

DISSERTATION

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The Influence of Sustainable Product Development on Consumer Purchase Behavior: A Case Study of Marks & Spencer

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The Influence of Sustainable Product Development on Consumer Purchase Behavior: A Case Study of Marks & Spencer

Introduction

"Sustainability has evolved from a specialized problem to an essential need for businesses in the retail industry. Retailers are under increasing pressure to incorporate sustainable business practices into their core business operations and marketing strategies as a result of the growing demand from customers for products that operate in an ethical and environmentally sensitive manner. To remain competitive and relevant in their respective industries, businesses need to demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability. This commitment must go beyond mere corporate social responsibility measures and include sustainability as an essential component of the long-term prosperity of the organization."

"A rising number of people are ready to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products. The findings of a study conducted by Nielsen indicate that 73 percent of consumers would consider making changes to their purchasing choices in order to reduce the impact that they have on the environment." (2015, Nielsen) Since this data demonstrates that there has been a significant shift in consumer behavior toward sustainable brands and products, it is imperative that retailers such as M&S make sustainability a high priority in their list of marketing priorities.

The term "sustainability" refers to the process of meeting the requirements of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their wants and needs. This translates into traditional financial goals being taken into consideration in conjunction with the social and environmental impact of a company's actions in the context of business practices. According to Hahn et al. (2015), concerns over the depletion of resources, climate change, and ethical sourcing are contributing to the growing significance of sustainability that is being emphasized.

Within the realm of marketing, there is a branch known as sustainable marketing that focuses on integrating social and environmental responsibility into its marketing strategies. The demonstration of a company's commitment to sustainable practices and the endorsement of products and services that are sourced in an ethical and environmentally responsible manner are both required for this.

Marks & Spencer (M&S) is a well-known British retailer that has been trading for more than a century and has a long and illustrious history. In the year 1884, Michael Marks and Thomas Spencer established the company as a little market booth that sold commonplace items. Over the course of its history, M&S has evolved into a leading retailer, renowned for the superior quality of its products, outstanding customer service, and innovative approaches to doing business. According to Donnelly (n.d.), the company's strong emphasis on trust and reliability has helped to contribute to the establishment of its reputation as a reliable brand in the United Kingdom market.

In the history of British retail, M&S has been an important factor in the development of the industry. In areas such as uniform size, product quality, and customer service, the sector was able to establish new standards as a result of the creative efforts that it implemented. The ability of the shop to adapt to changing client preferences and macroeconomic conditions has been a significant contributor to the retailer's long-term success. In addition, Marks & Spencer has a documented history of upholding fair labor standards, actively participating in the community, and being at the forefront of social and ethical issues (Marks & Spencer, 2017).

Over the last several years, there has been a substantial shift in consumer behavior, with an increased emphasis on purchasing products that are ethical and environmentally responsible. In light of the fact that consumers are becoming more aware of the impact that their purchases have on the environment, they are searching for brands and products that are reflective of their ideals. According to Baskentli et al. (2018), this new growth has presented both opportunities and challenges for commercial establishments such as M&S.

Having recognized the growing relevance of sustainability, M&S has taken the initiative to engage in corporate social responsibility, making it a pioneer in this field. According to the company's "Plan A" initiative, which was initiated in 2007, it is an all-encompassing sustainability program that is aimed to address ethical, social, and environmental concerns.

Although previous research has investigated the ways in which sustainability can be incorporated into marketing in general, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the ways in which specific retailers, such as M&S, modify the components of the marketing mix (product, price, location, and promotion) in order to attract customers who are concerned about sustainability in the UK market. There is a paucity of information about the effectiveness of M&S's one-of-a-kind sustainability marketing strategies and how they influence the attitudes of customers in the United Kingdom. In order to further understand the relationship between M&S's "Plan A" environmental initiative and consumer awareness, it is required to do more study. It is essential to do more research on the influence that M&S's sustainability activities have had on the brand image, especially in the market in the United Kingdom. It is possible that studies that compare with other big supermarkets in the UK may produce information that is enlightening.

Research Aims

The aim of this research is to investigate how Marks & Spencer (M&S) incorporates sustainable practices into their marketing mix and evaluate the impact of these strategies on customer perception as well as brand image in the UK market.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- Examine M&S's environmental policies, paying particular attention to the "Plan A" program and how it fits into the phases of the product lifecycle.
- Analyse the marketing materials used by M&S to convey their sustainability objectives.
- Determine the understanding and perspectives of UK customers about M&S's environmental initiatives.
- Analyse how consumers' purchase decisions and brand loyalty are affected by M&S's sustainability efforts.
- Ascertain the relationship between M&S's overall brand image in the UK market as well as its environmental initiatives.
- Identify opportunities for M&S to enhance its sustainability communication as well as marketing strategies.

Research Question

In what ways does Marks & Spencer (M&S) include sustainable business practices into its marketing tactics, and what kind of an effect does this integration have on the way consumers perceive the brand and how it is perceived by the market in the United Kingdom?

Significance of the study

The significant contribution that this study makes to the growing body of knowledge about the intersection of sustainability and marketing is the primary reason for the relevance of this research study. By conducting a study of the ways in which sustainable practices are integrated into the marketing mix of Marks & Spencer (M&S), this research offers valuable insights into the manner in which a large retailer translates environmental promises into consumer-centric strategies. Furthermore, this research provides empirical evidence for the success of marketing efforts that have a focus on sustainability by investigating how these strategies influence the perceptions of consumers and the image of the business. The findings will serve as a benchmark for other companies who are interested in using sustainability as a difference, and they will also direct the marketing campaigns that M&S will undertake in the future. This study contributes to the expanding body of information on sustainable marketing and is in line with the expanding corpus of research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the influence it has on the behavior of customers.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which Marks & Spencer (M&S) integrates sustainable practices into its marketing mix, as well as the ways in which these activities influence customer perception and brand image in the United Kingdom market. This study investigates the ways in which the environmental policies of M&S, particularly the "Plan A" program, correspond with the various phases of the product lifecycle. The goal of this investigation is to get a better understanding of how sustainability is incorporated into the operations of the firm. In addition, an examination of the marketing materials made available by M&S will concentrate on the manner in which consumers are educated about the sustainable aspirations of the firm. The purpose of this

research is to ascertain how customers in the United Kingdom feel about M&S's efforts to protect the environment, as well as the extent to which these efforts influence their purchasing decisions and their loyalty to the company. We are going to investigate the ways in which M&S's sustainability activities are connected to the company's overall brand image in order to discover methods to enhance marketing and communication strategies that are associated with sustainability. In keeping with the growing body of research on sustainable marketing, the purpose of this study is to increase the amount of information that is available about how organisations may effectively utilise sustainability as a strategic marketing strategy.

Literature review

Overview of sustainability in the retail industry:

The Growing Importance of Sustainable Practices in Business and Marketing

Sustainable business practices are becoming a vital corporate need, rather than just a niche issue (Hasanuddin et al., 2023). As environmental, social, and economic concerns come together, businesses are coming to the realisation that they need to include sustainability into their fundamental business operations and marketing strategies. This realisation is growing at an increasing rate.

Environmental Concerns: There has been an increase in public awareness and regulatory pressure as a result of the escalating impacts of pollution, resource depletion, and climate change. Companies are coming under increasing amounts of pressure from investors, customers, and politicians to assume a greater share of environmental responsibility. Therefore, in order for companies to reduce their impact on the environment, they need to reduce the amount of trash they produce, reduce the amount of carbon emissions they produce, and adopt environmentally friendly practices. The study that was conducted by Orlitzky, Schmidt, and Rynes (2003) sheds light on the connection that exists between monetary success and environmental performance.

Social Responsibility: Stakeholders want firms to positively impact society, including workers, consumers, and communities. When it comes to a company's image, ethical sourcing, community participation, and fair employment standards are becoming more important components. It has been shown via research conducted by Islam, Pitafi, and Xiaobei (2020) that there is a favourable correlation between corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and consumer loyalty and trust.

Economic Opportunities: The concept of sustainability is increasingly seen as a strategic opportunity rather than a budgetary expense. By using sustainable techniques, businesses have the potential to reduce their operational expenditures, attract customers who are environmentally conscious, and enhance their brand image. As a further point of interest, the growing market for environmentally friendly products and services offers a substantial number of financial opportunities. Tebaldi, Bigliardi, and Bottani (2018) emphasise the potential for sustainable innovation to result in financial gain.

Regulatory Compliance: Governments all around the world are putting into effect regulations that are becoming stricter in terms of social and environmental issues. For those who do not comply, there is the possibility of facing significant fines, damage to their reputation, and legal repercussions. Through the proactive incorporation of sustainability into their operations, businesses have the potential to decrease risks and ensure their continued existence over the long term.

Marks and Spencer: A Historical Overview and Market Position

History of Marks and Spencer

Over the course of its long and storied history, which goes back to 1884, the British global retailer Marks and Spencer (M&S) has grown significantly. Michael Marks and Thomas Spencer were the ones who first introduced the company to the world by establishing a little market stall in Leeds, England. Over the course of its history, Marks & Spencer has evolved from a low-cost shop to a significant merchant that is renowned for the quality of its products and the service it provides to its customers (M&S, 2024).

When the corporation began to place a greater focus on innovative marketing strategies and private label products in the middle of the 20th century, the growth of the business began to pick up pace immediately. By the 1970s, M&S had become a household name in the United Kingdom and was closely linked with both quality and affordability. According to Bevan (2017), the merchant faced a number of challenges in the latter half of the 20th century and the early 21st century. These challenges included increased competition from discount retailers and changed preferences among potential customers.

In order to address these difficulties, M&S initiated a transformation project, with the primary focus being concentrated on product innovation, store renovations, and the extension of product ranges. A significant amount of money has also been spent by the company on e-commerce in an attempt to adapt to the changing shopping habits of its clients.

Market Position

Within the retail sector, M&S has a unique and distinguished position. The company has altered its image to become a more accessible name with a range of both high-end and low-cost items. Previously, it was considered to be a high-end store; however, it has changed its image to become more approachable. According to Bevan (2017), retail establishments that place a strong focus on quality, sustainability, and customer service have been able to maintain a loyal consumer base.

