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Renewing Marks and Spencer for Platform, People and Planet.

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Executive Summary

Marks & Spencer (M&S) is at a critical strategic turning point shaped by rapid digital disruption, intensifying competitive pressures, and shifting customer expectations. While the organisation continues to benefit from strong brand loyalty - particularly within its food division - ongoing structural weaknesses have constrained overall performance. These include declining clothing sales, outdated legacy IT systems, a fragmented organisational culture, and historically slow digital adoption (Marks & Spencer, 2025). This report maintains the structure of the original draft while developing it into a comprehensive academic analysis that integrates relevant theory, diagnostic evaluation, and a practical change-management programme. The proposed hybrid changes framework combines Kotter's 8-Step Model, Lewin's Three-Step Model, the Burke–Litwin causal framework, and Pettigrew's contextualist perspective to ensure both clear sequencing and sensitivity to organisational context (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951; Burke & Litwin, 1992; Pettigrew, 1987). Leadership analysis positions M&S's transition from a predominantly transactional style toward transformational leadership, driven by CEO Stuart Machin's philosophy of "positive dissatisfaction" (Machin, 2023). The change programme targets measurable outcomes, including a 30% improvement in customer satisfaction, a 20% increase in operational efficiency, near-universal staff digital adoption within six months, and growth in online sales contribution from 22% to 30% within 18 months. These objectives are supported by a phased £250 million investment plan, an integrated communications strategy, and a robust evaluation framework (Marks & Spencer, 2025).

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1. Introduction to Marks & Spencer

Marks & Spencer M&S, established in 1884, is a UK-based multinational retailer operating across Food, Clothing & Home, and international segments, employing more than 65,000 people worldwide (Marks & Spencer, 2025). Historically, the company's competitive advantage was rooted in product quality, an extensive physical store network, and a highly trusted brand identity. However, over the past two decades, major structural shifts in the retail environment - particularly digitalisation, increased supply-chain complexity, and changing consumer preferences - have exposed significant weaknesses within M&S's operating model. These challenges have been most visible in the Clothing & Home division and within the organisation's ageing IT infrastructure (Financial Times, 2025).

Recent leadership under CEO Stuart Machin has introduced a renewed strategic direction centred on "positive dissatisfaction," reflecting a shift toward transformational leadership and a culture of continuous improvement (Machin, 2023). In the role of Change Manager, this report diagnoses the internal and external drivers behind M&S's performance gaps and proposes a structured, evidence-based change programme. While retaining the original draft's structure, the report expands its theoretical foundations, implementation detail, and evaluation mechanisms. The urgency for change is reinforced by accelerating digital disruption reshaping both retail operations and customer behaviour; rising sustainability expectations from regulators and consumers; intensified competition from agile rivals such as Next, Zara, Tesco, and Amazon; and persistent internal resistance to cultural and technological change (Harvard Business Review, 2023; UK Government, 2024).

Urgency for change is underpinned by digital disruption reshaping retail operations and customer behaviour; rising sustainability expectations from regulators and consumers; increased pressure from agile competitors such as Next, Zara, Tesco and Amazon; and internal cultural resistance and slow technological adoption (Harvard Business Review, 2023; UK Government, 2024).

2. Analysis of the External and Internal Environment

Comprehensive environmental analysis establishes the strategic context for organisational change at M&S. This section develops the draft's PESTEL and SWOT analyses through deeper interpretation and clearer implications for strategic decision-making.

2.1 PESTEL Analysis

Political. Post-Brexit trade arrangements and evolving regulatory frameworks have increased supply-chain complexity and cost volatility. As a result, M&S must diversify

sourcing strategies and strengthen supplier relationships to protect product availability and margin stability (BBC, 2024).

Economic. Persistent inflation and constrained consumer spending have reduced discretionary purchases, disproportionately affecting clothing sales. To respond, M&S must pursue cost efficiencies, dynamic pricing strategies, and value propositions that appeal to price-sensitive customers, while safeguarding margins in food and essential categories (Financial Times, 2025).

Social. Consumer preferences are increasingly fragmented. Older, loyal customers continue to value quality, trust, and familiarity, whereas younger consumers prioritise convenience, digital engagement, and sustainability. M&S must therefore balance heritage with modernity - retaining its core customer base while attracting new demographics through targeted product offerings and seamless omnichannel experiences (Guardian, 2025).

