 18th of November 2022. The author will compile the report by research conducted from books, articles, websites to underpin arguments.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Overview of Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's first opened its store in 1869. Sainsbury's (2022) state that they serve customers driven by their passion for food. Sainsbury's offer great quality food at competitive prices. The company provide convenient shopping online and instore and are supported by own brands such as Argos, Tu, Habitat and Nectar. Key information include:

- Sainsbury's has over 600+ supermarkets
- Argos is the third most visited retail website in the UK
- 189,000 colleagues are integral to Sainsbury's success.

Timeline of Sainsbury's

- 1869-1899 – John James Sainsbury and wife Mary Ann opened the first store in London's Drury Lane. In 1881 further three stores opened to cater for demand.
- 1940-1969 – Sainsbury's opens its first self-service store in London in 1950. The transition from staff collecting items for customers to the modern shopping of customers browsing aisles and selecting own items was deemed revolutionary. This led to turnover of 50% of sales of Sainsbury's own brand products.
- 1970-1999 – Sainsbury's become an established national retailer expanding to the North of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 2000-2018 – a total of 432 stores making Sainsbury's more accessible. In 2005 Sainsbury's introduced a traffic light labelling to better indicate nutritional value.

(Sainsbury's, 2022).

Current Market Share

According to Kantar (2022) Sainsbury's currently accounts for 14.6% of the market share. In 2010, Sainsbury's was regarded as 'one of the big four' alongside Tesco, Asda and Morrisons accounting for over three quarters of the

sector. But discounters such as Aldi have seen a dramatic increase in sales in recent times. Statista (2022) state that Tesco and Sainsbury's held the largest share of 41.5% of the market as of September 2022. Due to post-Brexit uncertainties and growing inflation have shifted consumer behaviour in favouring cheaper stores such as Aldi who have been ranked fourth place for the first time. Sales performance had not been consistent until the Covid pandemic in early 2022 where the impact led to a change in shopping behaviours which led to an increase of sales by 8.4% (April 2020). Sales had continued to hit new highs and increased by 13.5% in June 2020, but this growth has now begun to slow as shopping has stabilised in 2021 (Bedford, 2022).

Company Vision

Sainsbury's vision is to be the most trusted retailer, where people like to shop and work. This means that Sainsbury's harnessing the talent, creativity and diversity of employees ensuring that customers receive great service every time (Sainsbury's, 2022). Sainsbury's vision underlines the purpose of any organisation which is to acquire and retain customers for life. It is the customer who gives opportunities to organisations to serve them. Ongoing complexities such as uncertainties (global competition) at the marketplace can propose organisations to devise new strategies to attract customers for the achievement of competitive sustainable advantage (Rajnish et al. 2003). Organisations are duty bound to be responsive to the ongoing global environmental challenges as well as meeting the needs of employees and customers.

2.2 Customer Data Information (CDI)

Buttle (2010) states that customer related databases can be sourced internally and externally. Prior to accumulating a database, it is essential for organisations to audit what data are available. The amount of data collected relies on how much contact organisations have with customers. According to Richardson et al (2015) there are many methods to collect data. Digital marketing research platforms and tools available via online technology offer marketers' access to a vast amount of useful data. The challenge here is how

to analyse and interpret this data in order to make effective decisions.

Sainsbury's (2022) state the purpose of collecting data via Nectar is to:

- Contact customers for marketing purposes, market research and in queries regarding customer accounts
- Use for statistical analysis and help understand customers
- To personalise shopping experience
- To provide a safe and secure habitat for employees to work and customers to shop.

The key in building a regular clientele is to obtain customer satisfaction. Organisations that succeed in adapting its performance to expectations of their customers generate basis for future business. The key to company success is the committed close relationship it has with customers (Raab et al, 2008). Customer orientated data plays a major marketing resource in achieving stronger relationships with customers. Sainsbury's offering of loyalty card scheme has gained a direct marketing and purchasing habits (Hooley et al, 2012). Sainsbury's Nectar loyalty scheme (Internet Retailing, 2019) allows customers personalised offers and experience. Along with The Nectar app and website customers can utilise a fully digitised experience. The Nectar card allows customers to collect points on purchases from Sainsbury's and partners resulting in personalised rewards. The key objectives of introducing loyalty programs are to:

- **Build true loyalty**- attitudinal and behavioural which refers to a more significant commitment to a business or product(s)
- **Efficiency profit**- immediate profits generated by loyalty programs in comparison to profit consequences without loyalty programmes
- **Effective profits**- this refers to long term profits which are generated from knowledge of customer habits and can result in value creation such as customised products or communication.

(Kumar and Reinartz, 2006).

