

Critically evaluate a retail store boots marketing essay



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The retail store that will be covered in this report is Boots. There will be a short description on the retail store and the retail's target group before covering several areas on what the retail can offer to the customers. The assessment will cover two areas which are the store design and environment and merchandising.

Boots retail store is a part of pharmacy chain company called Boots UK Limited which is a subsidiary company of Alliance Boots group (Alliance Boots, 2012). Boots store is not only a pharmacy store but it also retail cosmetic, toiletry and health related products. These also include electronics and clothing associated with daily healthcare. In addition, Boots also have a division that retail in optics called Boots Opticians.

There are 3 Boots stores located in Stirling but the one that will be discussed is the store that is located on Kings Square at The Thistles shopping mall (The Boots Company PLC, n. d.). It opens every day except festive holidays, for Monday to Saturday; it opens from 9 am and closes at 5.30 pm except for Thursday and Saturday where it closed at 8 pm and 6 pm respectively. As for Sunday it opens from 11 am till 5 pm (The Thistles, 2012). This follows the opening hours of the shopping mall, making it hard to be flexible with operating hours as any changes that do not go in flow with the shopping mall may hurt the sales count. The store has 2 floors where the ground floor consists of pharmacy section, cosmetic, health care and toiletry sections. As for the upper floor, it consists of optics and clothing section.

The Boots store has an advantageous location for Stirling demographic. First, it is situated in the one and only shopping mall in the city so it can take the

advantage of the crowd that visit the mall daily. Thus ensuring there will be a certain traffic rate going in and out of the store even during the weekdays. This is because even though most adult demographic unavailable around during the working hours, there is still others come and visit the store such as the elderly and university students. Secondly, Boots being a beauty and healthcare retail store, its target market covers all age group, thus located in the centre of the city help to reach out the desired target group easily. And its target group are not only the people living in Stirling city but also the county surround it thus covers more area with potential customers.

Store Design & Environment

Store design and its environment play a major role in attracting customers to go and shop at a retail store. Store design helps in managing the store's environment. The design itself is important as it can be used for customers' appeal and at the same time making sure the efficient usage of the store's space (Varley & Rafiq, 2004). The five key elements required in store plan are the exterior layout, interior design, the fixtures, merchandise and the people working there (Varley & Rafiq, 2004).

For The Thistles' Boots, its exterior is very simple; there is no specific design or architecture required as it is in a shopping mall. It is hard to change the exterior of the store as any change can only be made at the front of the store. And Boots decide to fully utilise the front of the store by making the whole front as an open space. The interior can be seen easily when people pass by the store thus making people think they ' need to buy some toiletry' or ' saw latest beauty products' thus making them to enter the store. Open front store means easy access to the store and the same time, maximise the <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-a-retail-store-boots-marketing-essay/>

space usage as it can extend to outside of the store. The only 'decoration' for the exterior front is the blue sign with boots brand to identify the store which people do not really notice unless people look up when walking around the shopping mall. People identify the store by looking into the store where all the advertisements hang on the ceilings instead of the sign outside of the store.

The interior and fixtures play a role in the image and atmosphere of the store. But at the same time, to design a store's interior; several points are required to take into consideration. The type of products being sold in the store, the cost to set up the interior layout and health and safety of the workers and customers are needed to be considered in designing the interior (Varley & Rafiq, 2004). The interior layout includes the condition of the ceilings, walls, flooring, lighting fixture, furniture and fittings for equipment (Varley & Rafiq, 2004).

As for Boots' interior, the store emphasised more on minimising the cost spend on it thus simplest and efficient design is made. The interior design is all in white to accentuate the products displayed. The store lighting used are bright white to ensure the place brighten up as there is no windows in the store. Any colours pop up in the store are from the merchandise and the labels that hang all over the place. Even the shelves and counters are in white or wash-off white thus making the product stand out more than the fixtures and equipment in the store. Store layout for ground floor is shown below in figure 1.

Cosmetics

FragranceC: UsersalienwareDesktopdarft-page-001. jpg

Figure 1: Draft plan of Boots' ground floor

However, as seen above, the position of escalator and stair to the upper floor is problematic. The escalator is situated at the front right of the store as if it is separated from the ground floor. And the stair to go up also separated from the ground floor by a door. Anyone pass the door will think that it is a door to the staff or stock area instead of to the upper floor unless they saw the sign for stairs to go to the upper level which is not that noticeable. This is a bad design of the store and the consequences will be a reduction in sales for the products in the upper level which are mainly clothing and optic products. Unless there is any initiative to attract customer to upper level, the sales of the upper level's products will not improve.

The cashiers' layout in the store is also a problem. The normal layout for cashier is usually situated near the front of the store or at the end of each department if it's a department store. However, Thistles' Boots is not quite big to have department sections and it has too many cashiers' point and to make it worse the main cashier point is at the middle of the store which is not strategic place at all and it is hard to queue there.

Merchandise and products' positioning is also one of the important role in store design. This will be explained more later on in the merchandising section. Merchandise roles that will be explained later on involve enhancing the senses of the customers' in order to attract them to buy the product.