In spite of this, M&S continues to face a significant challenge from both traditional shops and online retailers. In order for the company to remain successful in the future, it will be necessary for it to adapt to the always evolving preferences and trends of its customers. Even though it faces these challenges, M&S continues to have a high level of brand awareness and a loyal customer base, which positions it as a significant player in the retail business in the United Kingdom.

M&S: A Relevant Case for Sustainable Marketing

The usage of Marks & Spencer (M&S) as a case study is especially helpful for gaining an understanding of the difficulties involved in sustainable marketing. The company has a long-standing commitment to sustainability, which is shown by its "Plan A" initiative, which has contributed to the company's widespread recognition in the industry. For the purpose of doing research on sustainable marketing, this section will provide an in-depth discussion of the reasons why M&S is an interesting and important example.

A Pioneer in Sustainable Retail

When it comes to the retail industry's many environmental initiatives, M&S has been at the forefront of the pack. Due to the fact that it was one of the first companies in the industry to embrace social responsibility and environmental initiatives, it is considered a pioneer in the industry. Given the creative nature of sustainability, it is essential to have an understanding of the ways in which early adopters of sustainability might potentially affect the attitudes of consumers and the standards of the industry (Hart and Milstein, 2003). By analysing the road that M&S has taken, researchers have the opportunity to gain insight into the opportunities and challenges that come with integrating sustainability into a large-scale retail operation.

A Strong Brand with a Large Consumer Base

Due to the fact that M&S is a well-known and celebrated company that has a substantial customer base, it provides a one-of-a-kind opportunity to investigate how sustainability influences the behaviour of consumers. It is possible that the strong brand image of the firm will make it easier to comprehend how consumers perceive and respond to actions taken by the corporation to promote sustainability (Keller 1991). By analysing M&S's customer base, researchers have the opportunity to explore how different demographic groups engage with the sustainability message and how it influences the decisions that customers make about their purchases.

A Complex and Evolving Sustainability Agenda

M&S's "Plan A" program incorporates a wide range of sustainability goals, including the reduction of carbon emissions and the improvement of animal welfare initiatives. It is a fantastic chance to study the possibilities and problems associated in finding a balance between many different sustainability objectives (Shrivastava, 1995). This is because of the complexity of the situation. Scholars may be able to get valuable information on the development of complete sustainability approaches by conducting an investigation into the manner in which M&S incorporates these diverse components into its marketing strategy.

A Focus on Supply Chain Sustainability

The management of supply chains and the practice of sustainable sourcing have received a lot of attention from M&S. Based on the findings of Stadtler and Kilger (2008), the sustainability agenda item provides an opportunity to study the benefits and challenges associated with working with suppliers about topics pertaining to sustainability. An investigation of the supply chain operations of M&S might provide researchers with the opportunity to contribute to the growing body of

knowledge about sustainable supply chain management and the impact it has on the reputation of brands.

Sustainability in the Retail Industry

Defining Sustainability: A Theoretical Framework

Defining Sustainability

Sustainability is a multifaceted notion that involves the interaction of social, economic, and environmental elements. At its core, sustainability is the process of meeting the requirements of the present without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their own requirements (Hariram et al., 2023). In addition to highlighting the long-term perspective of sustainability, this idea highlights the intergenerational justice of sustainability.

The three pillars of sustainability are often visualized as a Venn diagram, illustrating their interconnectedness:

- **Environmental sustainability:** One of the primary objectives of this dimension is to lessen the impact that marketing activities have on the surrounding environment. It comprises encouraging ecologically responsible consumer behaviours, cutting down on waste, and making use of resources that are beneficial to the environment. A few examples of significant components of environmental sustainability in marketing are the use of recycled materials, the reduction of packaging to a minimum, and the promotion of product recycling or reuse.
- **Social sustainability:** This dimension highlights the moral and societal obligations of marketers. It encompasses the protection of consumers, the implementation of fair-trade practices, and the utilisation of marketing efforts to address social problems. In the field of marketing, some examples of social sustainability include lobbying for fair working standards, fostering diversity and inclusion, and participating in philanthropic initiatives.
- **Economic sustainability:** The long-term viability of both the marketing function and the companies is ensured by this dimension. All of these things are involved: profitability, the satisfaction of customers, and the creation of shared value for stakeholders. It is possible to attain economic sustainability in marketing by, for example, investing in the development of people, developing innovative products, and fostering strong ties with customers.

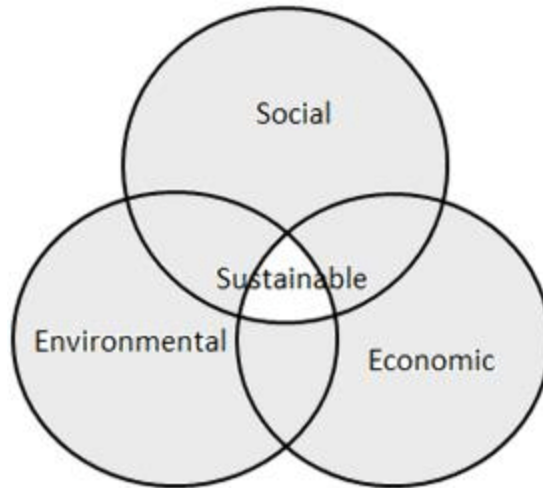


Figure 1: Venn diagram of the three pillars of sustainable development

Source: (Mohd-Rahim, Wang and Zainon, 2016)

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Sustainability

A number of theoretical frameworks provide perspectives for comprehending sustainability.

1. Triple Bottom Line (TBL)

In accordance with this paradigm, which gained popularity as a result of Elkington (1998), companies need to take into consideration not only their financial performance (profit), but also their social duty (people) and their impact on the environment (planet). When it comes to assessing the effectiveness of companies, TBL provides an approach that is objective.

2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A comprehensive framework for achieving sustainability on a worldwide scale is provided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were approved by the United Nations in the year 2015. These 17 interconnected goals are designed to address a wide range of issues, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and the preservation of the environment, amongst others. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of goals that may be followed by governments, companies, and organisations that are part of civil society.

3. Natural Capital Accounting

The incorporation of natural resources into the process of economic decision-making and the valuation of these resources as assets are the primary goals of this paradigm. According to Costanza et al. (1997), natural capital accounting is a method that places a monetary value on ecosystem services. This method makes it easier to include environmental considerations into economic planning process.

4. Ecological Footprint

The purpose of this metric is to determine the amount of biologically productive land and water area that is required to sustain a population in order to evaluate the impact that human activities have on the environment. According to Rees and Wackernagel (1996), the ecological footprint is a useful tool for determining whether or not patterns of consumption and resource utilisation are sustainable.

5. Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

A life cycle assessment (LCA) compares the environmental impacts of a product or service at each and every step of its life cycle, beginning with the extraction of raw materials and ending with disposal. By using Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to identify environmental hotspots, businesses have the potential to reduce their ecological footprint and develop products and processes that are more environmentally friendly (ISO, 2006).

Impact of Sustainable Marketing on Consumers

Consumers are significantly impacted by sustainable marketing in a number of ways:

- Concerns related to social issues and environmental issues are becoming more prevalent among consumers. According to Islam, Pitañi, and Xiaobei's research from 2020, consumers are more satisfied with their purchases and more loyal to brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability for their business practices.
- Through the use of sustainable marketing, a positive representation and reputation of the business may be built. According to Sujanska and Nadanyiova (2023), customers are more likely to have a preference for businesses that share their values and strive towards making the world a better place.
- Marketing efforts that are environmentally responsible have the potential to encourage customer participation and engagement. For example, social media campaigns, product take-back programs, and recycling activities may all contribute to the development of a sense of community and loyalty (Gong et al., 2023).
- Customers are often willing to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products and services. As a consequence of this, businesses could see gains in terms of both sales and profitability.
- According to Sujanska and Nadanyiova (2023), customers who are satisfied with a brand are more likely to inform others about sustainable brands, which in turn increases market share and awareness of the sustainability of the business.

The Marketing Mix and Sustainability

The traditional marketing mix is comprised of the four components of product, price, place, and promotion. This mix serves as a core framework for understanding how businesses deliver value to their customers. In order to promote social and environmental responsibility, it is possible to rethink each and every component within the framework of sustainability principles.

Product

- **Sustainable design and development:** An extension of product life cycles, waste reduction, and the use of eco-friendly materials are crucial. Reducing environmental effect may be achieved, for instance, by utilising recycled materials, designing goods for disassembly and recycling, and providing repair services.
- **Ethical sourcing:** Making certain that components and raw materials are obtained ethically, taking into account environmental and human rights, is essential. Certifications that are organic and fair trade may be implemented.
- **Product transparency:** Trust and loyalty may be increased by giving consumers accurate information about a product's effects on the environment and society (Ottman and Miller, 1998).

Price

- **Environmental costing:** Sustainability may be encouraged by including in the environmental costs of manufacturing and delivery in the product's pricing (Bocken, 2023).
- **Premium pricing for sustainable products:** Premium pricing may support research and development into sustainable technologies and materials, even if it's not always practical (Porter, 2019).
- **Dynamic pricing:** Pricing changes depending on supply and demand may reduce waste and improve the use of resources.

Place (Distribution)

- **Supply chain sustainability:** The environmental impact of distribution may be reduced by minimising packaging, cooperating with suppliers that practice environmental responsibility, and optimising transportation routes (Stadtler and Kilger, 2008).
- **Local sourcing:** As per Goodland and Daly (1996), reducing transportation distances may help local economies and reduce carbon emissions.
- **Reverse logistics:** Reducing waste and recovering valuable resources may be achieved by putting in place procedures for gathering and recycling discarded goods (Eltayeb and Zailani, 2014).

Promotion

- **Authentic communication:** Credibility and trust may be increased by open and sincere communication regarding sustainability initiatives.
- **Educational campaigns:** Promoting sustainable practices and increasing public knowledge of environmental concerns may help bring about a more significant shift in society (Chea, 2024).