Another strategy implemented by Sainsbury's is using machine learning which predict products that are selling and predicting grocery trends. The retailer has used Accenture and Google Cloud to detect influential eating habits through

unstructured sources such as social media hashtags to structured methods of store sales. It is vital for corporations to respect and maintain consumer data. Data protection matters so securing data will make consumers feel protected. Documenting with transparency on how data is collected and analysed will increase customer trust. There are major effects of data breaches where personal data is stolen so consumers can become wary in sharing personal information to organisations who have been hacked. To avoid this, organisations need to refine and update privacy policies which appeal to consumers (Smart Data Collective, 2022). Sainsbury's (2022) are committed to the following legal bases:

- Legal obligation in processing personal information
- Only process information that been consented for a specific purpose
- The processing of personal data will have legitimate interests and will not be overridden by the interest of the consumer.

2.2.1 Reichheld's Research

According to Hooley et al (2012) the fundamental base for establishing a long-lasting relationship with customers is by ensuring that customers get more from the relationship than what was expected. Reichheld (2003) states that loyalty is the main driver for customer growth. Customer survey results can be used as the main focus in stimulating growth. Loyalty by definition is the willingness of an individual to invest in strengthening a relationship. In business terms this can mean customers sticking with an organisation who treats them well and offers value for money in the long run. True loyal customers tend to buy more over time and devote more money to the company they feel loyal to. According to The Grocer's (2018) Brand Loyalty index, 71% of Sainsburys customers felt that the loyalty rewards scheme offered was good and 46% felt that the supermarket did offer frequent promotional offers. The data collected can provide insight into shopping habits as well as what can be offered. Love Money (2022) state that the offers are relevant and personalised allowing Sainsbury's to learn about customers spending choices. The Nectar offers can be accessed via the app or website, so the physical card is not needed.

2.2.2 Humby's Scoring Points Model

The Nectar loyalty card can be under pinned by Humby's scoring points model. Humby believed that the Tesco Clubcard is one of customer relationship management's success stories as the technology is an extension of database marketing. It is a privilege to have so much information to analyse. Benefits of technology which collect such data include the much faster processing time than ten years ago. Humby's association with the Clubcard programme and the skills in how to analyse the data has been highly sought after around the globe. In the first five years of the Clubcard's existence resulted in Tesco's sales growth by 52%. Humby also stated that prior to the introduction of the Nectar card Sainsbury's customers had a reward card in place already and so were not asked about the move so some customers felt alienated. Humby believes that in doing anything new, the key is to bring your customers with you and understand customers from any source of data collected (My Customer, 2004).

2.3 Segmentation, Pricing Strategies and Differentiation

The segments Sainsbury's operates in is:

- **Retail** - retailing of food, and clothing in the form of 598 supermarkets and 811 convenience stores
- **Financial services** – Sainsbury's Bank plc
- **Company Brands** – Argos, Habitat, Tu and Nectar. Sainsbury's also offer services and products across food, beauty, and seasonal merchandise.

(Financial Times, 2022).

Pricing strategies implemented are offering lower prices to customers who use the loyalty card and self-scanner service in the latest bid in innovation. The "My Nectar Prices" is a reduction of 10% minimum per product. The loyalty model of consumer spending results in redemption on products on smartphones/ scanner services which reduces manned check- outs in stores (Reuters, 2021).

2.3.1 Porter's Generic Analysis

That author has identified the following areas for Porter's Generic strategies (see appendix 1) where Sainsburys have achieved growth objectives:

- **Differentiation:** Sainsbury's has strong brand performance. Habitat, Argos, and Tu have been credited for improved profits and sales (Marketing Week, 2021)
- **Cost Leadership:** Sainsbury's have utilised "tactical pricing" as a pricing strategy which involves reducing the number of promotional activities and replacing it by lower regular prices. By implementing tactical pricing, the supermarket has seen a volume in transactions. Customer feedback has suggested that pricing reductions has led to positive satisfaction scores (Insite Track, 2022).
- **Differentiation Focus:** Sainsbury's (2022) priority is to build on its reputation for quality which promotes brand heritage. Offering quality foods to customers which are value for money has been met by collaborating and simplifying work done with suppliers. Sainsbury's say it is fundamentally important to understand customers and by utilising the Nectar database unlocks the ability to connect with its customers. The data provides insight into decision making. There are over nine million Nectar users and over 2.7 million provide customer satisfaction feedback.

