

Design Thinking and Innovation

“Innovation and Customer Journey”

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Module Code: LCLM 6002

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Introduction

A strategic framework which aids the corporations in balancing their efforts of innovation among three levels on the basis of the newness to the existent market and the model of the business is known as the Innovation Ambition Matrix (Vandenberg, 2022). On the other hand, a procedure characterised by the creation of a visual depiction of the interactions of the clientele with a corporation from their viewpoint is known as the Customer Journey Mapping (Micheaux and Bosio, 2019). Consisting of two parts, the aim of this paper is to apply the frameworks of the Innovation Ambition Matrix, and the Customer Journey Mapping to the business of Tesco, identifying the current design thinking and innovations the organisation is engaged in, and the new prospects of the innovation that are on the horizon. The current customer journey created by Tesco for the core customers will be mapped in the customer journey mapping, which will be uncovering the points, of the pains and the gains along with spotting the places in the journey of the customers where oporties are prevalent for the digital innovation. The second part will revolve around proposing a new initiative of a digital transformation for Tesco on the basis of the analysis and assessment done in the first part. The proposedassistis intended to be assisting the organisation in overcoming the central challenges that have been identified. An updated and enhanced customer journey map portraying the new customer journey experience offered by the proposed initiative will subsequently be set out. In addition, the positive impact of the proposed digital transformation initiative on Tesco will be explained. This will be followed by outlining the way to measure the impact as well as the success brought about by the proposed initiative.

Organisation's introduction

Tesco, the largroceryish mnational groceries and the g,eneral merchandise retailer, was founded in the year 1919 by Jack Cofrom a market stall in London and currently has its headquarters in the United Kingdom (U.K.). The UK retail organisation of the UK grew into a global giant popular for its extensive online presence, convenience stores, hypermarkets, and the supermarkets. Tesco operates across multiple formats such as the large hypermarkets, digital Clubcard app, online grocery delivery, Tesco Express stores, and the click-and-collect services (Yawson and Yamoah). A huge variety of numerous items covering food, clothing, books, personal care products, electronics, furniture, and financial services are provided by Tesco, since the 1960s (Tesco, 2025). The organisation has repositioned itself from the position of a downmarket elevated-volume low-cost retailer, with efforts to attract a spectrum of social segments through its premium "Tesco Finest" and the low-cost "Tesco Value" range (Tescc, 2025). The firm has got its name listed on the London Stock Exchange and is a part of the

FTSE 100 Index. The stores of this largest grocery and general merchandise retailer in the U.K. are spread across Ireland, Czechia, the Isle of Man, Hungary, and Slovakia, and serve more than 20 million U.K. customers on a weekly basis. The annual report of Tesco shows that approximately 27% of the market share is held by the company in the U.K. grocery retail (Tesco Plc, 2025). At the centre of the strategy of Tesco lies the digital innovation, convenience, and value, with a clear motive of enhancing the experience of the base of the clients, and maintaining its competitive advantage in such a market that is highly saturated.

Key consumer and industry trends and data that affect the organisation

There are a number of substantial trends related to the consumers and the industry by which it is continually affected in the sector in which it operates. The innovation priorities of Tesco with regards to the digital development, the efficiency of the operations, the customer experience, and the competitiveness of prices, are shaped by each of these trends.

Rising cost of living

As per the Annual Report of Tesco, the organisation is affected immensely by the elevated cost of the living (Tesco Plc, 2025). More significantly, the cost of living is surging predominantly in the UK, with the Office for National Statistics, (2024) indicating a persistent rising inflation in the households of U.K. As a result of this elevated inflation, the price is rendered as one of the most significant drivers behind influencing the choices related to purchasing. Because of this, the loyalty schemes and the value ranges, including the Clubcard Prices of Tesco have gained crucial position when it comes to aiding the clients in managing the budget they have (Yawson and Yamoah, 2022).

Competition

Heightened competition is the second most notable industry trend affecting Tesco. A growing body of evidence confirms the presence of intensified rivalry being persistent in the retail industry (Huggins et al., 2021). The U.K. retail companies like the Lidl and the Aldi are observed to be making swift expansions through offering lowered prices, as revealed by Kochova and Drakulevski, (n.d.). This is challenging the position of Tesco in terms of the segment of the value. In the similar vein, the firm like Amazon Fresh is also serving as Tesco's competition, particularly in the digital grocery retail via its model that is led by technology (Begley et al., 2020).