Technological. Advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, and automation now enable personalised marketing, predictive inventory management, and faster fulfilment - capabilities that define successful contemporary retailers (Harvard Business Review, 2023). Simultaneously, the growth of online and mobile commerce has shifted demand away from purely store-based models toward integrated omnichannel journeys, increasing the importance of real-time inventory visibility, efficient click-and-collect services, and personalised digital touchpoints (Marks & Spencer, 2025).

Environmental. Sustainability has become a key source of competitive differentiation. While M&S's Plan A initiatives provide a strong foundation, deeper integration of sustainability metrics into product design, sourcing decisions, and digital reporting is required to meet rising stakeholder and regulatory expectations (Marks & Spencer, 2017/2025).

Legal. Data protection requirements under GDPR, employment legislation, and food safety regulations impose significant compliance obligations that must be embedded within all digital and operational change initiatives (UK Government, 2024).

These external developments expose internal weaknesses within M&S's ageing IT estate. Siloed systems, limited APIs, and slow-release cycles restrict rapid experimentation and inhibit the effective deployment of AI-driven personalisation and dynamic pricing (Marks & Spencer, 2025). In addition, increased data usage heightens regulatory and cybersecurity risks, necessitating stronger governance, encryption protocols, and consent mechanisms as part of any digital transformation (UK Government, 2024). Crucially, technological change also has a human dimension: new skills, flatter decision-making structures, and cultural alignment are essential to ensure that technology investments translate into tangible

customer and operational benefits (BBC, 2024). Consequently, digital modernisation at M&S is not merely an IT initiative but a strategic imperative requiring alignment across systems, processes, people, and governance (Harvard Business Review, 2023).

2.2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Brand heritage and trust, particularly in food: M&S's long-established reputation and strong food performance provide a resilient revenue base and high customer loyalty, supporting premium positioning and cross-channel innovation (Marks & Spencer, 2025).
- Established sustainability credentials: Plan A enhances credibility with ethically conscious consumers and offers a platform for embedding environmental metrics across products and suppliers (Marks & Spencer, 2017/2025).
- Extensive store network combined with growing digital reach: The physical estate supports fulfilment density and experiential services such as click-and-collect and returns, while online growth enables scale in personalisation and loyalty integration (Marks & Spencer, 2025).
- Diversified product portfolio: The combination of Food, Clothing & Home reduces reliance on any single category and allows for portfolio rebalancing during periods of underperformance (Marks & Spencer, 2025).

Implications / strategic moves: protect and monetise food leadership; leverage Plan A as a visible product and marketing differentiator; and fully utilise the store network for omnichannel fulfilment and experiential retail.

Weaknesses

- Legacy IT infrastructure and fragmented digital strategy: Siloed systems and slow deployment cycles restrict agility, personalisation, and inventory visibility (Financial Times, 2025).
- Hierarchical culture and slow decision-making: Centralised authority limits squad autonomy and delays the scaling of pilots, reducing responsiveness to market changes.
- Clothing relevance and assortment challenges: Inconsistent fashion positioning weakens customer retention and increases markdown exposure.
- High operating costs and supply-chain complexity: Estate costs, logistics inefficiencies, and supplier fragmentation compress margins and reduce organisational agility (Financial Times, 2025).

Implications / strategic moves: prioritise modular platform modernisation; decentralise decision-making through empowered squads; refresh apparel assortments using test-and-learn approaches; and reduce cost-to-serve across logistics operations.

Opportunities

- AI-driven personalisation and advanced analytics: Leveraging customer data platforms, recommender systems, and demand forecasting can improve conversion rates, reduce stockouts, and enhance margins (Harvard Business Review, 2023).
- Omnichannel integration: Using stores as micro-fulfilment hubs can improve convenience while reducing delivery costs.
- Growth in sustainable and ethical consumption: Translating Plan A into product-level claims and circular services, such as repair and resale, can capture premium segments.
- Selective international expansion and partnerships: Targeted alliances enable revenue diversification without overextending the physical estate.

Implications / strategic moves: pilot AI personalisation and in-store fulfilment rapidly; test circular business models in high-fit categories; and pursue partnerships to scale internationally.

Threats

- Aggressive fast-fashion and online competitors: Rivals with faster supply chains and lower prices threaten apparel market share.
- Cybersecurity and data-privacy risks: Expanded data usage increases GDPR exposure and breach risk, potentially damaging trust and incurring regulatory penalties (BBC, 2024).
- Macroeconomic volatility: Inflation and reduced discretionary spending disproportionately impact clothing and non-essential categories.
- Rising regulatory pressure on sustainability and data governance: Compliance requirements increase costs and demand greater transparency across supplier networks.