As mention before, store design creates the atmosphere of the store. The modes of stimulations required in the retail's environments are the lighting, colour, sound, odour, temperature and traffic of the store (Ng, 2003).

Mode of stimulation

Boots' description

Lighting

Bright white

Colour (interior design)

White or wash-off white

Sound

None

Odour

None

Temperature

Cool and comfortable temperature

Traffic

Medium rate (rarely crowded)

Table 1: Mode of stimulations in Boots store

As shown in Table 1, white lighting and white colouring for most of the interior design emphasised the merchandise thus making sure customers' concentrated on the products instead of the interior architecture. In addition, the adverts stands out more with white background compare to other colours and Boots' management do not have to worry of clashing colours between the walls and the adverts. Lighting would not be noticeable to customers unless it makes the customer uncomfortable and for Boots' the lighting is perfect to highlight the products in the store. And since it's a pharmacy and healthcare retail store, simple and professional look is preferable to elaborate and colourful atmosphere. At the same time, it follows one of Alliance Boots' core values which are simplicity (Alliance Boots, 2012).

With the healthcare professionalism theme in mind, there is no music play inside the store. With no music or noise background, it helps customers to concentrate all their senses to the products displayed. At the same time, any interactions between customers and the retail workers can be done effectively. There will be no problem hearing over each other as there is no noise preventing them to communicate properly other than themselves.

No odour to attract and entice customers as Boots is a pharmacy and healthcare store. Sweet smelling store does not suit with the image Boots representing to the market. And in addition help to emphasise the smell merchandising method that will be explain more later on. The temperature of the store is comfortable enough for people to either wear or take off their jackets while browsing around the store. Thus it won't force customers to hurry with their shopping and help indirectly to boost the sale rate.

Lastly, the traffic in a retail store is important as it may affect the comfort of customers in the store and again indirectly affect the sales rate. For The Thistles' Boots, the size of the store is adequate for its city centre location. It is not very crowded during its promotion and festive events. However, the spaces between aisles need to be bigger for people with disability to move around especially at the front area where the cosmetic section is positioned. There is just enough space for a disability chair to move but it is quite hard to move freely for the person and others especially when others need to be in the same area to move around or squatting down to check the products at the bottom aisle. The store needs to reconsider its design especially on the spacing between aisles especially when Alliance Boots (2012) core value is to give "a high standard of care and services to customer and their own people".

Merchandising

Products offered by the store concentrate more on cosmetics and toiletry products compared to other types of products. The designs of most stores in The Thistles except for a few are one floor stores. Due to this, people tend to forget the second floor of Boots unless they have a reason to go to the upper level such as wanting to buy baby clothing. In addition, as mentioned previously, the positioning of the escalator and stairs do not help in encouraging people to go to the upper level for window shopping compared to the ground floor.

As for store layout, the shelves are arranged in grid formation as shown in Figure 1 and it maximised the usage of store space with other elements taken into consideration. Majority of the shelves especially the ones on the ground

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floor are at most 5 feet tall. Thus customers with the exception for young children and people in disability chair can easily reach the products themselves.

As seen in Figure 1, cosmetics products are put in front. Other sections are divided by either the cashier points or the shelves itself. The Boots retail store emphasised more on selling its cosmetics and toiletry compare to the pharmaceutical products. This can easily been seen with the size of the pharmacy and over-the-counter drugs compare to other sections. Based on Alliance Group annual report for 2011/12, even though pharmaceutical division produce more revenue compare to health and beauty division i. e. £16, 828 Million to £7, 671 Million respectively, health and beauty division produce £399 Million more of trading profit compare to pharmaceutical division (Alliance Boots, 2012). Not to mention people only buy pharmaceutical drugs because it is prescribed by the doctors not of their own choice thus, there is no need to elaborate the pharmacy section of the store. Thus it is the company decision on the proportion of the sections between pharmacy division and other. And this proportion layout is similar to other Boots beauty and healthcare store across the country. The retail store can only decide the proportion on other sections such as the cosmetics and toiletries section where for this Boots store concentrated on.

There is four ways to market products through senses which are visual, auditory, olfaction and tactile marketing (Spence and Gallace, 2011; Kerfoot, Davies & Ward, 2003). Senses marketing play a huge role in selling products. Millward Brown's marketing research found out that touch is important when making decision to buy a product (Spence and Gallace, 2011). The <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-a-retail-store-boots-marketing-essay/>

research's result shows 35% of consumer preferred the hand-feel of mobile phone compare to its physical appearance (Spence & Gallace, 2011).

However, touch, hear and smell the products are underappreciated with this era of digital shopping where companies become more aware that potential customers may not be able to try these three senses on the products. Thus products offered become more concentrated on its visual features instead of other senses (Spence & Gallace, 2011).