Digitalisation of retail

The digitalisation of retail is another most notable trend affecting Tesco. Evidence by Khan et al. (2022) reveals that an evident increment of almost 40% has been encountered by the online grocery shopping in the UK, and this has specifically happened after the COVID'19 pandemic. This trend is shown to be remaining majorly higher than pre-pandemic levels. So, this trend shows that the habits of the digital shopping have become part of the normal behaviour of the consumers. Mohd Satar et al. (2019) confirm that the customers of the current era immensely value and prefer seamless shopping that is app-based, accompanied by the reliable and swift delivery at their doorsteps, and personalised offers on the basis of their previous history of purchase.

Convenience and speed

According to Meng (2024), convenience and speed possess a dominant role in shaping the expectations of Tesco's client. With the expanding development of the quick services of delivery, such as the Gorillas, and the Deliveroo, the thinking of the clientele about the time has been altered (Yao, 2022). Such that, the consumers now expect the options for the same-day or one-hour delivery.

Sustainability

Yet another key trend is related to the sustainability which shapes up the level of the loyalty of the clientele and the reputation of the brand. As per the British Retail Consortium, (2023), the retailers who exhibit a higher environmental accountability are more capable of attracting a larger base of consumers, since the UK's population is having a growing preference and consciousness towards the sustainable practices. This means that the customers are preferring to shop with sustainable retailers in the current era, thereby affecting Tesco, and prompting it to stay eco-conscious in its operations. Matching up its operations with the expectations of the sustainability, the firm Tesco has responded via committing to become Net Zero by 2050 and bringing down its wastage of food by upto 50% (Tesco, 2021).

Part 1: Analysis of Tesco's Approach to Innovation

This section will be applying the frameworks of Innovation Ambition Matrix and Customer Journey Mapping to spot the prevalent design thinking and innovation in which Tesco is engaged in, followed by identifying the new opportunities related to innovation on the horizon.

A. Tesco's Innovation Ambition Matrix

The allocation of the resources are guided well by a strategic framework called the Innovation Ambition Matrix. This matrix makes it possible for the businesses to balance their efforts of innovation, via aiding in differentiating between the ideas which are components of their core offering or marked as innovative expansions (Bridges, 2025). The innovations or the ideas are defined through this matrix's use of the three levels which are Core (improvements), Adjacent (making use of the existing strengths for the new markets), and Transformational (radical breakthrough). Each of these levels permit the teams to plan in a strategic manner with regards to the improvements to be made and the expansion plans to be implemented for the business without losing the positioning of the brand.

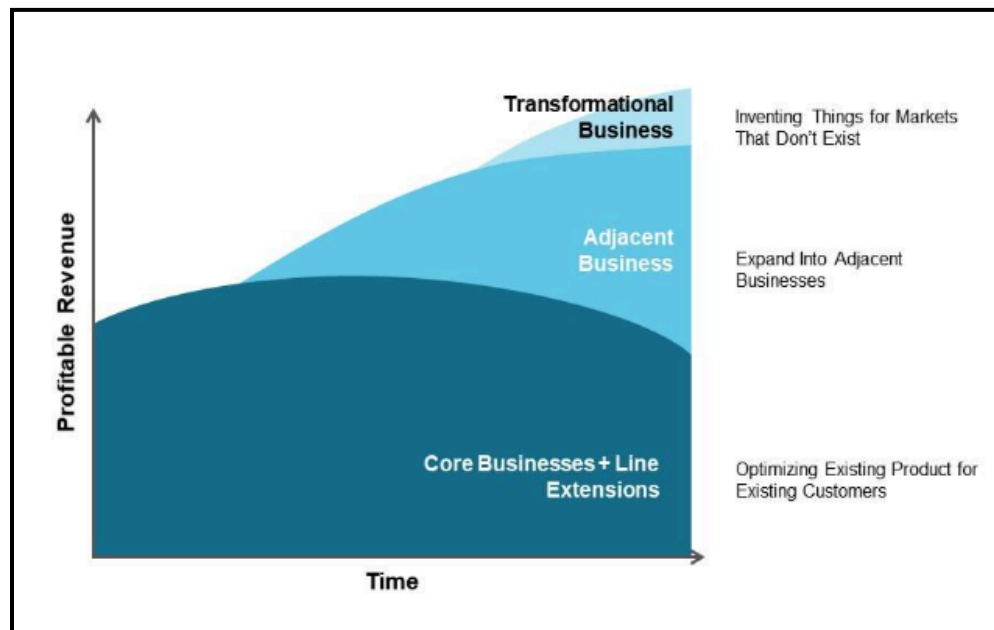


Figure 1: Innovation Ambition Matrix

Source: (Bridges, 2025)

Three touchpoints, called existing, emerging, and new are present on each axis, which refer to the relative acceptance or the implementation in comparison with the competitive market (Vandenberg, 2022).