Implications / strategic moves: strengthen cybersecurity and data governance capabilities; implement defensive pricing and value-focused propositions; and establish supplier compliance programmes with clear contractual safeguards.

3. Evaluation of Change Management Models

To design an effective transformation plan, it is essential to evaluate relevant theoretical frameworks and determine their suitability for M&S's context.

3.1 Kotter's 8-Step Model

Kotter's eight-step sequence-establishing a sense of urgency, forming a guiding coalition, crafting and communicating a clear vision, empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and anchoring new approaches-provides a pragmatic roadmap for mobilising stakeholders and sequencing change initiatives (Kotter, 1996). Its principal strengths are conceptual clarity and an operational focus on communication and early wins that build momentum and legitimacy for larger reforms. However, the model's linearity can underplay the iterative, emergent nature of large socio-technical transformations; without adaptation it risks becoming rigid, overlooking feedback loops, and failing to surface deeper systemic barriers. (Kotter, 1996) For organisations like M&S, Kotter's steps are most useful when combined with diagnostic and adaptive tools that enable parallel experimentation, continuous learning and context-sensitive adjustments.

3.2 Lewin's Three-Step Model

Lewin's Unfreeze-Change-Refreeze framework offers a behavioural lens for confronting cultural inertia by deliberately destabilising entrenched routines (unfreeze), introducing and supporting new practices (change), and consolidating those practices into stable norms (refreeze) (Lewin, 1951). Its strength lies in its simplicity and practical focus on sequencing interventions-making it especially useful for designing reskilling programmes, staged behaviour-change campaigns and reinforcement mechanisms (e.g., coaching, role modelling, revised appraisal criteria). However, the model's parsimony can understate the iterative, emergent character of large socio-technical transformations: in fast-moving retail contexts, "refreeze" should be reconceived as ongoing institutionalisation supported by continuous feedback loops, adaptive learning mechanisms and periodic re-calibration rather than a one-off stabilisation.

3.3 Burke-Litwin Model

The Burke-Litwin causal model maps how external environment, mission, leadership, culture, structure, systems and individual motivation interrelate to produce performance outcomes (Burke & Litwin, 1992). For M&S, this model is valuable diagnostically: it helps identify which variables (e.g., leadership style, IT systems, reward structures) must change to achieve desired performance improvements. Its limitation is that it is diagnostic rather than prescriptive, requiring translation into actionable steps.

3.4 Pettigrew's Contextualist Approach

Pettigrew's contextualist perspective foregrounds the dynamic interplay of content (what is changing), context (historical, political and organisational conditions) and process (how

change unfolds), arguing that effective interventions must be sensitive to all three dimensions. This approach is especially valuable for layered, legacy organisations because it directs attention to path-dependent constraints (history, power relations, informal networks) as well as to formal structures and processes, enabling change leaders to design interventions that fit local realities rather than imposing one-size-fits-all solutions. For M&S, a contextualist lens recommends diagnosing store-level routines, supplier relationships and managerial power dynamics before scaling pilots; it also legitimises iterative, locally adapted experiments and continuous learning mechanisms that surface unintended consequences and enable timely recalibration. The main limitation is that contextualist analyses can be resource-intensive and slow to produce clear prescriptions, so they work best when combined with more prescriptive sequencing tools (e.g., Kotter) and rapid prototyping methods to balance depth of insight with the need for timely action.

3.5 Synthesis of Models for M&S

A hybrid changes logic combines the practical sequencing of Kotter, the diagnostic depth of Burke-Litwin, the contextual sensitivity of Pettigrew and the behavioural focus of Lewin to create a coherent yet adaptable programme for M&S. In practice Kotter supplies a clear implementation rhythm-urgency, coalition building, visible wins and consolidation-while Burke-Litwin identifies the causal levers that must shift for performance to improve, such as leadership, systems and reward structures. Pettigrew tempers both by insisting that interventions be tailored to historical path dependencies, power relations and local store or supplier contexts, and Lewin translates these insights into concrete behavioural interventions that unfreeze old routines, support new practices and institutionalise change through reinforcement. Together the models enable a dual approach: rapid, time-boxed pilots and visible short-term wins to build momentum, plus diagnostic work and contextual adaptation to ensure pilots scale without creating technical debt or cultural backlash; behavioural tools then embed new ways of working so gains persist. This synthesis therefore delivers both structure and flexibility, aligning governance, diagnostics, local adaptation and sustained behaviour change in a single, operationally actionable framework.