- **Social marketing:** The effect of sustainability programs may be increased via working with non-profit organisations and interacting with stakeholders (Kotler, Roberto, and Lee, 2002).

M&S and Sustainable Business Practices

Marks & Spencer's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability Commitment M&S's CSR Initiatives

The following categories roughly describe M&S's CSR initiatives:

- **Environmental Sustainability:** This includes reducing the amount of trash produced, saving water, reducing carbon emissions, and acquiring resources in a manner that is environmentally responsible. Marks & Spencer has made significant progress in reducing the impact that it has on the environment and has established ambitious targets for these areas (Marks & Spencer, 2017b). By way of illustration, they committed to being a company that has net-zero carbon emissions by the year 2040.
- **Social Responsibility:** Community participation, worker welfare, and fair employment standards are all areas that M&S places a high priority on. They have implemented ethical sourcing standards for their supply chain and have started projects to improve the lives of workers in their supply chain (M&S, 2024b). In addition, they have participated in initiatives to improve employees' working conditions.
- **Product Sustainability:** M&S has introduced a number of environmentally friendly products, such as clothing made of organic cotton and packaging made of recycled plastic (M&S, 2024a). In addition to this, they have made it a priority to promote a healthy diet and reduce the amount of food that is wasted (M&S, 2022).

M&S's Overall Commitment to Sustainability

One of the ways that M&S displays its commitment to sustainability is by incorporating corporate social responsibility into its primary business strategy. The company has come to the conclusion that sustainability is also a moral imperative in addition to being an economic opportunity. The efforts that M&S has made in environmentally responsible business practices have resulted in cost reductions, greater brand awareness, and a rise in the number of customers who are concerned about the environment (M&S, 2024d).

Consumer Perception and Brand Image

Consumer Attitudes Towards Sustainability: Factors Influencing Environmental Awareness and Behavior

Over the last few years, there has been a significant movement in consumer attitudes towards sustainability (Kuchinka et al., 2018). This transition has been brought about by the growing

environmental concerns and the increased awareness of the consequences that consumption has on the environment from consumers. Having an understanding of these attitudes and the factors that contribute to their formation is vital for businesses that are interested in implementing sustainable practices and for politicians who are trying to promote environmentally friendly conduct.

Consumer Attitudes Towards Sustainability

Research indicates that there is a growing market of consumers that have a clear preference for environmentally friendly products and services. The term "eco-conscious" or "green consumers" is occasionally used to refer to these customers (Ansu-Mensah, 20221). According to Tamar et al.'s research from 2020, respondents' perspectives are characterised by a desire to make the future better, a sense of environmental responsibility, and a willingness to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly solutions.

Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to acquire an understanding that the feelings of consumers with regard to sustainability are complex and diverse. Not every consumer is willing to make significant changes to their way of life, nor does every consumer exhibit the same level of care for the environment. According to Stern (2000), the major motive for certain consumers may be economic considerations, while on the other hand, social norms and peer pressure may have an effect on some customers.

Factors Influencing Consumer Environmental Awareness and Behavior

Several factors impact the environmental awareness and behaviours of consumers:

- According to Steg and Vlek (2009), consumers who have a higher level of environmental literacy are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behaviour. In order to raise awareness, it is necessary to have access to information on environmental problems and the consequences of consumer choices.
- Personal beliefs and values have a significant impact on the values and actions of consumers with regard to sustainability. According to Stern and Dietz (1994), individuals who put a high importance on the preservation of the environment are more likely to adopt actions that are consistent with sustainability.
- A significant influence on the behaviour of customers is exerted by social norms and peer pressure. According to research conducted by Dietz, Stern, and Guagnano in 1998, consumers are more likely to embrace environmentally friendly habits if they perceive that their peers are also doing so.
- Consumers' tendency to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours may be influenced by the status of the economy. It is possible that when consumers are short on cash, they would choose cost above worries about the environment.
- Customers are more likely to engage with sustainable brands and products if they think the promises made by the firm to be real and trustworthy that they are. The authors MOHR, WEBB, and HARRIS (2005) state that maintaining transparency and sincerity is necessary in order to earn the confidence of customers.

Consumer Perceptions and Responses to Sustainable Brands in the UK

Consumers in the United Kingdom have shown a great deal of interest in sustainable practices, which has had an effect on both their loyalty to brands and their purchasing decisions. Several studies have shown that consumers are becoming more prepared to pay a premium price for environmentally friendly products and services. This suggests that there is a major connection between consumer behaviour and environmental consciousness of consumers.

Key Findings from Existing Research:

- Studies have shown that consumers in the United Kingdom are growing more aware of environmental issues and are concerned about the impact that their buying habits may have on the environment. According to Carrigan and Attalla (2001), they place a high value on brands that embody their core beliefs and demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility.
- According to Andrews (2023), customers in the United Kingdom are sceptical of greenwashing and want businesses to be transparent and truthful about the sustainability claims they make. To create customer loyalty, a business must first earn the confidence of its customers via its environmental activities.
- Despite the fact that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products, price remains a significant factor that influences their purchasing decisions. According to research conducted by Borin, Lindsey-Mullikin, and Krishnan (2013), clients often ask for a solution that is both economical and environmentally friendly.
- Customers in the United Kingdom give specific product characteristics, such as organic ingredients, recyclable materials, and fair-trade certificates, a higher priority when making judgements on their purchases that are environmentally responsible. The perceptions that customers have about the sustainable credentials of a company are influenced by these traits, as stated by Peattie (2010).
- The conduct of consumers is influenced by both peer pressure and cultural norms. According to research conducted by Thøgersen in 2005, consumers who have the belief that adopting sustainable practices is a socially acceptable action are more likely to engage in sustainability activities themselves.

The Role of Sustainability in Building a Strong Brand Image in the UK

According to Sujanska and Nadanyiova (2023), sustainability has emerged as an essential component in deciding how customers see a brand and how they view it and how they perceive it. Developing powerful and appealing brand identities has become more reliant on the implementation of sustainable practices in the United Kingdom market, which is characterised by an increasing concern for the environment. The purpose of this section is to investigate the significant role that sustainability plays in this particular context.

Sustainability as a Brand Differentiator

According to Gupta, Czinkota, and Melewar (2013), sustainability offers businesses a unique opportunity to differentiate themselves in a market that is becoming more competitive. By demonstrating a genuine commitment to environmental and social responsibility, businesses have the potential to attract a growing consumer segment that places a high value on ethical purchasing. Based on research conducted by Barabas (2024), it has been shown that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for products and services that come from companies that have a strong reputation for being environmentally responsible.

Building Trust and Reputation

Sustainability is inextricably linked to both reputation and confidence in the organisation. The customers are getting more selective about the companies that they patronise and are looking for more evidence that the firms they support are doing ethically. When businesses effectively integrate sustainability into their business models and communicate their efforts to customers, they have the potential to strengthen their brand image and earn the trust of their targeted audience. According to Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), a good reputation for sustainability may also aid in mitigating the consequences of crises or negative news.

Attracting and Retaining Customers

The use of sustainability as a marketing strategy may assist you in attracting new customers and retaining existing ones. One of the most basic values that many people hold is sustainability, and customers are more inclined to choose businesses that are able to demonstrate that they adhere to these ideals. Through the demonstration of their dedication to sustainability, businesses have the opportunity to cultivate long-lasting ties and a loyal population of customers. Furthermore, according to MOHR, WEBB, and HARRIS (2005), sustainable practices have the potential to increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty. This is because research has shown that customers are more likely to be satisfied with organisations that they perceive to be ethical and responsible.

Enhancing Brand Image and Perception

The perception and image of a brand may be significantly improved via the use of sustainable practices. By establishing a connection between their brand and positive social and environmental outcomes, businesses have the opportunity to develop a strong brand identity. According to Belch & Belch (2009), a strong sustainable image may also assist boost brand awareness and visibility. This is because consumers are more likely to notice and remember enterprises that are linked with helpful causes.

Consumer Purchase Behavior and Brand Loyalty

Consumers' Environmental Values and Product Choices in the UK

Consumers' selections of products and their environmental values have a complicated connection that is impacted by many different circumstances. It has been suggested by a growing number of studies conducted in the United Kingdom that consumer behaviour is undergoing a considerable change in favour of more environmentally friendly alternatives.

The patterns of consumption are greatly impacted by environmental values, which are sometimes characterised as the beliefs that individuals have about the importance of protecting the environment. According to Stern et al. (1999), research has differentiated between three distinct types of environmental values: altruistic values, biospheric values, and egoistic values and values. There are three types of values: egoistic values, altruistic values, and biospheric values. Egoistic values believe that one's own interests should take precedence over those of others, whereas altruistic values focus on the well-being of others.

The influence of environmental values on the product choices of consumers in the United Kingdom has been shown by a great number of academic research. An example of this would be the findings of the research conducted by Poortinga, Steg, and Vlek (2004), which found that individuals with high biospheric values were more likely to purchase environmentally friendly products. It may be deduced from this that consumers who are really concerned about the environment are more likely to make choices that have an effect on the environment.

The relationship, on the other hand, is not always straightforward. Purchase decisions are also heavily impacted by a variety of variables, such as the availability of the goods, the price, and the ease of the purchase. Consumers often find themselves in a position where they must make choices between environmental concerns and other factors. For instance, even if a buyer is concerned about the environment, they could still choose for a product that is less environmentally friendly if it is more economical or more freely available.

The availability of environmental information and the credibility of that information both have an effect on the conduct of consumers. Based on research findings, it has been shown that providing clearly understandable information on the ecological footprint of a product has the potential to encourage environmentally aware choices (Thøgersen, 2005). Furthermore, buyers are more likely to trust information that comes from unbiased sources or groups that are affiliated with the government, as opposed to information that comes directly from company representatives.

Marketers have come to the realisation that environmental values are becoming an increasingly significant factor in the process of client segmentation. Following the identification of these client categories, businesses have the opportunity to concentrate their marketing efforts and product offerings on the environmental concerns of the different consumer categories. For instance, some consumers could be willing to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products, while others would put a greater emphasis on the price of the item.