Core Innovations (Improve existing services)

These categorise the small enhancements to the prevalent operations of Tesco. The approach of Tesco to innovation can be understood through the Innovation Ambition Matrix, through which

core, adjacent, and transformational innovations are developed by the company to be remaining competitive in the fast-changing retail environment. At the core level, inducing an improvement in the existing services and upgrading the customer experience through the small but the meaningful upgrades is focused on by Tesco. Examples include Clubcard Prices, where the personalised digital loyalty discounts are delivered through the Tesco app, making shopping more affordable for price-sensitive customers (Yawson and Yamoah, 2022). Similarly, the Scan-As-You-Shop technology, available through the mobile app and the handheld devices, is provided to be permitting the items to be scanned by the customers as they move through the store, cutting down the time of the waiting at the checkout (Meng, 2024). The self-checkout systems have also been upgraded by Tesco through the integration of AI tools that reduce scanning errors and assist in managing the queues in a more effective manner. Improvements to the Tesco Grocery App, such as the real-time stock visibility and the personalised promotions, are implemented to be further strengthening the customer loyalty and their convenience.

Core Innovation	Description
Clubcard Prices	Digital loyalty discounts personalised in the Tesco app.
Scan-As-You-Shop	Customers use mobile app or handsets to scan items.
Self-checkout upgrades	AI monitoring to reduce scanning errors and queue times.
Tesco Grocery App improvements	Real-time stock visibility, personalised promotions.

Purpose: Improve convenience, diminish friction, retain price-sensitive customers.

Adjacent Innovations (Expand from existing to new areas)

At the level of the adjacent innovation, expansion into the new areas while building on the existing strengths is undertaken by the firm Tesco. Tesco Whoosh, a rapid delivery service offering the groceries within 60 minutes, is provided in order to be meeting the consumer demand for speed and convenience (Tesco Plc, 2025). The reach of the delivery is widened by the partnerships with Deliveroo, particularly for the quick-purchase convenience items (Yao, 2022). Insights are provided to the brands through the Tesco Media and Insight Platform, which utilises the vast amount of Clubcard data, and a new stream of the revenue is created (Yawson and Yamoah, 2022). The brand is also extended into telecommunications through the Tesco Mobile by integrating the mobile services with the loyalty ecosystem.

Adjacent Innovation	Description
Tesco Whoosh	60-minute rapid delivery service.
Partnership with Deliveroo	Extends delivery reach for convenience items.

Tesco Media and Insight Platform	Uses Clubcard data to sell insights to brands.
Tesco Mobile	Expands into telecommunications using loyalty ecosystem.

Purpose: Grow into new customer segments while making use of the existing strengths.

Transformational Innovations (New business models)

At the transformational level, the completely new business models are explored by the firm Tesco in order to be redefining the sector of the retail. Forecasting is improved, food waste is cut down, and the levels of the stock are optimised through the AI-driven systems of the supply chain (Meng, 2024). A frictionless shopping experience with no tills is created through the usage of the computer vision in checkout-free GetGo stores (MAZIDI, n.d.). Digital twins for store planning have also been experimented with in order to be improving the efficiency associated with the operations (Tesco Plc, 2025). Collectively, a balanced strategy across augmenting the present and shaping the future of the retail is demonstrated by these innovations.

Transformational Innovation	Description
AI-driven supply chain	Automated forecasting to diminish the waste and improve stock.
Checkout-free stores (GetGo)	Computer vision technology for frictionless shopping.
Digital twins for store planning	Experimented for operational optimisation.