4. Leadership and Organisational Culture

This section analyses leadership styles and cultural dynamics and prescribes leadership interventions.

4.1 Leadership Analysis

Transactional leadership-characterised by monitoring, compliance and reward systems-has historically dominated M&S; while it supports operational stability, it constrains innovation

and rapid decision-making (Bass, 1990). Under CEO Stuart Machin, the organisation is shifting toward transformational leadership, emphasising inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration; this style can mobilise employees around a compelling vision and encourage experimentation (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Machin, 2023). However, capability gaps remain limited digital fluency among senior and middle managers, risk-averse decision processes that slow pilots, and insufficient delegation to cross-functional teams. Leadership implications therefore include the need for visible executive sponsorship of digital and sustainability initiatives, a targeted leadership development programme to build digital fluency and change leadership capabilities across levels, and middle-manager coaching to translate strategy into operational objectives and to remove blockers for rapid experimentation.

4.2 The Role of Culture

Current cultural barriers at M&S-longstanding hierarchical norms that limit bottom-up innovation, a compliance orientation, risk aversion and fragmented communication-impede the translation of new digital capabilities into customer value (Marks & Spencer, 2025). To succeed, culture must shift toward psychological safety, empowered cross-functional collaboration and continuous learning. Practical enablers include empowered “squad” teams for time-boxed digital pilots, transparent communication of both successes and learnings, revised performance metrics that reward innovation, collaboration and customer outcomes as well as compliance, and targeted digital literacy programmes for buyers and store managers. Embedding the “positive dissatisfaction” mindset across the organisation-backed by recognition, coaching and aligned incentives-will help sustain behavioural change and ensure technology investments deliver measurable customer and sustainability outcomes.

5. Strategic Change Management Plan

This section outlines the proposed change programme for M&S, integrating objectives, financial considerations, communication strategies, stakeholder management and evaluation mechanisms.

5.1 Proposed Change

The proposed change initiative involves comprehensive digital transformation across all key operational areas, including: implementing integrated cloud-based IT systems; using AI and data analytics for personalised customer experiences; optimising supply chains with automation and predictive tools; enhancing omnichannel retail experiences; embedding sustainability metrics into digital operations; and training staff in digital and customer service

competencies (Harvard Business Review, 2023; Marks & Spencer, 2017/2025). These initiatives are designed to reduce inefficiencies, address customer expectations and improve competitive positioning.

5.2 Objectives

- **Enhance customer satisfaction by 30%** through personalised services, improved product availability and better digital experiences (NPS/CSAT targets) within 12-18 months.
- **Improve operational efficiency by 20%**, reducing waste, lead times and supply-chain disruptions through automation and forecasting.
- **Achieve 90-100% digital adoption among employees within six months** through structured training and support programmes.
- **Strengthen sustainability performance** Integrating digital tools to track carbon footprint, reduce waste and ensure ethical sourcing transforms sustainability from a compliance task into a measurable strategic capability. Digital carbon-accounting platforms and lifecycle-assessment (LCA) software can quantify emissions across scopes 1–3 and attribute impacts to specific products and suppliers, enabling targeted reduction plans and transparent reporting (Marks & Spencer, 2017/2025). Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and smart meters in stores and warehouses provide real-time energy and waste data, while inventory-optimisation and demand-forecasting algorithms minimise overproduction and food spoilage, directly cutting waste and cost (Harvard Business Review, 2023). Blockchain and supplier-portal technologies improve traceability and verify ethical sourcing claims by recording provenance, certifications and audit trails, which strengthens supplier accountability and reduces reputational risk (UK Government, 2024). Dashboards that combine these data streams with supplier scorecards and sustainability KPIs (e.g., carbon per unit sold, waste diversion rate, percentage of certified suppliers) make performance visible to executives, buyers and customers, supporting incentive-aligned procurement and product decisions. Embedding these tools into procurement workflows and product development cycles -paired with training for buyers and store managers ensures digital insights translate into operational change rather than remaining analytic outputs. Finally, linking sustainability metrics to financial planning (cost-savings from reduced waste, avoided carbon costs, and customer loyalty gains) demonstrates ROI and secures ongoing investment, making sustainability both an ethical commitment and a competitive advantage (Marks & Spencer, 2017/2025; Harvard Business Review, 2023).

