



A study of branding issues in PC world UK

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Abstract

This report is basically focused on the internet services and all the issues related to online services of the PC World. The report started with the basic introduction of the PC World, it includes how the PC World started the business in the UK and what are its key services and product line. PC World is doing a business of retailing which is the services sector and provide advisory services as well for the potential customers. Then the next step is branding issues, in this section it has been viewed that how the PC World continuously and with consistency remain in the market with stronger brand name in the mind of the customer and then the extent of online segmentation has been discussed in which it has been analyzed that the PC World is well aware of the segmentation and done a good work in respect of segmentation. The next issue is the transactional facilities and then the degree of online and offline integration, how these two factors relates to each other and in the end there are some recommendation and suggestions for the PC World for better competes in the highly competitive market.

Keywords: Internet Services, Segmentation, Transactional Facilities

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Introduction

This report is mainly focused on the PC World (Personal Computer World), in this report the main emphasis is on the online working of the web site of the PC World. Lets just start with a little basic introduction about the PC World; so that we came to know that what business actually the PC World is doing and what are the main strength and weaknesses of the PC World in its different online operations.

The PC World is started in November 1991 under the umbrella of Vision Technology Group Ltd. The first store was opened in Croydon. In 1993 Dixons Group plc purchased the PC World and these were those days when the PC World was running its four stores in different locations of the country. The Dixons Group plc is now known to be as the DSG International.

After sometime with the collaborations of different other companies such as DN Computer Services plc in 1996 and Byte Computer Stores Ltd the PC World was able to expand its business further in other parts of the country. One of the most recent collaboration is with the Micro Warehouse that was in June 2004.

PC World started its business in UK in 1997, up till 2001 PC World was operating in Bury and Great Manchester. PC World is a retail Business and it mainly deals with the Information Technology and the strength of the employees as of the in 2005 was about 5,528 and its headquarter is in Hamel Hampstead and as mentioned above it is the part of the DSG International.

It was the time when the technology was advancing and most of the organizations and individuals at home were adopting the newer technology and most of the organizations were using these new technology in their daily life matters or in operations and so the PC World was gaining the business and by 2006 PC World had its stores in 163 different locations of the country.

Now days PC World is doing retailing for number of different products categories and it provides services relating to Personal Computers and has its own advisory cell. That cell provides basic help to their existing and new customers how to better use the computers and other issues related with the products. PC World provides services in following categories:

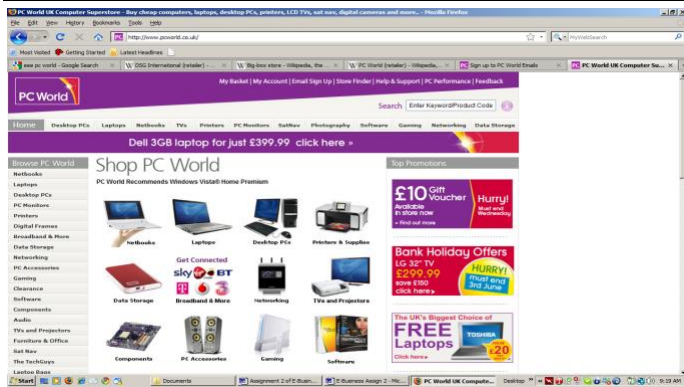
- Desktop PCs
- Laptops
- Notebooks
- PC Accessories
- PC Components
- Photo Cameras Digital
- TV, Audio
- Office Furniture and Supplies
- Sat Nav
- Printers
- Internet Accessories
- Gaming
- Storage (Hard Disk Devices)

These are the main product range of the PC World and with this the PC World has very powerful online services and in this report we'll critically look into the different aspects of the PC World online services. To start a business web site is the first step to take off and it provides or works as a window that represents the personality of the company.

<http://www.pcworld.co.uk/>

<http://www.dsgiplc.com/Layout.aspx>





Branding

A product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by a customer. A product can be copied by a competitors; a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated; a successful brand is timeless.