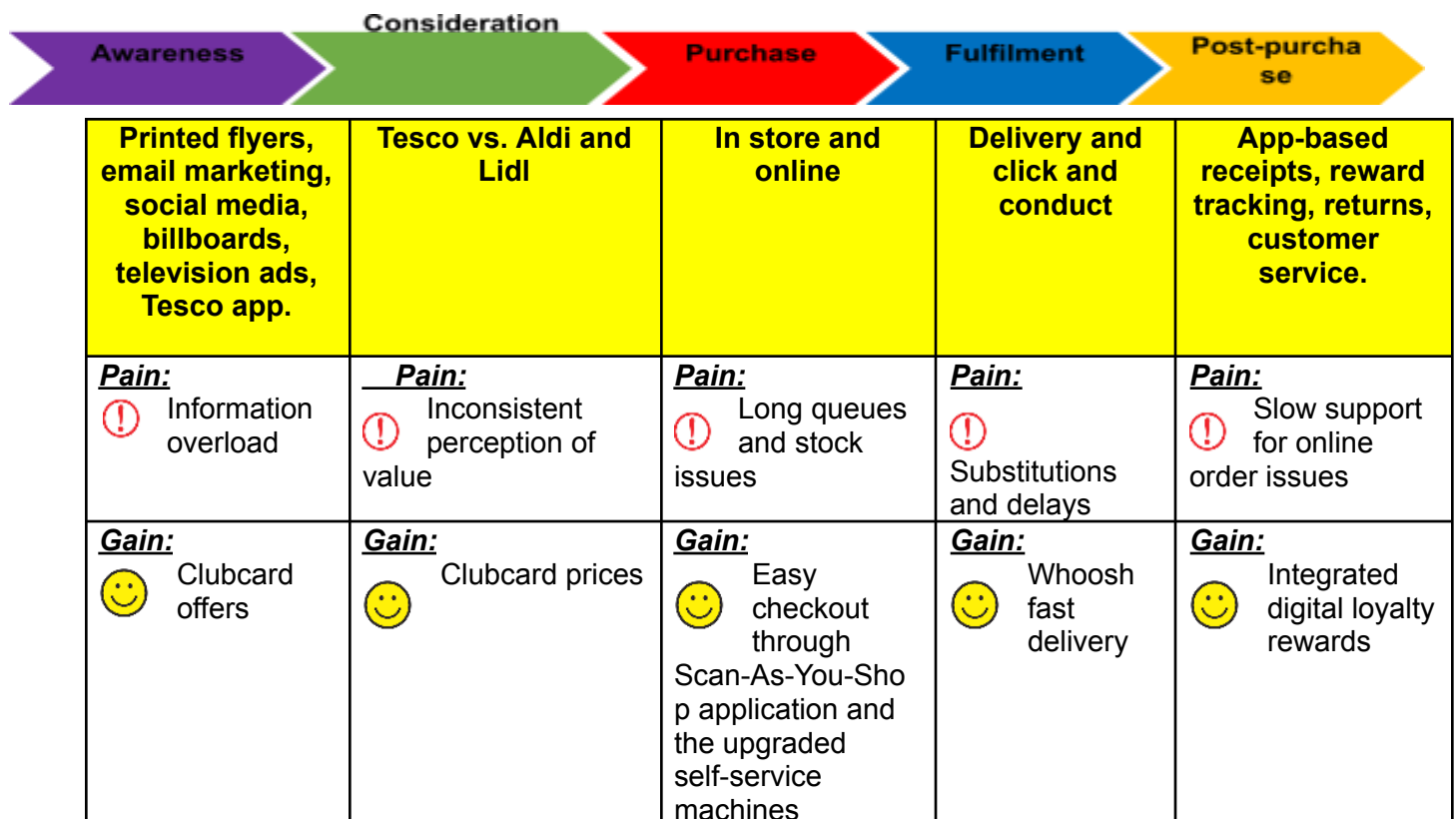
Purpose: Create long-term competitive advantage and redefine the experience of the clients.

B. Tesco's Customer Journey Mapping

A knowledge related to the needs of the clientele, pain points, and the emotions are noticeable for the businesses through a process, which is known as the Customer Journey Mapping. In this tool all the phases of the ordeal are charted, beginning from the initial understanding to the long-term loyalty (Hayes and Downie, 2024). The most important usage of the customer journey mapping is for the purpose of discovering the regions for the advancement, optimising the processes, and developing a much smoother experience which highly characterises as client-oriented throughout the different departments (Micheaux and Bosio, 2019). The selected segment of the customer for this analysis of Tesco is the regular weekly shoppers of the grocery who are under the constant utilisation of not only the on-site stores, but also the online channels, and are thus the core customers of the firm. This is why, they are selected for this customer mapping. A large proportion of the revenue that Tesco is able of generating is

represented by these customers, who are also notably influenced by the digital and the physical touchpoints of the retail giant. Through the mapping of their journey, a set of the pain and the gain points can be discovered, which will be aiding in specifying the regions where their experience can get more enhanced through the digital innovation.