Increase online sales contribution from 22% to 30% within 18 months through improved UX, personalisation and loyalty integration (Marks & Spencer, 2025).

5.3 Financial Plan - Allocation of the budget

Estimated investment: £250 million across IT infrastructure upgrades, staff training and development, data analytics systems, sustainability and supply-chain technologies, and customer-facing digital tools.

Budget allocation

Category	% of budget	Amount (£m)	Key deliverables
IT infrastructure and cloud migration	35%	87.5	Modular cloud platform, ERP modernisation, integration middleware
Data analytics, AI and CDP	20%	50.0	Customer data platform, recommender engines, forecasting models
Supply-chain & sustainability technologies	15%	37.5	Warehouse automation, supplier portals, LCA/carbon accounting tools
Customer-facing digital tools & omnichannel	15%	37.5	Mobile/web UX, click-and-collect, in-store digital experiences
Staff training, change management & leadership development	8%	20.0	Role-based training, coaching, change communications, reskilling
Cybersecurity, compliance & data governance	5%	12.5	Security architecture, GDPR controls, incident response capability
Contingency & systems integration buffer	2%	5.0	Integration overruns, inflation, vendor transition costs

(Created by the author)

Allocation rationale

- **IT infrastructure and cloud migration (35%)** -A robust, modular cloud foundation is required before analytics and omnichannel features can scale; this allocation covers platform migration, middleware and ERP modernisation (Gartner, 2021).
- **Data analytics, AI and CDP (20%)** - Investment in analytics and a customer data platform enables personalisation and demand forecasting that drive conversion and reduce stockouts (Harvard Business Review, 2023).
- **Supply-chain & sustainability technologies (15%)** - Funding supports automation, supplier portals and carbon-accounting tools to reduce cost-to-serve and meet Plan A objectives (McKinsey, 2020).
- **Customer-facing digital tools & omnichannel (15%)** - UX and omnichannel features convert backend capability into sales through improved customer journeys and click-and-collect services (Forrester, 2022).
- **Staff training, change management & leadership development (8%)** - Reskilling and leadership programmes ensure technology is adopted effectively and that managers can translate strategy into operational change (CIPD, 2020).
- **Cybersecurity, compliance & data governance (5%)** -Protects customer trust and regulatory compliance as data usage expands; non-negotiable for digital growth (UK Government, 2024).
- **Contingency & systems integration buffer (2%)** - A modest buffer to manage integration risk, vendor transitions and inflation without derailing core initiatives (Financial Times, 2025).

Phasing and controls

- **Phasing:** Phase 1 (0–6 months) - 30% (£75m) for governance, pilots and initial cloud migration; Phase 2 (6–12 months) -40% (£100m) to scale analytics, ERP modules and supply-chain pilots; Phase 3 (12–24 months) - 30% (£75m) for full cutover and embedding.
- **Funding mix:** internal cashflow, reallocated capital and staged vendor financing where appropriate.
- **Controls:** milestone-based vendor payments, independent integration testing, security sign-offs and monthly financial variance reporting.

- **ROI monitoring:** target ROI 12–15% within the first-year post-implementation, tracked via monthly dashboards and quarterly ROI reviews.

5.4 Communication Plan

Effective communication reduces resistance and strengthens engagement.

Stakeholders include employees, leadership teams, customers, IT vendors, shareholders, unions and regulatory bodies.

Methods: monthly newsletters, town halls led by senior management, interactive digital dashboards with project KPIs, workshops and training sessions, and 1-to-1 briefings with department heads.

Feedback systems: anonymous surveys, team discussions, suggestion platforms and pilot testing feedback loops. Clear, transparent communication reduces uncertainty and improves trust-critical elements of transformational leadership (Kotter, 1996).

5.5 Stakeholder Management

Employees: engage early through co-design workshops, pilot participation and reskilling incentives.

Unions: negotiate changes to roles and working patterns transparently, ensuring protections and retraining commitments.

Customers: communicate benefits (personalised offers, improved availability) and maintain trust through transparent data use policies.

Vendors: establish strategic partnerships with clear KPIs and integration roadmaps.

Shareholders: provide regular financial and progress reporting tied to KPIs and ROI milestones.