Stephen King, WPP Group, London

Branding began many centuries before the term acquired its modern usage. Brand management is mostly related with the supervision of brands of the products and services from the time they are introduced until they are removed from the marketplace. Brand became most important in the days of industrial revolution and development of advertisement and marketing techniques. With the extension of the businesses in America and Europe most of the bigger organization began to think upon or chosen to have a brand name. The manufacturers and marketers tried hard to choose a unique brand name for their organization that was easily memorable, original and altogether effective, so that the customer can memorize it. (BRANDS “The New Wealth Creators By Susannah And John Murphy)

Let us have the pure definition of the branding, “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitors”. (By American Marketing Associates coated in Kotler and Keller)

A Brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design intended to distinguish the goods and services of one from another. The basic philosophy behind the brand is that the potential customers can be able to identify and will be able to easily find out their required product of their selected organization in the marketplace. (Marketing Management by Douglas J. Dalrymple and Leonard j. Parsons)

As we all know that now days the technology has been used in all kind of daily working and so that all of the businesses are using technology for their customers, so that the customers can shop online and while sitting in their homes and offices. The online branding includes the different factor and these factors are discussed below:

Brand recognition

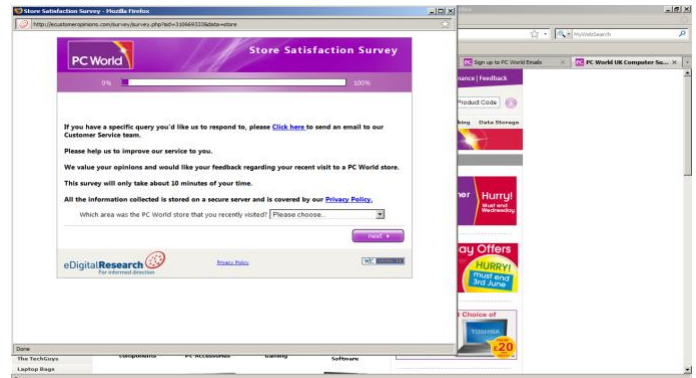
The brand should be so strong that it will attract the customers towards its different offers. As the online services of the PC World are improving day by day and it provides all the services online with improvements. As the name “PC World” itself is very attractive and customers in the markets of PCs recognize the brand name of the PC World.

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty means that the customer is willing to purchase the product because of the attractiveness and commitment with the brand, and the customer is ready to purchase or repurchase the particular product. PC World has a strong brand name in the market and customers have many affiliations that are related to the brand name. Most of the customers repurchase and purchase number of products and get services because of the improved services of the PC World.

Customer satisfaction

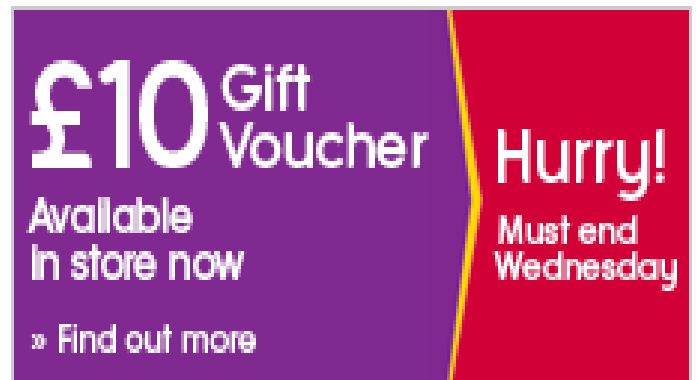
Customer satisfaction is another issue that is of great importance. PC World has a strong system of customer feedbacks and that system is used to improve the services that they are currently providing to its customers. After every transaction PC World ask its customers for the feedback about its services asking customers about the services they provided to its customers. That will increase the customer satisfaction and commitment and loyalty with the brands.



Online brand equity

Brand equity is simply “what your brand stands for in the hearts and minds of your audience. It is both logical and emotional” (American Association word of mouth presentation, Presented by Krista Neher)

Brand equity is mostly related with the customer’s response when the company put a different product or service or that can be any kind of a new offer on the website and how the customers will react when they see a new product or service or offer. If they react favorably then the brand equity is higher and if the responses are unfavorable means customer’s reaction is normal then the product is only a commodity and the competition is only done on the prices.

