

Customer service and
store management
techniques in retail to
improve shopping
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“ Investigate and access how Retailers use customer service and store management techniques to improve the consumers shopping experience”.

In this essay, I will describe a variety of customer service management techniques and analyse the impact of these strategies. Secondly, I will critically assess the other complexities of store management to create a shopping experience that maximises customer satisfaction in relation to staff, shoppers, and security. Finally, I will demonstrate my understanding of the academic topic through providing a variety of examples to articulate my analysis.

‘ Retailing is the last stage in the distribution process... that encompasses the business activities involved in selling goods and services to consumers for their personal, family or household use .’ (Berman, Evans and Chatterjee 2018) Customers are the heart of every business, it is imperative that businesses drive customer service to ensure that it attracts and retains loyal customers for the purpose of generating profits. According to Henry Ford he said: *‘ Businesses must be run at a profit, else it will die. But when anyone tries to run a business solely for profit... then the business must die as well, for it no longer has a reason for existence’.* (Customer Happiness Blog, 2018)

Customer service is fundamental to businesses in the sense of exceeding customer expectations that will separate you apart from your competitors. There are two types of services that retailers such as Marks and Spencer’s (M&S) that can be applied, which are expected and augmented services. Expected customer service is described by Berman, Evans and Chatterjee (2018) as: *‘ the service level that customers want to receive from any*

retailer, such as basic employee courtesy. ' A common expected customer service is the respect that the customers deserve, as business should treat them how they wish to be treated. Businesses such as M&S have their own adaptability on the matter, their core purpose is the promise of ' Enhancing Lives Everyday'.(Corporate. marksandspencer. com, 2016)

The concept of Customer service strategy particularly plays an important role in the sense of any business plan . ' *Since business relies on customer satisfaction, any good business should develop a strategy that not only draws in customers, but keeps them happy so they are not tempted to try out a competitor .*' (Harris D, 2017) Implementing customer management techniques enables businesses to prioritise its customer's expectations, with the sole purpose to improve their customer shopping experience.

Customer engagement is a prime example of a customer service technique in which retailers can apply through delivering different types of services. Payment services are convenient to the customers in the sense of having a selection of payments to choose from. As technology is developing ' *we live in a cashless society, so the methods and terms of the payments that retailers offer need to have the flexibility to provide suitable arrangements for individual customers*' . (Varley and Rafiq, 2014) The way in which M&S provide numerous payment types, is instore and online and over the phone: cash, cheques M&S credit cards, M&S gift cards, M&S budget card, M&S charge card, visa, Apple pay, MasterCard and M&S e- gift card.

(Marksandspencer. com, 2018) The advantage of these payment services essentially prevents loss of a sale because it allows the customers to pay with their preferred method. As a result, a relationship is created between <https://assignbuster.com/customer-service-and-store-management-techniques-in-retail-to-improve-shopping-experiences/>

the business and customer. However, a disadvantage of particular payment types, is the physical form of cash and cheque's. The process of exchanging products for physical money can be quite time consuming, and its within M&S best interest to provide a fast and friendly service. Sacha Berendji, Retail, Operations and Property Director at Marks & Spencer said: *' Our customers – especially those who come to us for lunch – are so busy, any tech that can speed up the shopping experience is a massive benefit to them. Crucially, it also means our brilliant colleagues are freed up to offer great service in other parts of the store, helping to improve the overall experience in the lunchtime rush'.* (Marks and Spencer, 2018) The launch of ' mobile pay go', will provide customers a way of paying without the interaction of tills. This is done through scanning the *' products as they go and then pay from their iPhone using Apple Pay or a saved card on their M&S. com account .'* (Marks and Spencer, 2018)