Tesco's Visualised customer journey map:



Awareness stage

The journey of the customers typically begin when the shoppers are made aware regarding the services and the offers of Tesco via a range of channels of the communication, such as the printed flyers distributed on local basis, the email marketing, social media, billboards, television ads, and the Tesco application. Although, a vast number of the audience gets tapped by these materials in an effective manner, a sense of the information overload is often perpetuated by them (Kusi et al., 2022). The regular shoppers are routinely confronted with an extensive amount of the volume of the promotional material, through which the comparison of the bargains or the recognition of the most valuable savings is made difficult. But, a notable advantage at this stage is generated by Tesco's Clubcard individualised incentives, through which the digital

information is utilised so that the context-appropriate promotions can get custom-fitted as per the each customer's former purchasing behaviour (Yawson and Yamoah, 2022). Through this targeted method, heightened relevance is achieved, and the shoppers are enabled to feel that the offers matching their requirements are being provided to them.

Consideration stage

Within the phase of the consideration, Tesco is frequently evaluated by the customers against the notable in the sector of the retail, such as Aldi, Lidl, and Sainsbury's. For habitual grocery purchasers, the pricing is regarded as a decisive determinant owing to the prevailing financial pressures on the households (Kochova and Drakulevski, n.d.). A recurring difficulty at this point is the irregular interpretation of the value. Although competitive pricing is presented across the numerous items by Tesco, stronger bargains are believed to be offered by discount retailers (Tesco Plc, 2025). However, again the Tesco's Clubcard Prices are made evident as a clear advantage by assuring that the loyalty-connected reductions are displayed prominently both in the stores and online, permitting the savings to be observed with ease and upgrading the perceived worth.

Purchase stage (in-store and online)

At this phase, a spectrum of the interaction points is involved, including the physical shopping, the automated checkout kiosks, the Scan-As-You-Shop systems, the click-and-collect arrangements, and the digital ordering. Frustrations are experienced during the peak periods when extended queues are formed at the areas of the checkout. The online consumers are also affected by the out-of-stock complications, through which the meal plans are disrupted and irritation is generated (Peterson et al., 2020). Conversely, Tesco's technological instruments, such as the Scan-As-You-Shop application and the upgraded self-service machines, are recognised as offering the substantial time-saving advantages, as waiting durations are cut down and greater control is granted to the shoppers during the process of the buying.

Fulfilment/delivery stage

For the digital purchasers, the fulfilment and the experience of the delivery is considered very essential. Grocery orders are dispatched from the nearby stores or the specialised hubs of the distribution, through which a comparatively smooth process is provided (Tesco Plc, 2025). Still, the complications are created when the product substitutions are issued for the unavailable goods or when the delivery slots are not specified accurately. Salari et al. (2022) observed that customers, in such scenario, are left uncertain about the precise arrival time of their orders. On the other hand, the positive outcomes are delivered through the Tesco's Whoosh rapid-delivery

service, in which items can be transported within sixty minutes, satisfying the incrementing demand for convenience and immediacy.

Post-purchase stage

Following the transaction, the app-based receipts, the product returns, and the digital rewards monitoring are engaged with by the customers. The issues in this stage are most commonly encountered when the efforts are made for rectifying the online concerns related to the order, as the customer-service responses are risked to be experienced as delayed during the hours which are high-traffic (Yao, 2022). But, the benefits are secured through the Tesco's advanced network of the digital loyalty, enabling savings, reward balances, and vouchers to be tracked with notable ease.

Opportunities for Digital Innovation

From the noted difficulties and the advantages, several innovation possibilities are indicated:

- a) Real-time stock forecasting is proposed so that the stock-shortage problems can be minimised.
- b) The in-store digital navigation instruments are recommended so that the product location difficulty can be reduced.
- c) AI-driven customised shopping lists are suggested, based on the previous patterns of the consumer.
- d) The intelligent delivery-tracking systems are endorsed to raise the level of the accuracy and lower the uncertainty.

These insights serve as a base for the proposed digital-transformation solution in Part 2.