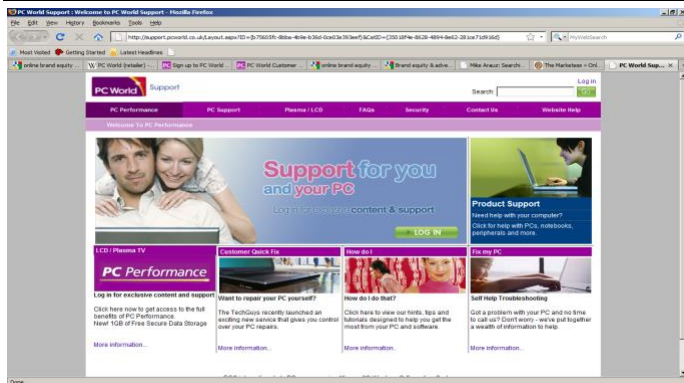


At PC World we see a new offer that is mentioned above and the reaction of the customers to this offer. As PC World has a strong band so that customers react favorably to the different offers and development of the new product and service.

Online assistance

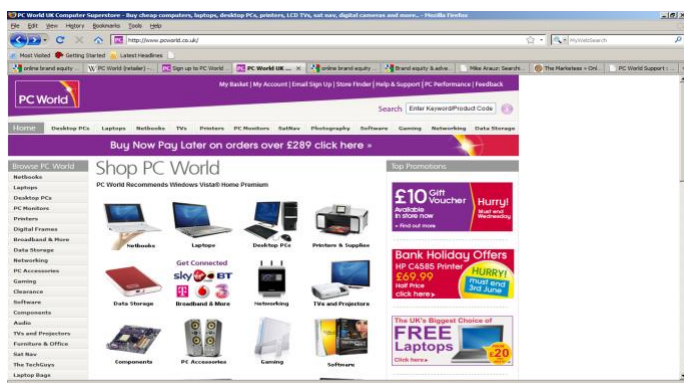
Online assistance means that PC World provides its customers with the help to better understand and to solve the problems related to the information systems. It provide with the customers the online solutions for the problems they are facing for their products. Problems includes hoe to run the software, how to install any other hardware etc.



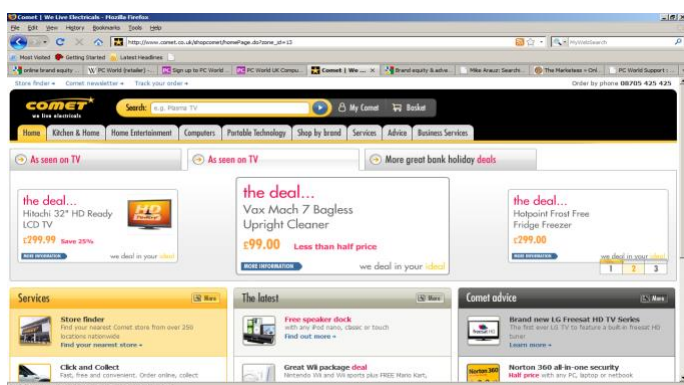


Online brand comparisons

Competition is the most important part of any kind of a business and now days businesses and the companies are trying very hard to cope with their competitors and are creating and developing different strategies to improve their products and services to take competitive edge. The main competitors of the PC World are Staples and Comet. These two businesses are making the competition very tough and are highly competitive.



PC World Main Website



COMET Main Website



Staples Main Website

Extent of online segmentation

Segmentation is one of the key and very important aspects of the marketing and all this is done for the better facilitation of the customers, as customer satisfaction is the most important and prime objective of any business because they have to maximize the profit. Segmentation is basically to develop different strategies for different kind of customers and to fulfill the needs of the potential customers. Each of the customer segments has his own individual needs and requirement and different kind of demand functions such as price of the product, quality and other attributes related to the specific product or service. There are different major bases for the segmentation which are as follows:

Geographic: markets are segmented on the bases of the geographical location such as sometimes on the bases of the nation, regions, divisions, cities or also on the bases of country. Segmentation is mostly done by the preferences of the particular region.

Demographic: That means that the customers are segmented on the basis of their age, gender, stage in the family life cycle, income, education, occupation, and ethnicity of the potential customer. Businesses are now days working really very hard to come up with this kind of the segmentation for their customers.