Consumer Satisfaction, Trust, and Loyalty in Sustainable UK Retail

One of the most important topics in marketing research has been the intricate relationship that exists between client satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. In spite of this, the manner in which these ideas and sustainability interact within the framework of retail activities in the United Kingdom constitutes a separate and increasingly important area of research.

In the context of consumer satisfaction, the term refers to the degree to which a product or service fulfils the requirements and anticipations of the customer, as evaluated by the customer themselves

(Gianluigi Guido, 2015). In the context of sustainability, factors such as the eco-friendliness of the product, ethical sourcing, and transparent communication of sustainability activities are likely to have an effect on the level of pleasure experienced by customers (Oliver, 1997). Research conducted by Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) found that when consumers perceive that a company is environmentally responsible, they are more likely to be satisfied with the products and services they have purchased from that company.

Trust, on the other hand, is the notion that a corporation is dependable, honest, and skilled about its operations. As a result of the fact that it encourages consumers to spend a higher price for sustainable products and to remain loyal to the brand, trust is an essential component of the sustainable retail environment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Studies have indicated that consumers are more likely to trust in businesses that demonstrate a genuine concern for the environment by putting their words into action rather than just talking about it (Grunert, 2002).

Customer loyalty is something that retailers strive for since it is an indication of repeat business and positive word-of-mouth. Sustainability has the potential to significantly influence brand loyalty by facilitating the development of a deeper emotional connection between customers and companies. Customers who perceive that a company is environmentally responsible are more likely to remain loyal to the brand, according to research. Furthermore, consumers are more likely to remain loyal to businesses that they feel will satisfy their sustainability obligations. This is the reason why the trust-loyalty relationship is particularly strong in the context of sustainability (Warokka, Listyawati, and Rizan, 2014).

In the context of sustainability, retailers that are interested in gaining a competitive advantage in the retail business in the United Kingdom need to have an understanding of the linkages that exist between happiness, trust, and loyalty. The increasing awareness of environmental issues among consumers is the defining characteristic of this sector. It is possible for retailers to cultivate a loyal client base and enhance their overall brand image by placing an emphasis on environmentally responsible business methods, cultivating consumer trust, and offering contentment to their customers.

Methodology

Research Design:

This dissertation will use a mixed-methods research strategy, integrating a UK consumer survey with an M&S case study. An extensive investigation of the study topic is made possible by this methodology.

- **Case Study:** A case study will be used to give an in-depth examination of the sustainability policies that M&S has implemented and how those policies are integrated into marketing tactics. We are able to investigate their "Plan A" campaign, advertising materials, and maybe even conduct interviews with people associated with the relevant department.
- **Survey:** We will conduct an online survey to find out how customers in the United Kingdom feel about the environmental measures that M&S is doing and how those

activities influence the reputation of the firm. This takes into account the significant viewpoint of the client and extends the scope outside the framework of M&S's internal perspective.

Data Collection Methods:

- **Case Study:**
 - In order to get an understanding of how M&S communicates their commitment to sustainability, we will examine their website, in addition to their sustainability reports and marketing materials (advertising and packaging).
- **Survey:**
 - An online survey that consumers in the United Kingdom may self-administer will be given to a representative sample of those customers. In the course of the survey, the following subjects will be discussed:
 - A familiarity with the environmental initiatives undertaken by M&S.
 - A discussion about the validity and effectiveness of the environmental measures undertaken by M&S.
 - Depending on the sustainability pledges made by M&S, the elements that influence purchasing decisions are as follows.
 - Concerning the connection between the brand image of M&S and sustainability.

Data Analysis Techniques:

- **Case Study:**
 - To find important themes and patterns in M&S's communication of sustainability practices, thematic analysis will be used.
- **Survey:**
 - Consumer demographics, knowledge of M&S's sustainability initiatives, and the correlations between factors (such as perceived sustainability and brand image) will all be evaluated using statistical analysis.

Analysis

An emphasis is placed on the age distribution of those who participated in the a survey. There is a significant proportion of respondents who fall into the younger age categories. The age groups ranging from 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 years old together account for 83.3% of all respondents. The results of the survey indicate that the viewpoints and experiences of younger people were mostly reflected from their point of view. The percentage of people that answer experience a significant decline as they become older. There are only 7.4% of persons in the sample who fall into the age range of 35–44 years old, but the percentages for those in the age ranges of 45–54 years old and 55 and older are 3.7% and 5.6%, respectively. This leads one to believe that there was a relatively small number of older adults who participated in the research. It is reasonably equal that the distribution is fairly even in the two age groups that are the most frequent (18–24 and 25–34). 37% of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 24, while 46.3% are between the ages of 25 and 34. This suggests that individuals within these age groups are represented in a manner that is relatively equal.

A greater number of younger generations are likely to be concerned about the environment in general and to have a greater interest in environmentally friendly products and strategies. There is a significant proportion of younger respondents, which may indicate that M&S may have identified a potential target demographic for their sustainability campaign. It is possible that the values of younger consumers connect with the environmental initiatives that M&S engages in, which might result in increased brand loyalty and a good attitude. Customers that are younger are often more willing to pay a higher price for products that are better for the environment. By gaining an understanding of customer tastes, M&S may be able to provide more economical rates and innovative items.

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	20	37.0	37.0	37.0
	25-34	25	46.3	46.3	83.3
	35-44	4	7.4	7.4	90.7
	45-54	2	3.7	3.7	94.4
	55+	3	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Table of responses "Age"

Respondents who are male make up 68.5% of the sample as a whole, which means that they constitute the majority of respondents. Taking this into consideration, it seems that there was a significant gender gap in the survey, with a much smaller percentage of females participating. Women make up a minority of the sample, accounting for 31.5% of the total answers received

overall. In light of this, it may be deduced that the survey mostly gathered the opinions and experiences of males.

The distribution of genders, on their own, does not directly address activities related to sustainability; rather, it may give information that is informative on prospective target groups and marketing strategies. Based on the higher number of male respondents, it seems that male consumers are more likely to have a positive reaction to the sustainability efforts that M&S plans to implement. There are a lot of factors that might be responsible for this, such as cultural conventions, gender-specific marketing activities, or traditional gender roles. M&S need to give some thought to changing their messaging on sustainability in order to be more precisely directed towards female clients. This may include putting a focus on a variety of benefits or emphasising on specific environmental issues that are appealing to women. It may be beneficial for product design and development to have an awareness of the preferences of customers based on their gender. For instance, M&S may consider the possibility of manufacturing environmentally friendly products that cater to specific preferences of either men or women. It is possible that M&S might broaden their audience and boost their reputation in the sustainability arena if they reached out to organisations or celebrities who have a significant proportion of female followers.

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	17	31.5	31.5	31.5
	Male	37	68.5	68.5	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Table of responses "Gender"

Participants in the survey were restricted to those who were based in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Due to the fact that the sample was only taken from a certain geographical location, it is possible that it may not accurately reflect the whole population. All of the respondents were individuals who were located inside the United Kingdom, with a frequency of 53 and a percentage of one hundred percent. It may be deduced from this that there were no questions or ambiguities about the location.

Despite the fact that location data does not immediately address sustainability objectives on its own, it does provide informative background information that assists in analysing the results and comprehending how M&S's actions might potentially effect consumers in the United Kingdom. Given that all of the respondents were from the United Kingdom, it is possible that M&S's target market may directly benefit from the findings. Because of this, it is feasible to conduct a more exact analysis of the preferences and perceptions of customers in the context of the United Kingdom. In order to adequately personalised sustainability campaigns and communications, it is vital to have a thorough understanding of the cultural and contextual factors that are specific to the market in the United Kingdom. In order to create more appealing advertising, M&S may make use

of information about the views and behaviours of customers in the United Kingdom. When operating in the United Kingdom, M&S is obligated to comply with a number of consumer protection and environmental requirements. There is a possibility that the outcomes of the poll will add to M&S's understanding of the regulatory environment and how it influences the expectations of customers.

		Location			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	UK	53	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Table of responses "Location"

Three-fourths of the respondents who make monthly purchases online provided the response that was the most often given. On a monthly basis, this suggests that the individuals who were questioned often make purchases online. The fact that 30.2% of respondents make at least one purchase online every week is indicative of a consistent and consistent practice of buying by these individuals. A lesser percentage of respondents, 15%, claimed they only purchase online sometimes, while just 3.8% of respondents indicated they shop online every day or never. In light of this, it may be deduced that a certain proportion of individuals make purchases online less often or not at all. Overall, there is not a single group that constitutes the majority of the responses to the poll, which reveals a diverse range of online shopping habits. The fact that various individuals have diverse preferences and habits when it comes to buying is suggested by this conclusion.

The fact that a significant number of respondents make purchases online on a weekly or monthly basis suggests that the demographic that is being investigated is familiar with the process of buying online. It would seem from this that an increasing number of individuals are making purchases of goods and services via the use of the internet. The varying purchase frequency of the data demonstrates how various the preferences and habits of customers are when it comes to taking advantage of online shopping. Some individuals may want to go shopping once a month or once a week, while others may opt to go shopping less often. This may be due to circumstances such as convenience or unique needs.

M&S's customer base is comprised of a significant portion of customers that shop on a monthly or weekly basis, which indicates that these customers are often exposed to the brand and its message on sustainability. Through customer engagement initiatives, product labelling, and in-store promotions, this presents an opportunity for M&S to reinforce its commitment to become more environmentally responsible. By gaining an understanding of the frequency of purchasing, M&S is able to more effectively target different client types with their message on sustainability. For instance, M&S may place a greater focus on affordability and convenience for consumers who shop with them less often, while highlighting the long-term benefits of environmentally friendly solutions for those who shop with them frequently. It is possible that M&S may utilise their incentive systems to encourage customers to participate in sustainable shopping activities, such as

purchasing environmentally friendly products or reducing the amount of waste they produce. As a consequence of this, consumers could be inspired to adopt lifestyle choices that are less harmful to the environment, and their loyalty to the brand might increase.