2.4 Ethics and Sustainability

2.4.1 Ethics

According to the Institute of Business Ethics (2022) business ethics is the implementation of ethical values to organisational behaviour. It is relevant to the conduct of both individuals and the organisations involved. This can be how businesses treat employees and suppliers to sales practices. Sainsbury's (2022) state that they champion human rights and recognise the importance

for suppliers who grow their products are not exposed or exploited while working. This is monitored through Sainsbury's due diligence processes whereby they establish open dialogue into the capacity and skills of workers and have open relationships with suppliers. Sainsbury's (2017) are conscious of the responsibility shared with suppliers and the welfare of workers. The code of conduct of the organisation is a declaration of the intention to conduct business on fair terms with transparency and by communicating the code of conduct will allow everyone involved on steps in improving working conditions. By behaving in accordance with ethical standards can strengthen the drive to succeed by attracting others to align with own standards of ethical behaviour which in turn aids in long lasting relationships. Organisations who operate unethically are less inclined to receive support or investment from others. Employees who follow ethical stance of the organisation make better decisions and overall increase productivity and morale. They workforce will be driven with integrity and are more loyal (Investopedia, 2022). Sainsbury's (2022) state that they are an inclusive organisation to work for and shop. The retailer sees themselves as truly inclusive and represent a with diverse range of colleagues who are treated with respect at all levels. The retailer welcomes all customers.

2.4.2 Sustainability

Sustainability is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Richardson et al, 2015, p. 9). Sainsbury's (2022) have a Supplier Policy on Sustainable Sourcing in place which highlights employment practices expected from suppliers. The policy is in relation to the minimum standards that are to be expected and for suppliers to continuously improve performance. Sainsbury's provide engaging initiatives such as training and sharing knowledge. Since the beginning in 1869 the retailer has always had strong passion for economic and environment responsibility and realise that success depends on the communities' success. Through sustainability practices Sainsbury's want long lasting positive changes so everyone can eat better (Sainsbury's, 2022). Sainsbury's acknowledge corporate social responsibility

(CSR) towards the environment and the social challenges faced with what is consumed and how it is grown, sourced, packaged and disposed of. By committing to playing a leading role in CSR will reduce the impact on the planet. The retailer has set sustainability goals throughout the organisation placing focus on key commitments which matter most and are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development (Sainsbury's, 2022). Sainsbury's have devised three interlocking pillars:

- **Better for you** – responsibility to help customers to eat healthier by offering sustainable choices to protect the planet for future generations regardless of customer budgets or time. This has been addressed by offering information, rewards and incentives to make better choices. Key achievements include 72% of total sales of protein products are of meat-free and plant-based.
- **Better for the planet** – Sainsbury's are committed to reducing their impact on the environment and as climate change is affecting the planet the retailer is playing a part in improving food systems. The retailer has worked alongside the Science Based Targets Initiative and Carbon Trust on targets to reduce waste and report publicly twice a year. Reductions include greenhouse gas emissions from operations by 2035 for the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Key achievements include 4.6 million trees planted by Sainsbury's with the Woodland Trust and 100% of farmed seafood and fish come independently certified as best practised standard.
- **Better for everyone** – Sainsbury's owe their success to the employment of 189,000 inclusive colleagues. The retailer encourages a fair treatment and encourage all to develop skills to reach full potential. Key achievements include 74% of colleagues saying they able to be themselves in the workplace and £38.4 million raised for causes in 2021.

2.4.3 Triple Bottom Line (TBL)

Elkington's Triple Bottom Line (Richardson et al, 2015) (see appendix 2) states that sustainable marketing decisions should be ethical and guided by sustainable practices to lessen tensions between customers' needs, long-term

interests as well as organisational requirements and societies needs for environmental balance. Essentially TBL is about aligning organisations with how customers view Sainsbury's in terms of how they see themselves as a sustainable consumer. The model can be broken down into the "three Ps", Profit, People and Planet. The author can identify that Sainsbury's have met the components of Planet as Sainsbury's have championed their responsibility towards the planet by participating in several activities to reduce carbon emissions. The initiatives taken to underpin the Planet component are:

- Commitment which sees Sainsbury's operations become net zero by 2035 in line with the intention to limit global warming to 1.5°C
- Significant progress in reducing operational emissions by extensive investment in innovation
- By the end of 2021 Sainsbury's will have been using 100% renewable electricity across its platform reducing fossil fuels

(Sainsbury's, 2021).

The component of making a positive impact on the planet is of high importance as historically large organisations have contributed the most to the amount of pollution globally. Organisations hold the keys to drive a positive environmental change and many companies such as Sainsbury's are acknowledging responsibility to ensure adjusting to ethically sourced materials, cutting energy consumption and participate in taking steps towards a positive change (Harvard Business School Online, 2020 and Sainsbury's, 2022).