Psychographic: This is related with the or generally focused the habits of buying, social class, lifestyles and attitudes that may be related to a specific product or the service. This is usually related to the activities and interest for any kind of the product and service.

Behavioral: In this kind of the segmentation marketers divide customers according or on the basis of the groups and according to their knowledge, attitude towards, use of and response to any kind of a product and service.

(Kotler and Keller)

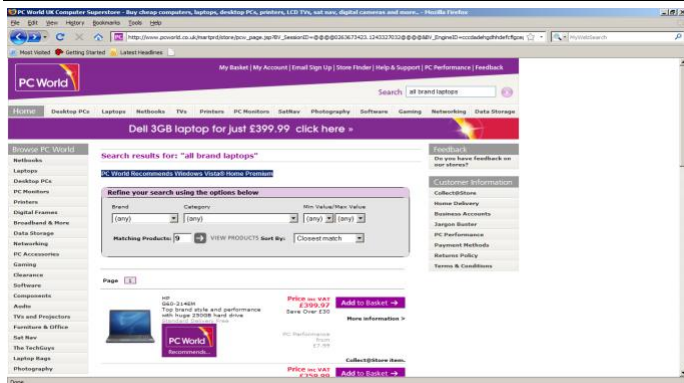
(Marketing Management by Douglas J. Dalrymple and Leonard J. Parsons)

Sometimes the segmentation is done on the basis of the brands, customers liking and disliking of the product or service. Like if we take the example of the brand name SONY then its value is greater and it is also expensive but customers still like to purchase Sony product because of the strong brand name.

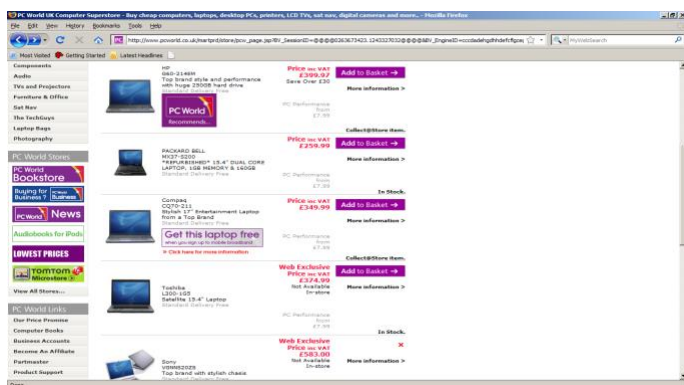
PC World segmented its product and services according to the following categories:

Brands: PC World segmented the different products according to their brand names and customers just do one click on the brand and with a blink of an eye his selected brand appears on the screen with its different styles and different attributes.

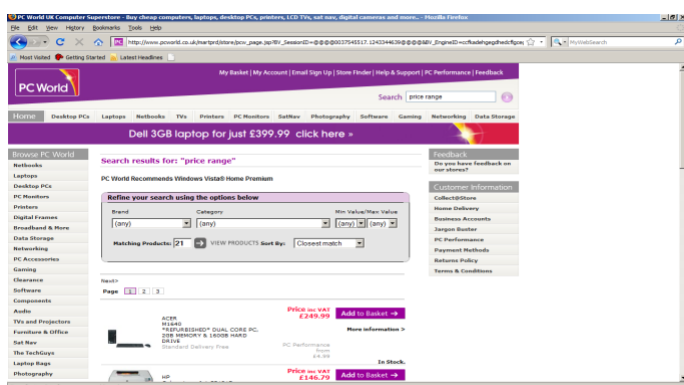




Attributes: PC World also segmented its different offers according to different specifications of the products, such as sometimes customers like to purchase Laptop with different attributes related to the specific brands. They just put the specification on the window and their selected brand appears on the screen.



Customer Class: Sometimes the product or service is being segmented on the basis of customer class. That means that higher the income of the customers higher will be the product price range. The customer can choose the product according to his income and is easy to locate online, just put the desired price range and the number of option will be available to the customer. Below is the figure which clearly shows the price range that the customer is desired to spend.