Frequency of M&S shopping					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Monthly	18	34.0	34.0	37.7
	Never	2	3.8	3.8	41.5
	Occasionally	15	28.3	28.3	69.8
	Weekly	16	30.2	30.2	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Table of responses "Frequency of M&S shopping"

The great majority of participants, which accounts for 77.4% of the total, are aware of the M&S Plan sustainability program. It seems from this that the individuals who were surveyed have a high level of awareness. Among those who participated in the survey, a smaller minority (22.6%) were unaware of the project. When this is taken into consideration, it is possible that some individuals are unaware of the sustainability initiatives that the M&S Plan has been working on. According to the data, each and every responder provided a response when they were asked whether or not they were aware of the program, so indicating that this variable was fully represented. There were no replies that were either ambiguous or lacking.

Because of the high level of awareness, it can be deduced that a sizeable portion of the target audience has been made aware of the M&S Plan's sustainability program via the use of efficient communication. The fact that this is the case is a positive indication of the program's efficacy and broad reach. In light of the fact that there is a subset of the population that is unaware of the program, it is imperative that continual efforts be made to increase awareness and establish connections with a greater number of individuals. Collaborations with relevant organisations or communication strategies that are more narrowly focused might fall under this category.

Having such a high level of expertise is positive for the environmental activities that M&S is doing. It gives the impression that a sizeable portion of their intended audience has been successfully communicated to as a result of their effective implementation of Plan A. M&S is provided with a firm foundation upon which to build its sustainable activities thanks to the extensive expertise provided by Plan A. Because of this, it demonstrates that consumers are receptive to their message and are interested in learning more about their initiatives. In spite of the enormous amount of information that is available, the Plan A program still has to be strengthened. Considering the possibility of including more overt allusions to Plan A in their advertising, in-store messaging, and product packaging is something that M&S may consider doing. For the purpose of establishing trust and confidence, M&S may take use of the significant information that consumers have about

Plan A. For the purpose of demonstrating their commitment to ecological responsibility, they can provide specific examples of the sustainability efforts they have undertaken.

Awareness of M&S's Plan A sustainability program					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	12	22.6	22.6	22.6
	Yes	41	77.4	77.4	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Table of responses "Awareness of M&S's "Plan A" sustainability program:"

According to the findings of the survey, a sizeable majority of respondents (50.9%), sustainability is considered to be "extremely important" when choosing a brand. Based on this, it seems that the individuals who were questioned showed a considerable preference for environmentally friendly products and services. 15% of respondents, which is a lesser number, consider sustainability to be "somewhat important," while 32.1% of respondents consider it to be "very important." Despite the fact that sustainability may not be the primary concern of all participants, it is still a significant factor for a sizeable portion of the population, as shown by the responses that have been presented so far. Only 1.9% of those who participated in the survey felt that sustainability is "not important at all." Taking this into consideration, it seems that only a small fraction of respondents considers sustainability to be a relatively insignificant issue. From the overall data, it is evident that the people who were surveyed had a strong preference for sustainability. Given that the majority of respondents had a preference for businesses that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, it is clear that sustainability is becoming an increasingly important consideration in the decision-making process of consumers.

In light of the fact that sustainability is held in such high esteem, it is not surprising that there is an increasing demand among consumers for sustainable products and services. It may be simpler for businesses that prioritise sustainability to acquire new customers and to maintain relationships with those they already have. The findings indicate that consumers are taking a greater interest in social and environmental issues, as well as increasing their awareness of these issues. It would seem from this that customers are giving preference to businesses who share their values and contribute to the development of a more sustainable future. Taking into account the results of the survey, businesses have the opportunity to differentiate themselves from their rivals by incorporating sustainable practices into their business operations, services, and products. By demonstrating their commitment to environmental responsibility, businesses have the potential to improve their brand image and attract a growing number of loyal customers.

The fact that the respondents placed a significant emphasis on sustainability is a positive indication for M&S's efforts. It gives the impression that a sizeable portion of their target market is aligned with the same principles that form the basis of their environmental initiatives. There is a possibility that M&S will be able to exploit their environmental efforts to their advantage in the market.

Establishing oneself as leaders in environmentally responsible business practices may allow companies to differentiate themselves from competitors and attract clients who are environmentally conscious. By gaining an understanding of the relevance of sustainability, M&S may be able to better tailor their communication approaches in order to successfully interact with a wide variety of client groups. For those who are of the opinion that sustainability is of the utmost importance, they may, for instance, stress the environmental benefits of their products, while also promoting other aspects for those individuals who are not as concerned about sustainability. It's possible that M&S may use this knowledge to direct their efforts in terms of product development and innovation. One way in which they might further strengthen their credentials in the area of sustainability is by focusing on the development of sustainable products that meet the requirements and preferences of their target market.

How important is sustainability to you when choosing a brand					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely important	27	50.9	50.9	50.9
	Not important at all	1	1.9	1.9	52.8
	Somewhat important	8	15.1	15.1	67.9
	Very important	17	32.1	32.1	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Table of responses "How important is sustainability to you when choosing a brand?"

With regard to the M&S environmental programs, the significant majority of people who were surveyed (56.6% of them) said that they are "very aware" of them. It seems from this that the individuals who were surveyed have a high level of awareness. The fact that some of the respondents, which accounts for 22.6% of the total, are "somewhat aware" of the activities is indicative of a comprehension level that is moderate. Those respondents who are "not at all aware" or "not very aware" make up a smaller fraction of the total (20.8%). The fact that this is the case shows that a portion of the population may have an inadequate comprehension or awareness of the sustainability efforts that have been adopted by the M&S. The results of the poll indicate that there is a broad range of knowledge levels, and there is no one group that emerges as the most prevalent among the responses. With this in mind, it can be deduced that various groups of the general population have varying degrees of comprehension about sustainability initiatives.

Due to the high level of knowledge, it seems that a sizeable portion of the target audience has been made aware of the M&S's sustainability aims via the use of effective communication. The fact that this is the case is a positive indication of the program's efficacy and broad reach. In light of the fact that there is a subset of the population that is either unaware of the activities or not very aware of them, it is imperative that continual efforts be made to increase awareness and reach a greater number of individuals. Collaborations with relevant organisations or communication strategies that are more narrowly focused might fall under this category.

Having such a high level of expertise is positive for the environmental activities that M&S is doing. It gives the impression that a sizeable portion of their intended audience has been reached as a result of the efforts that they have made to disseminate information on sustainability. Because of the high degree of awareness, M&S now has a strong platform on which to advance their activities that are environmentally responsible. Because of this, it demonstrates that consumers are receptive to their message and are interested in learning more about their initiatives. Even if they have a high degree of awareness, they should continue to support the efforts that they are doing to be sustainable. There is a possibility that M&S may consider incorporating a more obvious message into their product packaging, in-store communications, and marketing campaign activities. It's possible that M&S would take advantage of the high awareness in order to boost the credibility and trust of their customers. For the purpose of demonstrating their commitment to ecological responsibility, they can provide specific examples of the sustainability efforts they have undertaken.

How aware are you of M&S's sustainability initiatives					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not aware at all	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Not very aware	9	17.0	17.0	20.8
	Somewhat aware	12	22.6	22.6	43.4
	Very aware	30	56.6	56.6	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Table of responses "How aware are you of M&S's sustainability initiatives?"

The majority of respondents, which accounts for 56.6% of the total, are of the opinion that the M&S is "very committed" to sustainability. It would seem from this that the results of the organization's work in this area are regarded positively. A relatively low proportion of respondents (34%) had the opinion that the M&S is "somewhat committed," which indicates that they have a moderate level of faith in the environmental initiatives that the firm is doing. There are just 9.4% of persons who have the opinion that the M&S is "not very committed." It seems from this that a very small proportion of respondents had a negative opinion of the sustainability activities undertaken by the organisation. According to the data, the majority of people are in favour of the environmental initiatives that the M&S is doing. A significant number of respondents had a positive impression of the activities carried out by the organisation, which suggests that it has been effective in disseminating its message on the importance of sustainability.

It is possible that the positive perception of the M&S's commitment to sustainability will contribute to the firm's brand reputation to be reinforced. Consumers are seeking for companies that demonstrate that they are concerned about social and environmental issues, and having a good reputation may help you attract new customers and maintain the ones you already have. Based on the findings, it seems that the M&S has been successful in incorporating stakeholders and successfully articulating its goals regarding sustainability. As a consequence of this, it is possible

that relationships with customers, employees, investors, and other stakeholders may improve. The minority of respondents who believe that the M&S is "not very committed" indicates that there is still a need for growth, despite the fact that the majority of respondents had a positive impression of the M&S. The organisation is able to identify specific areas in which enhancing its sustainability measures may result in an even greater improvement in both its impact and its reputation.

The fact that M&S is seen as having a positive attitude towards its commitment to sustainability is a trustworthy indication that their efforts have been successful. It suggests that their efforts to disseminate information about their sustainability message have been successful in resonating with consumers and have led to the building of a positive image for the brand. There is a possibility that M&S has a competitive advantage in the market due to the excellent reputation they have earned as a sustainable brand. Taking this step might differentiate businesses from their rivals and attract clients who are environmentally conscious. Having a favourable attitude towards sustainability has the potential to increase customer advocacy and loyalty to a company. In the event that customers acknowledge M&S's dedication to sustainability, they are more likely to continue their relationship with the brand and to recommend it to others. By capitalising on their strong environmental image, M&S has the ability to expand their customer base and enter places that have not yet been explored effectively. By highlighting their commitment to sustainability, they provide themselves the opportunity to attract a bigger audience of consumers who place a high value on ethical and responsible businesses.

How do you perceive M&S's commitment to sustainability					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very committed	5	9.4	9.4	9.4
	Somewhat committed	18	34.0	34.0	43.4
	Very committed	30	56.6	56.6	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: Table of responses "How do you perceive M&S's commitment to sustainability?"