Another aspect of customer management service that improves the shopping experience is product-availability service. This type of customer engagement ensures that products are available to customers at all times. Customers who invest their resources by getting to the store in terms of money and time, discovering the product is unavailable will cause a series of disadvantage's. This is because the customers will become dissatisfied with the service, which can result in the customer never returning to the business. According to Wyman (2012), *' poor availably can cost at least 5% of sales ,* which can be huge in the long run. Therefore, it is vital to a business to ensure that the first connection between the product and customer is available. The way in which M&S provide product availability

products instore is through the honey well app, which is designed to enable staff to have the ability to search for products. The development of technology in retail increases the customers shopping experience because the process of allocating a product is quick, easy and efficient. According to M&S's Digital Director, he said: '*Digital is about all of us thinking differently about technology; using it to change the way we work and to help customers. Digital is entwined in our customers' lives, so it's absolutely got to be throughout ours, too.*' (Careers. marksandspencer. com, 2018) The advantage of this digital app in place, allows the staff to inform a manager when particular products are low, for them to be replenished.

Customer delivery is a customer service technique that is used to exceed the customer's expectations at a satisfactory level. '*The Work of Pararasurman, Zeithaml and berry underpins much of the theoretical development relating to customer perceptions of service.*' (Varley and Rafiq, 2014) They found out the relationship between the customer's expectations is in fact associated with their actual experience of service which contributes to the customer satisfaction. This theory was implemented into a model, which intertwines four factors of: word of mouth, personal needs, past experience and external communications, with the five service quality dimensions. The five services assess the quality within business service's through various dimensions. For example, M&S have adopted the tangible dimension in the sense of keeping their physical facilities such as toilets to a high standard. If the customer witnessed filthy toilet's, the customer will be dissatisfied because the experience didn't meet their expectations. M&S also adopt the responsiveness dimension in terms of providing the customer with prompt

service and efficient help. Having 24/7 social media enables business to pinpoint customer's issues which acknowledges vital feedback. According to Julia Monro, head of social media at M&S said: *' We picked up on things we would never have known otherwise," she said. " Proper listening is about getting the feedback loop, and getting the insight from the social media team to the people with the power to change things.'* (Baldwin, 2014)

Furthermore, on the customer delivery, *' the gap model is very useful for retailers when they are trying to analyse where they may be failing customers on service'.* (Varley and Rafiq, 2014)

The way in which the model suggests there are barriers to service quality is through the knowledge, standards, delivery and communication's gap. As an example, the communication gap demonstrates the failure of the businesses service promise to the customers because there is a space between the level of service and the level of service actually received. This articulates that the communication's gap can ruin the relationship between the business and customers, as failing to fulfil their promises can be misleading. For example, advertisement is a fundamental factor of this, due to the retailers building up the expectations of the product or service. This means that the businesses are required to follow up on the matter before its release to the public. If the product or service however doesn't carry out its promise, customers will be dissatisfied in the result of being lied to. The way in which M&S tackled this was through their 2012, advertisement launched of low priced grocery items under the brand name ' Simply M&S'. The advertisement supported the marketing campaign using the strap line *' M&S quality now at prices you'll love ,'* (Russell, 2012) thereby providing emphasis on supporting the brand <https://assignbuster.com/customer-service-and-store-management-techniques-in-retail-to-improve-shopping-experiences/>

at a low-price range. Therefore, the approach of customer delivery service must match its promises in regard to the association of expectation's.

Despite the customer service management techniques, store management is utilised to also create a shopping experience that maximises customers satisfaction in relation to staff, shoppers, stock and security. As M&S operates in various industry's such as food, Clothing & Home, Finance & operations, and Visual merchandising they all require a manger in each section. Safety and security is a necessity within a business, it is so important that it is required for business to have policies and procedures in place to protect there: assets, private information and the well-being of staff and customers. Threats in safety can come in many forms, including domestic violence, robbery, fire hazards, hacking information systems, and accidents. To prevent the occurrence of these dangers, policies and procedures are set up and monitored to minimise the potential risk. M&S have many security attributes that help prevents these threats, for example, they have CCTV, tags, and security guards. In compliance with security, mangers at M&S ' *are responsible to make sure employers are aware of the health and safety regulations and the need to report all accidents and dangerous occurrences to the appropriate person or department.* '