Transactional facilities

This is the era of technology and as mentioned earlier each and every kind of business is adopting the technology in their everyday business use and with the help of this technology they are gaining and their business is growing day by day. Every business has its own transactional facilities. Customers can place an order very easily and it's convenient for the customers and so that the business is also finds it very simple and it will take no time and the transaction is being completed. There is no need of waiting to be attended.

The PC World is also using the transactional facilities with improved quality and very easy to use for the customers. If any of the customers is in need of some assistance he can easily communicate his message to the customer care team.

The account transactional facility is also available and it is very easy to use and also user friendly. The customer has to make an account with the PC World website and then the next step is to choose the product which may be a laptop or any other kind of the product. After choosing the product the next step is to look or check whether the product is available that mean is it in stock then the next step is for the payment. The payment is usually be made by the debit or credit card after then the product will be delivered in 4 to 5 days.

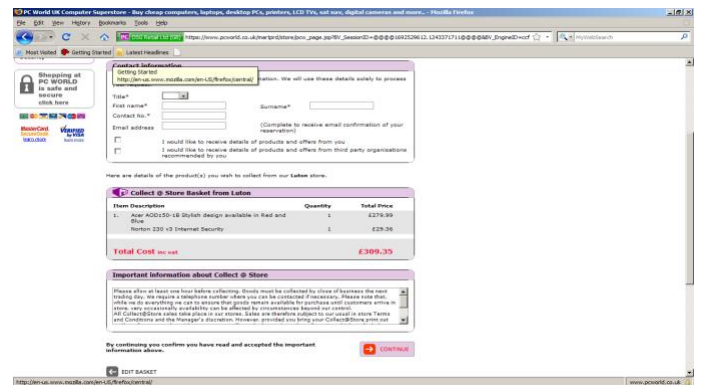
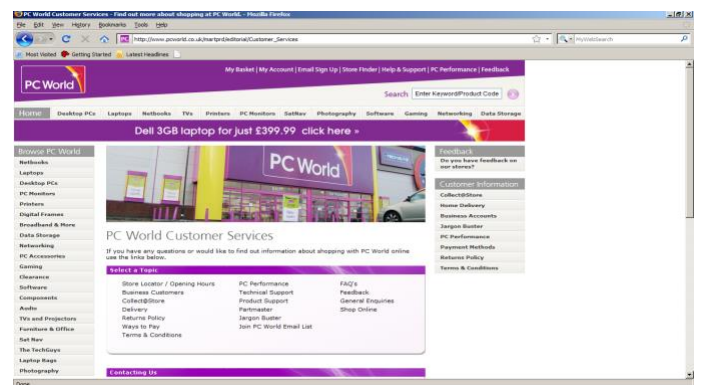
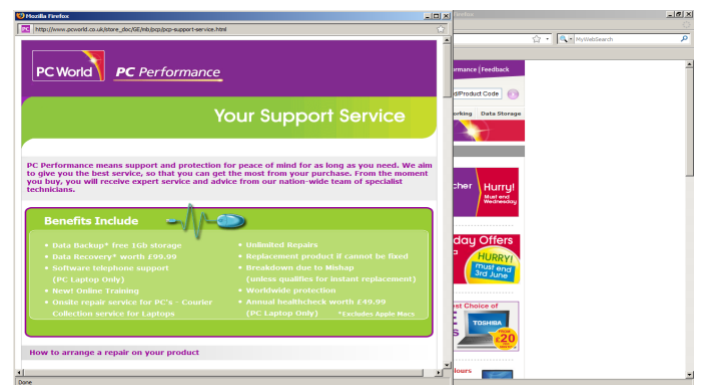
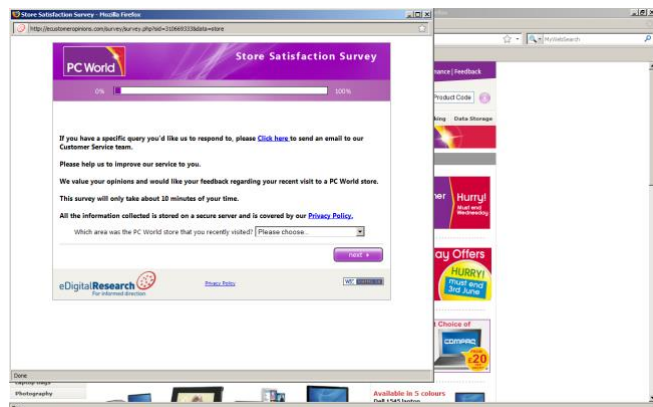