A vast majority of respondents (60.4%), who were asked about their opinions, said that the choices made by shoppers had been "significantly" influenced by M&S environmental activities. It may be deduced from this that a sizeable portion of the general public based a major portion of their purchasing decisions on the concept of sustainability. Another group of respondents, including 30.2% of the total, assert that sustainability measures had "somewhat" an effect on their decision. It seems from this that even if it is not the primary worry, sustainability is a significant concern for a sizeable portion of the population. A small minority of respondents (9.4%) responded with "I'm unsure" or "No, not at all" when asked about the influence that sustainability efforts had on their purchase decisions. The implication of this is that for a very small fraction of the population, sustainability could not be a relevant factor to take into account.

The overall results of the study indicate that M&S sustainability measures have a positive effect on the decisions that customers make. The majority of respondents said that the organization's sustainability initiatives had a substantial influence on them, which is evidence that these programs are effective in encouraging sustainable consumption. According to the findings of the study, consumers are growing more concerned about sustainability, and businesses that prioritise sustainability may become more successful in attracting and retaining customers. Based on the data, it seems that consumers are shifting their preferences towards environmentally friendly products and services. This presents businesses with an opportunity to differentiate themselves from their rivals and capitalise on the growing demand in the market.

A good indicator of the effectiveness of M&S's sustainability efforts is the positive responses that customers have received to such initiatives. It gives the impression that consumers have reacted positively to their message about sustainability, and that this has influenced the choices that they have made about their purchases. The use of M&S's environmental efforts might provide the company with a competitive advantage. Establishing oneself as leaders in environmentally responsible business practices may allow companies to differentiate themselves from competitors and attract clients who are environmentally conscious. Customers who have a positive opinion of a company's commitment to sustainability may become more loyal to that firm if they have a positive perception of the company's ethical and responsible business practices. Perhaps this will result in repeat business as well as increased advocacy from customers. Even if the results are positive, M&S should continue to increase the amount of effort they put into their environmental projects. There is a possibility that they may present case studies, provide more specific information on the impact that they have on the environment, or highlight specific examples of their sustainable practices.

Have M&S's sustainability efforts influenced your decision to shop there?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I'm unsure	3	5.7	5.7	5.7
	No, not at all	2	3.8	3.8	9.4
	Yes, significantly	32	60.4	60.4	69.8
	Yes, to some extent	16	30.2	30.2	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: Table of responses "Have M&S's sustainability efforts influenced your decision to shop there?"

The data obtained from the survey emphasises on the specific operations of the M&S that fall under the category of sustainability that the participants have seen. Among the efforts that are most frequently mentioned, the use of environmentally friendly products is the one that is known by 39.6% of the respondents. It may be deduced from this that the efforts of the M&S are particularly apparent and relevant in this particular sector. A significant proportion of the participants, namely 28.3% and 24.5%, are aware of the initiatives that are being undertaken to reduce the amount of packaging and to encourage ethical sourcing. It seems from these findings that the M&S is also

well-known for the work that it has done in these relevant domains. Fewer people are aware of the initiatives that aim to improve energy efficiency and encourage community engagement; just 3.8% of respondents acknowledged their existence. It might be inferred from this that, in compared to the other initiatives, these ones may have a lower level of visibility or influence.

The outcomes of the poll as a whole indicate that people's comprehension of the different sustainability initiatives vary greatly. Although some programs are more well-known than others, there are others that may benefit from more outreach and communication in order to be viewed by a greater number of people.

Considering the inequalities in awareness, it is possible that the M&S will need to make adjustments to its plans for outreach and communication in order to guarantee that each and every sustainability initiative is brought to light in an appropriate manner. This may include more visibility on social media and other platforms, partnerships with groups that are pertinent to the issue at hand, or communications that are more targeted. The findings of the survey might be used to determine the order of priority for the M&S's initiatives related to sustainability. There is a possibility that projects with lower levels of awareness might become more visible and influential if they get more financing and attention. The data throws light on the sustainability initiatives that clients find most appealing and provides insight into those programs. Through a focus on initiatives that are attractive to the target audience, the M&S has the potential to cultivate a clientele that is loyal to the brand and increase its reputation.

According to the results of the poll, the areas in which M&S's sustainability activities are most noticeable to consumers are highlighted that are emphasised. In addition, it highlights areas in which enhancements should be made to both awareness and communication processes. Customers are already aware that M&S is dedicated to decreasing the amount of packaging and utilising environmentally friendly items, so it is possible that they will continue to emphasise these efforts. It is possible that they will present specific examples of their achievements in these areas in order to underline their commitment to sustainability. It would be beneficial for M&S to focus on increasing awareness of their initiatives that promote energy efficiency and community involvement. Showcasing particular initiatives, spreading success stories, and integrating these activities into their marketing campaigns are all examples of possibilities that fall under this category. On the basis of the fact that some client segments may not be aware of certain initiatives, M&S could adapt their marketing strategies appropriately. For instance, they may place a greater focus on telling clients about initiatives that are less well-known while further reinforcing their support for programs that are more well-known.

Which specific sustainability initiatives by M&S have you noticed					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Community involvement	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Energy efficiency	2	3.8	3.8	7.5
	Ethical sourcing	13	24.5	24.5	32.1
	Reduced packaging	15	28.3	28.3	60.4
	Sustainable materials	21	39.6	39.6	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: Table of responses "Which specific sustainability initiatives by M&S have you noticed or appreciated?"

The majority of the data collected from the survey is related with the opinions of respondents on the M&S brand. "Quality," which was chosen by 37.7% of respondents, is the trait that is used the most often to characterise the M&S brand image among the respondents. It may be deduced from this that people consider the M&S to be a luxury brand. 28.3% of respondents and 17% of respondents, respectively, are of the opinion that the M&S is both affordable and sustainable. Based on these findings, it seems that the brand is positively associated with both quality and value. Additionally, despite the fact that a smaller percentage of respondents (9.4%) and 7.5% believe that the M&S is trendy and ethical, these traits still have an impact on how the brand is seen as a whole. According to the results of the poll, the majority of respondents had a positive impression of the M&S brand. The vast majority of respondents believe that a positive brand image is indicated by the fact that they associate the brand with characteristics such as affordability, sustainability, and quality.

On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that M&S has successfully positioned itself as a brand of superior quality. The fact that it is inexpensive and has environmental links contributes to its popularity among customers. Based on the data, it was discovered that consumers put a significant amount of weight on the cost, sustainability, and quality of a brand. By making use of these characteristics, the M&S is able to attract and retain customers. In comparison to its competitors, the M&S is distinguished by the fact that it is regarded to be more affordable and sustainable. There is a possibility that the brand may stand out in the market due to the different attitude that it takes.

The results of the poll indicate that consumers have a favourable perception of the M&S brand, particularly with regard to the company's commitment to quality and sustainability. Consequently, this suggests that their attempts to be environmentally responsible have helped them acquire favour with their clientele. There is a possibility that M&S will continue to emphasise the significance of quality and sustainability to their brand identity. It is possible that they will be able to boost their position in the market and attract more clients who are concerned about the environment if they take this action. It seems that M&S's measures are having an effect, as seen by the positive consumer perception about sustainability. It is possible that they will utilise this to differentiate themselves from competitors and to strengthen their brand image even more. M&S should seek

for methods to improve people's opinions of cost, ethical conduct, and fashionability, despite the fact that consumers have positive sentiments towards quality and sustainability. The enhancement of their marketing campaigns, pricing strategies, or product offerings might fall under this category.

How would you describe M&S's overall brand image					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Affordable	9	17.0	17.0	17.0
	Ethical	5	9.4	9.4	26.4
	Fashionable	4	7.5	7.5	34.0
	Quality	20	37.7	37.7	71.7
	Sustainable	15	28.3	28.3	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 11: Table of responses "How would you describe M&S's overall brand image?"

For the purpose of this survey, the data focusses on the likelihood that respondents will inform their friends and family members about the M&S. With a score of ten out of ten, 54.7% of those who participated in the survey said that they are "very likely" to recommend the M&S to their friends and relatives. Taking everything into consideration, it seems that customers have a very positive impression of the brand and are pretty content with it. The fact that more respondents (37.7%) consider the M&S to be "likely" (rating it eight out of ten) to recommend it contributes to the development of a more positive view of the brand. Regarding the likelihood that they will promote the M&S, a smaller fraction of respondents, 17% have indicated that they are "unsure" (rating 1-2 out of 10) and "somewhat likely" (rating 6-7 out of 10) in their responses. Even if the vast majority of responders have a positive attitude, this suggests that some of them may have reservations or feelings that are in contradiction with one another. Approximately 1.9% of those who participated in the survey gave the M&S a grade of "unlikely" (3-4 out of 10) or "not at all likely" (rating 1-2 out of 10). This gives the impression that there is not a great deal of hostility against the brand.

It would seem that the M&S has a robust customer base that is formed of loyal people who are pleased with their interactions and willing to spread the word about the brand. This is shown by the high likelihood of referrals. Positive word-of-mouth marketing may be the consequence of a favourable view of the M&S, and it has the potential to be a powerful method for increasing brand awareness and growing the customer. In spite of the fact that the great majority of respondents are undoubtedly in support of the M&S, the fact that there is a very small percentage that has views that are either contradictory or negative implies that there is still room for improvement. In order to further enhance its reputation, the firm may identify areas in which it may take steps to increase customer satisfaction and address any problems that may arise.

According to the positive reviews, the sustainability measures that M&S has implemented have resulted in increased customer loyalty and a better reputation for the business. The fact that a sizeable number of participants said that they would be prepared to recommend M&S suggests that they are pleased with the brand and believe that it offers advantages to other people. It is possible that this may be explained by factors such as the quality of the items, the quality of the customer care, and the positive image that customers have of M&S's efforts to protect the environment. The likelihood of a customer telling their friends and family about a brand increase when the customer is satisfied with the brand. It is possible that this will result in increased brand awareness as well as organic growth. M&S has the potential to preserve and improve their positive brand image by implementing focused marketing initiatives, customer loyalty programs, and ongoing environmental operations.