2.4.4 Carroll's pyramid of CSR

Carroll (1979) describes social obligations as Economic Obligations which involves being productive and economically viable through legal and ethical practices while following the law and values as norms and adopting Philanthropic Obligations whereby actively giving back to the community it serves. The other two components of the CSR framework (Carroll, 2016) (see appendix 3) are Ethical and Legal responsibilities. The above create a foundation which frames the nature in organisations responsibilities towards society. The author can determine that Sainsbury's (2022) has addressed social

and economic expectations (Economic Responsibilities) by engaging in voluntary activities and by doing so has resulted in the retailer sustaining themselves and becoming profitable. Sainsbury's (2022) have structurally lowered operational costs by making changes to efficiency which will transform costs and simplify a reduction to the operating base costs. This move resulted in reinvestment in customer offerings and improvement in financial returns. Firms that are not successful in their financial aspect may result in less economic responsibility. Profits are necessary in business growth as well as a reward to investors while acting as a motivator for organisational success. The author can also identify that Sainsbury's (2022) has met its Philanthropic Responsibility (Carroll, 2016) as this component involves forms of organisational giving through voluntary activities such as donations which is not mandated by law. Today this is expected from the public. Sainsbury's do have a sense of "giving back" out of ethical motivation which addresses public expectations. Sainsbury's (2022) have contributed to a number of activities in Philanthropic Obligations such as:

- **Food Donation programme** – since 1998 Sainsbury's have launched their Food donation Programme where stores have partnered with local community organisations where customer donations as well as surplus stock have been donated. Sainsbury's are also trialling tech solutions to maximise the volume of surplus stock
- **£3 million commitment to FareShare** – to help support the pressures on foodbanks, charities and community groups, Sainsbury's funded the distribution of 24 million meals to 3,945 charities
- **Comic Relief and Children in Need** – Sainsbury's have supported the two charities by matching customer donations pound by pound which totalled in over £4 million donated to both charities
- **Computer for Kids Initiative** – 2,000 laptops were donated to children.

Carroll (2016) states that by examining the social contract between companies and society it is found that the public expect organisations to be good corporate citizens. This form of giving demonstrates companies' reputation for moral ethical sense.

3.0 Conclusion

In conclusion the author has determined that digital marketing research can help access many useful information and Sainsburys have captured valuable insight and growing trends via the Nectar programme. . Sainsbury's champions human rights and acknowledges employees not to be exploited while carrying out working duties. Sainsbury's sets out protocols to be followed to ensure there is open dialogue between employees and suppliers. Responsibility is shared between suppliers and their employee's wellbeing. By staying in line with the ethical standards has helped build a healthy relationship between all levels. Sainsbury's have put in place measures to ensure that it is sustainable by actively taking initiatives in growing, sourcing and packaging. Sainsbury's are committed to being a market leader in CSR which will reduce the effect on the environment. Sainsbury's always prioritise building its reputation on the quality of their products and advertises brand history. Sainsbury's have many programmes in place to help the local community like food donation with their surplus stock to be donated which demonstrates their care for the community it serves. Sainsbury's support food banks, charities and community groups. All these steps help provide a good relationship between customers and Sainsbury's which also demonstrate moral ethical code.

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5.0 Appendices

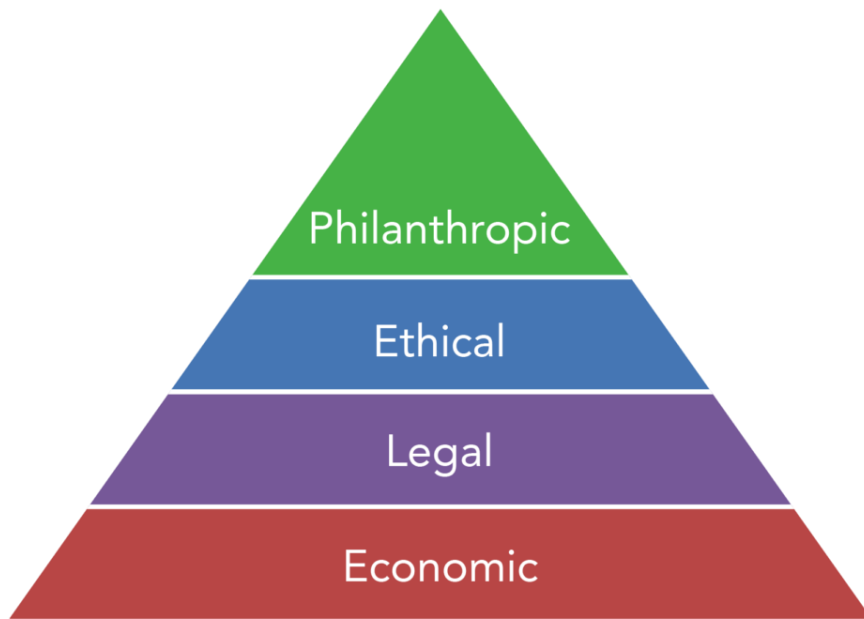
Appendix 1

	Lower Cost	Differentiation
Competitive Scope Lower Cost & Differentiation	Cost Leadership • Tactical pricing • Less promotions • More regular low prices	Differentiation • British suppliers for everyday essentials • Reduce transport miles • Boost UK agricultural industry
	Cost Focus	Differentiation Focus • Strong brand heritage • Understanding customers through Nectar

Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Carroll's CSR Pyramid