5.6 Evaluation Plan

KPIs: system adoption rates, customer satisfaction scores (NPS/CSAT), data utilisation metrics, operational efficiency benchmarks, financial performance indicators, employee engagement scores and sustainability metrics.

Frequency: monthly KPI reviews, quarterly performance meetings, mid-year strategic evaluation and final annual review.

Methodology: combine quantitative metrics with qualitative feedback (focus groups, employee interviews) and use A/B testing for digital features. Continuous monitoring ensures adaptability, consistent with Pettigrew's process-oriented approach (Pettigrew, 1987).

6. Critical Discussion and Reflections

This section integrates theoretical critique, ethical considerations and comparative analysis.

6.1 Critical Analysis of Change Models

Kotter's model is useful for sequencing tasks and building momentum but oversimplifies complex organisational environments; Burke-Litwin and Pettigrew's emphasis on interconnected variables and context is crucial for retail transformation (Kotter, 1996; Burke & Litwin, 1992; Pettigrew, 1987). Lewin's model, although criticised as dated, remains valuable in framing cultural transition-particularly for M&S's shift toward a digital-first mindset (Lewin, 1951). A hybrid approach balances structure, adaptability and cultural sensitivity.

6.2 Ethical Considerations

- **Employee wellbeing:** Digital transformation may generate anxiety; training, transparent communication and mental-health support are essential.
- **Data privacy:** Increased data usage must comply with GDPR and ethical guidelines; consent and robust governance are non-negotiable (UK Government, 2024).
- **Sustainability:** Maintaining environmental commitments is vital for brand reputation; digital tools should be used to measure and reduce environmental impact.
- **Inclusivity:** Change initiatives must include all employees, avoiding digital exclusion by providing alternative channels and targeted training.

6.3 Comparative Reflections

John Lewis: Over-reliance on online sales led to store closures and cultural tension, demonstrating the danger of neglecting physical store value-an important lesson for M&S (John Lewis Partnership, 2024).

Tesco: Integration of digital loyalty programmes and data analytics demonstrates the benefits of customer-centric innovation; Tesco's agility should inform M&S's digital roadmap (Tesco PLC, 2025).

Implications for M&S: balance digital expansion with strong in-store experiences, prioritise data-driven decision-making, and cultivate accountability and inclusivity in leadership.

Recommendation

Adopt a phased, evidence-driven transformation that aligns visible executive sponsorship, platform-first technology modernisation, operationalised sustainability, and adaptive evaluation so leadership, culture, systems and procurement work together to deliver

measurable customer, financial and environmental outcomes. The programme should be governed by a Transformation PMO that enforces milestone-based funding and benefits realisation, use time-boxed pilots to de-risk scale-up, and combine quantitative KPIs with qualitative feedback to enable rapid learning and reprioritisation.

- **Governance:** establish a Transformation PMO with named sponsors for each workstream, clear decision rights, milestone-based vendor payments and a benefits-realisation mandate to ensure accountability and rapid escalation of issues.
- **Technology sequencing:** require a platform-first roadmap (cloud/ERP/integration CDP/analytics pilots - omnichannel scale); use product teams and defined success criteria for each pilot to avoid technical debt and enable modular scaling.
- **Sustainability operationalisation:** pilot carbon accounting and LCA on priority product lines, introduce supplier scorecards and procurement requirements for sustainability data, and align buyer incentives to environmental KPIs so sustainability becomes an operational decision, not an add-on.

Conclusion

Marks & Spencer stands at a pivotal moment where preserving brand heritage must be balanced with decisive modernisation. The evidence in this report shows that legacy strengths-trusted food offering, extensive store network and Plan A credentials-can be leveraged only if leadership, technology, culture and sustainability are aligned through a coherent, phased programme.

The recommended approach is an integrated, evidence-driven transformation: secure visible executive sponsorship, create a Transformation PMO with benefits-realisation authority, adopt a platform-first technology roadmap, operationalise sustainability through carbon accounting and supplier scorecards, and drive culture change via time-boxed cross-functional squads and leadership development. These elements must be governed by milestone-based funding and mixed-method evaluation so the programme can learn, reprioritise and demonstrate measurable customer, operational and environmental returns.

Immediate action on governance, Phase-1 technology pilots and a small set of sustainability experiments will create the credibility and data needed to scale. Executed with disciplined sequencing, transparent measurement and inclusive leadership, this programme will enable M&S to retain its heritage while becoming a more agile, digitally enabled and sustainable retailer-delivering value for customers, employees and shareholders alike.

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