How likely are you to recommend M&S to friends and family					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
	3	2	3.8	3.8	5.7
	4	3	5.7	5.7	11.3
	5	3	5.7	5.7	17.0
	6	1	1.9	1.9	18.9
	7	3	5.7	5.7	24.5
	8	7	13.2	13.2	37.7
	9	4	7.5	7.5	45.3
	10	29	54.7	54.7	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 12: Table of responses "How likely are you to recommend M&S to friends and family?"

The primary emphasis of the survey data is to determine whether M&S's sustainability measures have affected respondents' assessment of the brand image. As a result of learning about M&S's environmental initiatives, the overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) said that their perception of the firm had improved "positively." It may be deduced from this that the company's efforts to promote sustainability have resulted in a positive view of the brand. There were only 5.7% of respondents who said that their perspective had shifted in a "negative" manner. On the other hand, this indicates that even while the majority of people have been positively affected, a very small number of people may have been affected by something else. 11.3% of respondents said that their perception of the M&S brand image "has not changed at all." This is a very small fraction of the total respondents. The fact that this is the case suggests that the fact that some individuals are aware of the sustainability initiatives may not have had a significant influence on their preexisting perceptions of the brand. It has been determined via the accumulation of facts that the M&S sustainability efforts have a positive impact on the way in which people view the brand.

The fact that the majority of respondents indicated positive improvements is evidence of how well the organization's efforts to disseminate its message about sustainability had been successful.

It may be inferred from the positive movement in opinion that M&S's brand reputation has improved as a direct consequence of the sustainability initiatives that it has implemented. Consumers are increasingly seeking for businesses that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, and a powerful brand image has the potential to attract and retain customers. The findings indicate that consumers place a high level of importance on considerations of sustainability when evaluating brands. By drawing attention to actions that promote sustainability, the M&S has the potential to influence the purchasing decisions of customers and connect with their beliefs. There is a favourable impact on brand perception, which highlights how important it is to communicate and connect with the public about actions related to sustainability in an efficient way. It is possible for the M&S to continue its efforts to disseminate information about the positive impression and to attract a greater number of individuals.

Has your perception of M&S brand image changed since learning					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No, not at all	6	11.3	11.3	11.3
	Yes, negatively	3	5.7	5.7	17.0
	Yes, positively	44	83.0	83.0	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: Table of responses "Has your perception of M&S's brand image changed since learning about their sustainability efforts?"

The survey's findings focus on how respondents judged M&S Marketing's ability to effectively communicate sustainability ideas. An overwhelming majority of participants, which accounts for 58.5% of the total, are of the opinion that M&S marketing methods are "very effective" in terms of raising awareness of sustainability goals. This indicates that the organization's marketing initiatives have been effective in reaching the target audience and in informing them of all relevant information. Among those who were polled, 35.8% of respondents expressed their opinion that the marketing campaigns were "somewhat effective." The implication of this is that even if the efforts are generally useful, there are specific things that might be done more effectively. A total of 5.7% of those who participated in the survey rated the marketing activities as "not very effective." Based on this, it seems that the marketing attempts of the M&S may not have reached or educated a portion of the population to the extent that they should have. Generally speaking, the data indicate that individuals have a positive attitude of the degree to which M&S marketing effectively conveys sustainability. The majority of respondents had a positive impression of the organization's marketing strategies, which suggests that they have been effective in conveying the message that the organisation is committed to practicing sustainability.

Through the use of effective communication strategies, the M&S has been able to successfully connect with and engage the audience that it was designed for, as shown by the high degree of effectiveness. It is possible that the corporation will continue to cultivate and perfect its marketing strategies in order to maintain this good image. According to the findings, even if the majority of respondents believe that the marketing initiatives are successful, there are still those who believe that they are "somewhat effective" or "not very effective." In light of this, it is possible that the M&S will need to enhance its targeting and segmentation strategies in order to guarantee that its message is comprehended by a more extensive audience.

How effective do you find M&S's marketing efforts in communicating their sustainability initiatives?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very effective	3	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Somewhat effective	19	35.8	35.8	41.5
	Very effective	31	58.5	58.5	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: Table of responses "How effective do you find M&S's marketing efforts in communicating their sustainability initiatives?"

The data collected from the survey focusses on the preferred methodologies that individuals employ in order to acquire knowledge about the M&S. A total of 54.7% of those who participated in the survey indicated social media as their preferred method of acquiring information on the M&S. Taking this into consideration, it seems that social media platforms are fairly effective at connecting with and engaging with the audience they are designed for. The internet and in-store signage are preferred by a sizeable number of respondents (24.5% and 5.7%, respectively) when it comes to the process of obtaining information. This suggests that there is still a role for traditional methods of communicating with individuals who are clients. Only 5.7% of respondents chose email as their preferred method of communication, whereas the same number of respondents identified traditional advertising as their preferred path. The fact that this is the case shows that some channels may not be as well-liked by consumers or could have a lower level of success in reaching the target demographic. The overall results of the poll indicate that respondents have a broad selection of channels that they like; thus, there is no one channel that is more popular than the others. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that a multi-channel approach is necessary for the M&S to effectively communicate with the audience that it is intended for.

Due to the dominance of social media, it is clear that digital marketing is very important for M&S. It is necessary for the firm to make an investment in the use of effective digital marketing strategies and the maintenance of a consistent presence on social media. In-store signage is still essential for communicating with consumers, even if social media is the preferred vehicle for communication. In addition to being amusing, instructive, and coherent, the M&S is responsible for ensuring that all of its in-store signage effectively communicates the essential values of the firm. Due to the fact

that there are many different preferences, the M&S need to implement a customised communication strategy, adapting its message to the various types of media and audience groups.

What channels do you prefer for receiving information about M&S					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Email	3	5.7	5.7	5.7
	In-store signage	3	5.7	5.7	11.3
	Social media	29	54.7	54.7	66.0
	Traditional advertising	5	9.4	9.4	75.5
	Website	13	24.5	24.5	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 15: Table of responses "What channels do you prefer for receiving information about M&S's sustainability efforts?"

Those who participated in the survey offered a wide range of suggestions for improving M&S sustainability communication, highlighting a great deal of potential areas for improvement. In their presentations, a number of participants emphasised the need of more openness and proactive participation from consumers. It was suggested that social media should be used for communication in both directions, that user feedback should be included, and that there should be greater transparency on sustainability measures. In order to communicate with a more specific audience, the M&S should prioritise outreach and focused communication, according to the recommendations of the respondents. The use of social media, the placement of adverts in relevant publications, and the formation of partnerships with other companies are all necessary here. Several of the participants brought up the need of focussing on specific sustainability measures, such as using sustainable materials, reducing the amount of packaging, and procuring products in an ethical manner. It may be deduced from this that consumers are interested in learning more about the particular actions that the M&S has taken. A handful of the responders suggested improving the M&S website as well as the in-store contacts with the company. In order to do this, it is necessary to increase the quantity of information that is accessible about activities that promote sustainability, to make it easier to find information that is relevant, and to ensure that the message is consistent across all forms of media. A broad range of suggestions is included in the conclusions of the survey, which exemplifies the many perspectives and worries expressed by the individuals who took part in the survey. Given this, it is clear that the M&S has to consider ways to improve its communication around sustainability by using a range of different tactics.

What could M&S do to improve their sustainability communication				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
It was a good idea at first place for M&S to introduce the zero- carbon lives all along the coming years. M&S looks behind the label, and thought about the well-being of it customers and the environment system (Climate change). I can tell very few big industries care about the well-being of their customers, but just generated profits.	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
Actively seek and incorporate customer feedback on sustainability initiatives to demonstrate responsiveness and adapt to consumer expectations.	1	1.9	1.9	3.8
Adaptive new culture accounting to customer	1	1.9	1.9	5.7
Ads	1	1.9	1.9	7.5
Advertise	1	1.9	1.9	9.4
Affordable	1	1.9	1.9	11.3
Be more active in the online environment!	1	1.9	1.9	13.2
Being more transparent	2	3.8	3.8	17.0
Branding	1	1.9	1.9	18.9
Business market	1	1.9	1.9	20.8
Change in fashion	1	1.9	1.9	22.6
Excellent!!!	1	1.9	1.9	24.5
Fantastic□□□	1	1.9	1.9	26.4
Fashionable	1	1.9	1.9	28.3
Focus on quality	1	1.9	1.9	30.2
Great exposure in the right format to be precise and explore the deep dive in all the fields of manufacturing units.	1	1.9	1.9	32.1
I guess it's good	1	1.9	1.9	34.0
I thinks its really important to keep regular intouch with customer around and find out there point of view too....	1	1.9	1.9	35.8
Leverage social media to promote sustainability efforts, using engaging content formats like videos and infographics to reach a wider audience.	1	1.9	1.9	37.7
M&S needs to reach out to a bigger audience so that more people would be aware of their sustainability efforts.	1	1.9	1.9	39.6
Marketing	1	1.9	1.9	41.5
Maybe they could do more recyclable things	1	1.9	1.9	43.4
More products	1	1.9	1.9	45.3
Nil	1	1.9	1.9	47.2
No	1	1.9	1.9	49.1
None	1	1.9	1.9	50.9
Nothing	2	3.8	3.8	54.7
Perfect brand	1	1.9	1.9	56.6
Public awareness	1	1.9	1.9	58.5
put the price low	1	1.9	1.9	60.4
Relaxing and comfortable in wearing	1	1.9	1.9	62.3
Responsible marketing	5	9.4	9.4	71.7
Sharing resources	2	3.8	3.8	75.5
Smm	1	1.9	1.9	77.4
Social media presence.	1	1.9	1.9	79.2
Sofesticated	1	1.9	1.9	81.1
Suitable in all conditions	1	1.9	1.9	83.0
Till improvement	1	1.9	1.9	84.9
Unsure	1	1.9	1.9	86.8
Website	1	1.9	1.9	88.7
website updates.	1	1.9	1.9	90.6
working with partners	1	1.9	1.9	92.5
Working with partners	1	1.9	1.9	94.3
Yes	2	3.8	3.8	98.1
Yes ofcos they have have to improve in a brand	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 16: Table of responses “What could M&S do to improve their sustainability communication?”