Figure shows the ordering and payment transaction for the selected product and the process is little lengthy but it is secure and no need to worry about the confidentiality of the customers account information. Customer can also send an e-mail to PC World about the trouble if they found in the product may the product is not working well and need some kind of the assistance. They can provide the online solution for the problems and there is no need of going to the branch physically. PC World has its own help and support which is open 24 hours a day and they provide the assistance through chat.



They also provide the customer care through their customer care centre, which will help their customers about the different queries and satisfy the customers.

PC World also has the feedback system and the PC World ask their customers for the feedback so that they can improve the services and quality of their services they provide to their potential customers.



Online and offline integration

As mentioned before that this is the era of technology and every business is using this technology to better facilitates its customers and through this get the maximum competitive edge in the market. Those businesses which are unable to cope with the environment they got failed and ultimately they washed out. Those businesses become successful in the market having the tendency to adopt the changing technology.

The online and offline integration plays a vital role in the betterment of the both the customers and as well as the business itself. In this section we'll check whether the business has the integration for both the online and offline operations. The business should use both online and offline operations.

The online and offline integration can be done in two way, it is from organization to customers and then from customers to organization. These two can be done if we look from the customers to the organization it says that how well the online operations complements the other multiple ways to customer care, satisfaction and from organization to customer how the online operation attracts the customers to the organization's new offers and how to attract new customers towards the organization.

If we look at to the PC world the following features are written below:
Multi channel Services – In which the buyer or the customer has the choices to interact with the PC World online or offline. The online operations are convenient when the physical location is far and can't be easily assessable.

Customer Care – Another feature is the customer care in which each of the customer can record his/her feedback either online or physical present at the store. It can also provide customers with the answer with their different queries.

Different Offers – PC World is continuously updates its website with different offers these offers are also valid offline, if the customer wants to purchase any item itself directly from the store he can do it easily because it is available at store.

Collect at Store – This feature is very attractive, the customer can book the product online and then on the next day he can physically collect the item from the store. This feature is helpful in a way that customer can have a look for the product other features physically and if the product satisfied the customer he can have it.

Recommendations

Internet has a considerably huge impact on the organization's main businesses and changed the way of the businesses altogether and introduced new ways and means of doing a successful business. This technology also changed the customer preferences and expectations and most of the customers get attractive towards different options available and get the option which is most appropriate one. The quality is the main issue and the most of the customers are quality conscious, this is the big challenge for the organizations that they have to manufacture the product in high quality and with lower minimum price, so that they will get more and more customers. This trend is changing the way of organizations doing businesses and the competition is getting stronger and stronger day by day and most of the weaker organization comes to an end in their business. The organization like PC World they are doing the same kind of business and their online operations are very much identical and are same to the maximum extent. They should have something different for their potential customers so that they can have the competitive edge and they can better survive in the most competitive environment. Following are some suggestion for the PC World:

Website – The website is very simple, it must have some attractive and eye catching content in it that can attract the potential customer in the first visit and he can look into different kind of other product.

Incentive – PC World should have some incentive for the existing customers, such as if they purchase the item second time they have the discount of say 10 percent, and if they introduce new customer/friend to PC World they have the discount of 10 percent. That is also be appearing in the website online.

Delivery Services – PC World's product delivery to their customers is little slow as compared to Staples. They delivered the product next day, sometimes the customers is in need of a product very urgently so that the PC World should have that kind of feature added in their website.

Online and Offline Offers – There are some items that are not available offline PC World should have the proper integration between the offline and online services.

Security Measures – As this issue is very common and all the banks can provide the maximum security and safety to their customers. PC World should provide helpful tips to their customers who are doing their transaction online, so that the safety and security should be maintained in all situations.

About Us – There is no link available on the PC World website which provides the history and all the material related to the PC World's basic introduction. That is must for each kind of the organizations.

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