Part 2: Proposed new digital transformation initiative and how it will add value to the organisation

With a motive to be resolving the issues identified above and strengthening its competitive advantage in an increasingly digital retail environment, a SmartCart Ecosystem is a new digital transformation initiative which is being proposed to be implemented by Tesco. This should be a completely integrated AI-powered system which elevates the online and in-store clientele experience at the same time. In this ecosystem, the smart carts equipped with the sensors and the vision of the computer, dynamic in-store navigation, predicative capability of the inventory, real-time personalised suggestions, and automatic checkout are combined. This endeavour is in line with the key concepts associated with the digital transformation, such as the Omni-channel

retail theory, Porter's value chain, and the Technology-organisation-environment (TOE) framework, eventually showcasing that the customer worth as well as the organisational efficacy can be generated by the disruptive technologies (Galipoglu et al., 2018).

Possessing the enormous potential of streamlining both the in-house and the online experiences for the Tesco's clients, SmartCart Ecosystem will be having a set of crucially planned components, such as:

SmartCart device:

- a) The items placed inside are automatically recognised by the Cart (computer vision).
- b) Shows running total as well as the Clubcard discounts.
- c) Eliminates the need for the checkout queues.

In-store AI navigation:

- d) App guides customers to the items on their list of the shopping.
- e) Reduces the time spent on searching for the products.

Personalised smart lists:

- f) App generates the weekly lists based on the past purchases and the stock levels.
- g) Suggests the offers, recipes, and also the healthier alternatives.

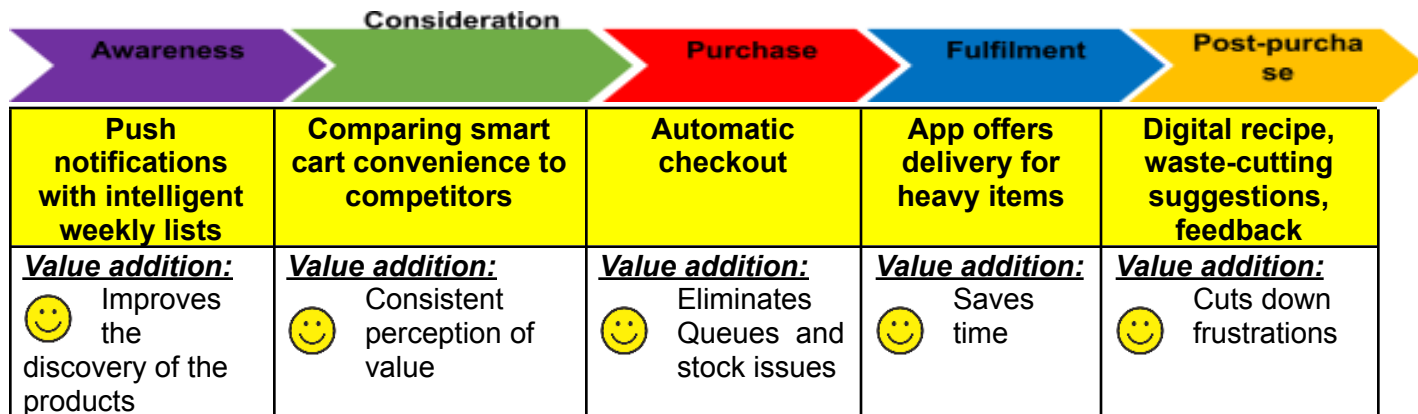
Real-time stock updates:

- h) AI integrates with SmartCart in order to be preventing the out-of-stock situations.
- i) Suggests the alternatives before the customer is disappointed.

With these components, this proposed new digital transformation initiative will not only be aiding in combatting the previously discovered challenges, but will also be positively impacting Tesco. Such that, Tesco will be yielding a significant amount of value addition in its operations, and will resultantly be capable of coming up with more exceptional services and satisfying experiences for the client. For example, the new customer journey will be enhanced via this endeavour in the following ways:

New and enhanced customer journey map

Proposed initiative: "SmartCart Ecosystem"



Awareness

The push notifications will be received by the customers through SmartCart, coupled with the AI-generated weekly lists. This utilises the principles of the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) through pushing the relevant, and the timely material in line with the routines of the consumer (Juska, 2021).