And thus the Boots retail store also emphasised more on the visual merchandising compare to touch and smell merchandising. People see attractive products afar due to colourful and attractive products with the white background compare first before even thinking of smelling and touching the products. In other word, 'pretty' products are what arouse customers' curiosity compare to other senses present in merchandise. However, certain products required both visual and touch before purchasing for example cosmetics. Thus testers are required for each product which what Boots' able to produce compare to other competitors in the same mall. For example, Bodycare does not provide any testers for its cosmetic products. This shows Boots have efficient management and take into consideration customers' need to try on products before buying them.

As for visual and smell merchandising, fragrance section of the store provides sufficient testers. However, the layout of the testers is very confusing as the tester is not together with the products. Instead, the testers are located on to the top of the shelves while the products are arranged elsewhere. This arrangement is not for customers' ease of usage and some products are hard to match with the tester as most products will be in <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-a-retail-store-boots-marketing-essay/>

enclosed boxes that can be in different design compare to the perfume bottles. And this may put off the customer from buying them.

The retail brand has evolved from focusing the products especially store's brand to taking into consideration the corporate's brand and image (Kremer & Viot, 2012). As for Alliance Boots, it has both long established brands such as No. 7 for cosmetics and Soltan and Botanics for toiletries and new brands like Boots Pharmaceuticals for over-the-counter drugs and Boots Laboratories for skincare products (Alliance Boots, 2012). With these brands, it helps the retail stores to be different from the competitors as the company produce products exclusively owned by them (Alliance Boots, 2012).

However, Thistles' Boots does not really emphasised on selling the company's products on certain sections. The store concentrates more on other products especially for toiletries section as it is really hard to find any Botanics products in hair care section or Soltan in body wash section. This could be due to the presence of other cheaper products that are more preferred by the consumers in Stirling. For students, they prefer cheap but highly known brands for their toiletries as saving as much as possible from impersonal stuffs is a requirement for them. For working demographic, they would prefer to buy high quality products or some famous 'sophisticated' brand rather than the 'Boots' brand.

Information about the products offered is very important in helping customers to decide which products to buy. The information can be in term of the content of the product, the price and any promotions offer in the store. Wrong information about a product may push customer away from buying

the product again or worse case scenario stop buying goods in the store.

From own observations on Boots, all the price tags and additional information needed are put out correctly and it is easy to find the price or any promotions on the products. This ease of information flow is what customers want and at the same time, it match with the Alliance Boots group's core value of simplicity where the group is proud being "uncomplicated, efficient and easy to do business with" (Alliance Boots, 2012).

The promotions that Boots offered tend to be in monthly routine and this is one way of Boots to attract customers to go and buy their products. Some of the promotions are three mixed products for the price of two products, two products of the same brand for £5, buy 1 get 1 free and much more. The promotions are one of Boots strategy to ensure customers to go back and buy their products i. e. become a loyal customer to the store. Without the promotions offered in the store, there would not be any special about Boots products other than the products that are manufactured by the company group. And the store retails the same products as the other competitors such as Superdrug and Bodycare sell the same products at the same price in the same shopping mall and Bodycare is just across Boots while Superdrug is only a few stores away.

Recommendation

The main recommendation will be improving the store layout. This is because even though the current layout maximise the usage of space in the store, several arrangements are required to change to improve the sales rate. As mention previously, the positioning of the escalator and stair to <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-a-retail-store-boots-marketing-essay/>

upper level is not working effectively. The stairs and escalator cannot be moved unless complete reconstruct of the store is made which in this case, will cost a lot of time and money. Another way is by removing the wall and door near the stair at ground floor and arranges products near the stair thus indirectly to let people know there are more products display on the upper level. As for the escalator, the products arrange next to the escalator actually hide the escalator instead of highlighting it. Large attractive sign should be put up in replace of the products thus show the feeling of both floors are not a separate entities.

Boots being a pharmacy, beauty and healthcare retail store, should took into more consideration disability access to the store. Wheel chair cannot go to the upper level so it does not fit the store image not to provide sufficient disability access. The aisle spaces need to be wider for wheelchair to move around. And at the cosmetic section the spacing between shelves are narrower compare to the spacing at toiletries section. During busy period, it is hard to maneuver around and it put off some customers from buying any cosmetics.

And as point out before, the cashier points need to be move especially the main cashier at the centre of ground floor. It is hard for customer to queue up there and it is better if the main cashiers move to the front of the store or move all cashier points to one place with a queue path since it is not a big store. The other layout that has not been mentioned is the food and drinks section. As seen in Figure 1, this section is tucked away at the back of the store, where customers can only see it if they walk all the way to the back. It is reasonable to put dietary food and drinks at the back but for snack foods it <https://assignbuster.com/critically-evaluate-a-retail-store-boots-marketing-essay/>

is irrational to put it there. Customers who want to have a quick grab on snack would have to go pass the other sections in the store. This will reduce the number of customers whose only desire is to buy some snacks as they can easily get the same snacks from other store. Thus this will crippled the sale on foods and drinks of the store.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Boots is relatively a good retail store for health and beauty products. It being located in the shopping mall in the centre of the city received all the advantages it can get. However, it has to compete heavily with other stores not just in the shopping mall but also around the city such as Tesco and the newly open Waitrose. Not to mention Boots also set up another 2 similar store within the city which is a waste of resources.