Discussion

The findings of the survey provide valuable in-depth information on a variety of subjects that are connected to the objectives of the M&S in terms of communication, sustainability, and brand image. The vast majority of persons who participated in the survey expressed satisfaction with the brand's efforts to promote sustainability and said that they would be willing to recommend the M&S to others, which is indicative of a positive overall image of the M&S.

Sustainability and Brand Image:

It was widely known to the respondents that the M&S had implemented sustainability measures, and they also believed that the organisation was committed to sustainability. The firm has seen an improvement in its image as a consequence of this good perception, which has resulted in the company attracting customers who are concerned about the environment. In addition, the survey revealed that sustainability has a substantial impact on purchasing decisions, highlighting the need of incorporating sustainability into business strategies.

Communication and Outreach:

According to the results of the study, the M&S has been effective in promoting sustainability measures via the actions that it has undertaken in the realm of marketing. A significant number of respondents highlighted social media in particular as a source of pleasure with the communication channels used by the organisation. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement in terms of communication with a more extensive audience and ensuring that all sustainability initiatives get sufficient publicity.

Customer Engagement:

A significant focus was placed by the survey on the relevance of consumer engagement in the transmission of sustainability policies. According to the recommendations offered by respondents, the M&S need to make a concerted effort to solicit and take into account the feedback of consumers, foster a sense of community, and give customers the opportunity to participate in activities that promote sustainability. It is possible for customers to get involved in the road towards sustainability, and the M&S has the potential to create brand loyalty via the cultivation of relationships.

Areas of Improvement:

In spite of the fact that the results as a whole are positive, the M&S still has room for improvement in a number of areas with regard to its environmental activities. Among them are the enhancement of communication and transparency, the improvement of sustainability initiatives, and the refining of approaches for targeting and segmentation. The M&S will be able to take care of these concerns, which will allow it to attract a greater number of consumers, enhance the image of its brand, and continue to preserve its position as a pioneer in the field of sustainability.

The results of the study provide valuable insights on the M&S's brand image, as well as its communication tactics and sustainability activities. When everything is taken into consideration, the firm has made significant progress in terms of establishing a strong reputation, attracting customers who share the same conviction, and being regarded as a sustainable brand within the industry. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in a few areas, such as enhancing communication strategies, increasing the level of customer interaction, and enhancing transparency. Through addressing these concerns, the M&S will be able to preserve its position as a pioneer in the field of sustainability and continue to have a positive impact on both society and the environment.

Literature Review and Survey Findings: Supporting Evidence

According to the findings of the study, the existing body of knowledge on the topic of sustainability in the retail industry is largely supported by the findings. There are a few significant subjects from the literature that are highlighted in the responses:

- It is clear from the results of the poll that sustainability is becoming an increasingly important factor in the retail industry. It is clear that consumers are growing more aware of and interested in sustainable brands, as seen by the fact that a significant majority of respondents had positive impressions of the M&S's efforts related to sustainability. The study, which shows how organisations are growing more and more in need of sustainable practices and understanding that sustainability is now a fundamental business challenge rather than a niche issue, points out that this is consistent with the findings of the research.
- The findings of the study lend credibility to the vast amount of research that has been conducted on how consumers perceive sustainability. In addition to demonstrating a deep awareness of environmental issues, the participants demonstrated a willingness to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly products. This is in line with research that demonstrate that consumers are getting more worried about the environment and that their decisions over what to purchase are influenced by these concerns.
- The results of the poll provide credence to the existing body of research on the ways in which sustainability influences the reputation and image of a corporation. There was a correlation between quality, pricing, and sustainability among respondents to the M&S. This suggests that sustainability has the potential to enhance the reputation of a business and attract existing customers. According to research that demonstrate how important sustainability is to building credibility, attracting customers, and increasing a brand's reputation, this seems to be consistent with those findings.
- It is clear from the findings of the survey that effective communication and outreach are of the utmost importance when it comes to the distribution of sustainability initiatives. In addition to expressing satisfaction with the marketing measures undertaken by the M&S, respondents underlined the need of maintaining communication that is both open and honest. The findings of this study are consistent with research that emphasises the significance of effective communication in terms of increasing awareness, engaging consumers, and establishing trust.

- The results of the study are in line with previous research that has been conducted on the importance of consumer participation in sustainability projects. According to the recommendations offered by the respondents, the M&S need to make a concerted effort to include its customers in its sustainability activities by providing opportunities for feedback and participation. This is in line with research that demonstrate that improved brand loyalty and sustainability initiatives are achieved via increased customer participation.

In a nutshell, the findings of the survey provide empirical support for the key subjects and conclusions that were discussed in the literature study on the topic of sustainability in the retail industry. The findings demonstrate that consumers are starting to place a larger value on sustainability when making choices, that sustainability may enhance the reputation and image of a company, that it is essential to effectively communicate with customers, and that it is essential to engage customers. It is possible that retailers that are interested in incorporating sustainability into their business strategy and gaining a competitive advantage in the sector would find these insights to be valuable.

Literature Review and Survey Findings: Contradicting Evidence

The survey results included in this research are broadly consistent with the body of knowledge already available on sustainability in the retail sector and the particular situation of Marks and Spencer (M&S). The results, however, may conflict with or contribute to the body of current research in a few specific areas.

- The survey revealed that some respondents were unaware of specific projects such as energy efficiency and community engagement, despite the fact that a sizeable proportion of respondents were aware of the M&S's commitment to eco-friendly practices. In contrast to the findings of research that suggests consumers are growing more aware of sustainable habits, this has the opposite effect. In spite of the fact that customers are often aware of sustainability, it is possible that they do not have a thorough understanding of some initiatives unless they are actively participating in the process or are exposed to information that is specifically targeted to their experience.
- Some of the respondents expressed views that were either contradictory or negative, despite the fact that the majority of them believed that the marketing operations of the M&S were effective. study has shown that sustained communication that is executed well may have a positive influence on both the loyalty of consumers and their opinion of a business. This contradicts the findings of the study. It is possible that even if the M&S has made improvements to its marketing activities, there is still room for improvement in terms of reaching certain customer groups that are the focus of the enterprise's marketing efforts.
- The survey did not demonstrate that sustainability is the primary driver for all of the participants, despite the fact that it proved that for certain consumers, sustainability plays a significant part in the decision-making process about their purchases. Despite the fact that research indicates that customers are increasingly taking sustainability into consideration when making purchases, this contradicts the findings. One interpretation of this statement is that it

implies that other factors, such as cost, availability, and quality, continue to be significant considerations when making judgements.

Conclusions

The study of the survey results provides valuable insights into the ways in which sustainability is seen in the retail industry, especially in regard to the M&S brand. The findings are in line with the existing body of research on sustainability, which highlights the expanding part that sustainability plays in the decision-making process of consumers, the advantages that sustainability initiatives have for the perception of brands, as well as the opportunities and challenges that come with putting sustainable practices into practice.

The results of the survey indicate that consumers are more interested in purchasing environmentally friendly brands and products, which is in line with their rising awareness of environmental issues and interest in addressing them. The fact that respondents had positive perceptions of the M&S's sustainability operations and a desire to promote the brand is additional evidence that sustainability is relevant in the process of developing a powerful brand image and attracting customers.

Even while the findings of the survey usually support the body of research, there are a few cases in which more nuance may be seen. For example, the fact that just a relatively small number of respondents expressed disapproval of the M&S's sustainability initiatives suggests that the organisation has done a satisfactory job of addressing potential problems and articulating its plans. In addition, the vast range of interests that respondents have regarding communication channels and attempts to promote sustainability highlights how important it is to tailor strategies to the preferences and actions of individual people.

The results of the survey, taken as a whole, provide compelling evidence that the retail sector is placing a greater focus on sustainability, as well as the positive benefits that sustainable practices may have on the perceptions of customers and the image of brands. Companies who are aiming to start sustainability initiatives and create a strong brand in today's competitive market might benefit from the findings since they give relevant information related to these endeavours. Additional research may be conducted in the future to dive further into the specific factors that affect consumer preferences and behaviour towards sustainability, as well as the long-term effects that sustainability initiatives have on business results and the influence they have on communities.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the survey and the amount of research that is currently available, the following recommendations for the M&S might be made:

- It is clear from the findings of the survey that sustainability is of the utmost importance when it comes to developing a favourable impression of a brand and attracting customers.

Sustainability initiatives should continue to be given high priority by the M&S, and the M&S should include these projects into its primary business program.

- Despite the fact that the M&S has achieved significant accomplishments in terms of publicising its environmental measures, there is clearly room for improvement. Additionally, the business needs to study new channels and ways in order to ensure that all acts taken in the name of sustainability are suitably appreciated and to ensure that they are communicated to a bigger audience. Among these strategies are the use of influencer alliances, the utilisation of social media, and the delivery of a more specific message in accordance with the preferences of the client.
- Increasing brand loyalty and having a positive impact may be accomplished by cultivating a relationship with customers and including them in initiatives that promote environmental responsibility. It is necessary for the M&S to take into consideration programs that encourage customer participation. Some examples of such programs are product take-back programs, recycling campaigns, and educational initiatives.
- Setting up a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is something that the M&S ought to do in order to assess the level of success that sustainability initiatives have achieved and to identify areas that need further development. Monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to sustainability, conducting frequent surveys of stakeholders and customers to get their feedback, and analysing the impact of sustainability initiatives on financial performance and brand image are all examples of what this may entail.
- In light of the fact that the retail industry is in a constant state of flux, it is of the utmost importance for the M&S to remain current on novel advances in sustainability trends and best practices. For example, this may include collaborating with other businesses and organisations that are establishing the benchmark for sustainability, going to conferences that are specifically geared towards the industry, and doing market research on a consistent basis.

By putting these recommendations into action, the M&S will be able to attract a loyal customer base, improve its reputation as a sustainable brand, and contribute to the development of a more sustainable future.

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