(Corporate. marksandspencer. com, 2017) Measurements will be conducted by mangers in the appropriate form of risk assessments. If conveyed correctly risk assessment's will be beneficial to the business, for it saves costs in terms of communicating awareness to staff in regard to the risk assessment standards. Implementing this at work, will keep staff informed

and on their toes which will minimise the potential risks of hazards within the workplace. (Weekes, 2017)

Engaging with staff is paramount in order to achieve success in terms of gaining, retaining customers as well as profits. M&S connect with their staff on numerous levels, as they have set out principles and policies ' *to underpin the vision and everything we do for our employees.* ' (Corporate. marksandspencer. com, 2018) One way in which M&S make their staff feel valued is through the equal opportunities policy ' *from recruitment and selection, through training and development .* ' (Corporate. marksandspencer. com, 2018) Not only is everyone treated equally, but also treated with respect and dignity all throughout their career with M&S. The advantages of utilising the equal opportunities policy increases the productivity within the workplace. This is because people will feel happier to work in an environment with no discrimination and being provided with more opportunities for them to develop their skills. Having diversity within a workplace promotes the businesses reputation for they are interacting with all types of cultures and attitudes, indefinitely increasing their adaptability. M&S ' *respects culture and individual diversity and promotes inclusivity which includes seeking opportunities to support disadvantage people into work .* ' (Corporate. marksandspencer. com, 2017) This is because as a business M&S ' *believes that everyone counts and should always be treated with decency and honesty.* ' (Corporate. marksandspencer. com, 2017)

Furthermore, the aspect of M&S managing staff shares insight with their team by getting them involved through their own Business Involvement groups (BIG). The network of BIG, means that ' *colleagues have the chance to voice* ' <https://assignbuster.com/customer-service-and-store-management-techniques-in-retail-to-improve-shopping-experiences/>

their opinions and ideas, get answers and have their views represented when the business considers changes that affect them .' Topics discussed can range anything between targets, relationship statuses and customer service plans. This measure of staff retention is important because it allows free of speech within the company, potentially influencing the company on ideas on customer service and staff service. This will benefit the company for they will receive ideas from the front end of the business (staff) which enables them to listen and respond accordingly. AS a result, M&S will acknowledge the response they receive, and will communicate the changes back to the team in terms of success or failure.

Another store management technique of providing the customers satisfaction is the actual management of customers. Managing the customer's is important in the sense of generating profits, utilising their experience and staying ahead of competition. '*Information is a key resource that retailers need to manage effectively in order to satisfy their customer's needs and to remain competitive in the industry.*' (Varley and Rafiq, 2014) M&S manages its customers with managing use of specific information to critically analyse their purchases habits. With this sort of information, it allows businesses to see what satisfies the customer's needs and to therefore be applied. Due to the high demand of customers and suppliers that M&S has, essentially huge amounts of information is generated through IT systems. An example of this is the M&S loyalty cards, for when a purchase is made it is recorded by scanning the card, acting as a measure for the number of transactions. The advantage of this system enables businesses in the case M&S to critically analyse their information in order to improve the productivity of their

business and service that they deliver to their customers. Therefore, in the regards of listening and responding to this information M&S can communicate their changes. These changes can be seen in the number of tills in order to cope with the demand or with adequate staff members or even the quantity of certain products to be frequently replenished. The purpose is intended to increase the service delivery to make the next first approach more efficient.

In conclusion, I have demonstrated my understanding of customer service techniques with my analysis of conveying the strategies in terms of improving the customers experience. This includes the customer engagement of payment services and product availability service and how M&S have complied with these techniques. I have also clarified customer delivery in regard to the service model, and how M&S uses the dimension to improve their services. Furthermore, I have critically assessed the other complexities of store management in order to create a shopping experience that maximises customer satisfaction in relation to staff, shoppers, and security.

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