Consideration

In terms of the consideration, the clientele will be comparing the convenience of this proposed initiative of the Tesco with its competitors like the stores of the Amazon Fresh and the Smartshop of the Sainsbury. The differentiator of the Tesco is strengthened by the elevated digital experience inside the prevailing crowded Omni-channel market of grocery (Galipoglu et al., 2018).

Purchase stage

A high level of smoothness would be added in the Tesco's process of the purchasing as a consequence of this proposed digital initiative. The customers will be entering the store, a SmartCart will be picked up by them, and shopping will begin. Consequently, a couple of clear benefits will be offered for Tesco's client, thereby making their experiences more convenient and satisfying. These notable benefits comprise automatic checkout, no requirement of the barcode scanning, and no need of standing and waiting in long queues. A Service blueprinting model is portrayed by this kind of redesigning in the case of Tesco, polishing the front-stage efficiency for Tesco's shoppers, and diminishing the firm's back-stage difficulties (Ryu et al., 2020).

Fulfilment/delivery

The items of the heavy weight, such as the cleaning supplies, or the bulk quantities of the water would be synced with the application. This will be followed by delivering these heavy items to the doorstep of Tesco's client after the checkout. This is in line with the Omni-channel integration theory, removing the boundary that exists between the digital and the physical shopping (Galipoglu et al., 2018).

Post-purchase

After the purchases made from the proposed SmartCart Ecosystem of Tesco, the clients will be receiving personalised surveys of the feedback, food waste-diminishing suggestions, and the digital receipts. The Relational marketing theory is reinforced via this, indicating the loyalty for a long period and the behavioural dedication to the organisation (Arli et al., (2018).

From an organisational point of view, the proposed initiative will be adding a lot of value to Tesco. First of all, the value creation for customers is obviously immensely beneficial for Tesco, as the smoother and hassle-free experiences of the shopping will attract more purchasers, thereby raising Tesco's revenue. Secondly, the costs of the labour will be diminished for Tesco, due to the need of lesser need of the checkout assistants. The staff will be redeployed for the higher-worth activities like the fresh food preparation or the customer service. In addition, the average spending will be incremented by recommending the complementary products, supported by the Cross-selling theory (Homburg et al., 2020). Not only this, the proposed SmartCart initiative will be adding value to Tesco by boosting its already strong ecosystem of loyalty via amalgamating the data of the Clubcard with the real-time behaviour of the shopping. Moreover, the mid-range tactic of the pricing via digital novelty and the superior experience will make Tesco differentiate itself from rival firms like the Lidl and Aldi. Apart from that, the overstocking will be cut down by the predictive inventory, and through this, the goals surrounding sustainability will be satisfied, and the firm's corporate image will also be solidified, as posited by the principles of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) (Srivastava et al., 2022).

As far as the measurement of this initiative's success is concerned, certain KPIs are specified in the below given table, which will be used for judging how well the proposed digital endeavour is performing. Each of the mentioned KPI in this table is in line with the perspective of the Balanced Scorecard, encompassing the experience of the customers, the internal processes, the monetary outcomes, and the capability of the innovation (Norton and Kaplan, 2018).

KPI	Measurement Method
Reduction of Queue-time	Track % of customers using SmartCart and checkout duration
Customer satisfaction (CSAT)	In-app micro-surveys immediately after shopping
Basket size growth	Compare average spend of SmartCart users vs non-users
Adoption rate	Monthly Active SmartCart Users (MASU)
Waste cutting	Stock loss and expiry rates compared to the baseline
Operational efficiency	Labour hours saved due to the automation

Conclusion

The retail giant Tesco functions in a rapidly revolutionising sector, marked by altering clientele expectations, incrementing demand for digital feasibility, and the rising sensitivity to pricing. This task identified the major concentration of Tesco to be on the core and adjacent innovations through the use of the Innovation Ambition Matrix and Customer Journey Mapping. These assessments also highlight the key points of the pain, fundamentally related to the friction of the

checkout, availability of the stock, and the navigation of the Tesco stores. These challenges are suggested to be addressed through the proposed initiative of the AI-prompted SmartCart Ecosystem which will be modernising the ordeal of the in-store shopping, and will add enormous value to Tesco in the form of enhanced customisation, augmented digital efficiency, long lasting clientele loyalty, and saved resources. The KPIs are, however, crucial to be measured for assessing the initiative's performance. Resultantly, the competitive situation of Tesco will be overall elevated by the proposed digital transformation initiative.

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