

VALUE PROPOSITION, DES7060

# Apple

By Adam Islaam







**“Get closer than ever  
to your customers.  
So close that you  
tell them what they  
need well before they  
realise it themselves.”**

– Steve Jobs



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## Executive summary

Apple’s brand identity is synonymous with simplicity, innovation and user-centric design. The company has successfully created a cohesive ecosystem that seamlessly integrates its products, fostering customer loyalty and brand advocacy. Apple’s commitment to providing intuitive and aesthetically pleasing products has positioned it as a premium and aspirational brand in the consumer electronics industry (Apple, 2019).

Despite its success and with over 40 stores located in the UK (Apple Newsroom, 2023), Apple faces challenges in the physical realm of retail particularly in the navigation of its stores, commonly known as wayfinding. This value proposition explores how Apple’s brand positioning can be enhanced through the application of design thinking principles to address wayfinding challenges and access to specialists in its physical stores (see Appendix A/B/C).

With competitors such as Google and Microsoft consistently introducing new products to the market, Apple may be at risk of losing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Apple Inc. 2022).

**KEYWORDS:**

- Design thinking
- Consumer satisfaction
- Human-centred
- Wayfinding
- Empathy
- One-on-one support

# Brand audit

Apple is a global technology giant founded in 1976 by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne and has become synonymous with innovation, design excellence and a premium user experience.



Apple has successfully built a strong and distinctive brand that resonates with consumers worldwide. The brand’s commitment to innovation, premium design and a seamless user experience has positioned it as a leader in the technology industry. The consistent brand identity, effective communication strategies and a focus on customer satisfaction contribute to Apple’s enduring success in the market. As the technology landscape continues to evolve, Apple’s ability to maintain its brand appeal and adapt to changing consumer expectations will be key to its continued success. The brand’s emphasis on cutting-edge features, performance and user experience sets it apart in the competitive tech industry. Apple’s premium pricing strategy positions its products as aspirational and exclusive. Despite the higher price points, consumers associate Apple with quality and prestige (Apple, 2022).

The introduction of groundbreaking products like the iPhone, iPad, and MacBook has consistently reinforced this image. Net sales of Apple’s products and services has increased year on year, iPhone is consistently Apple’s best selling product.

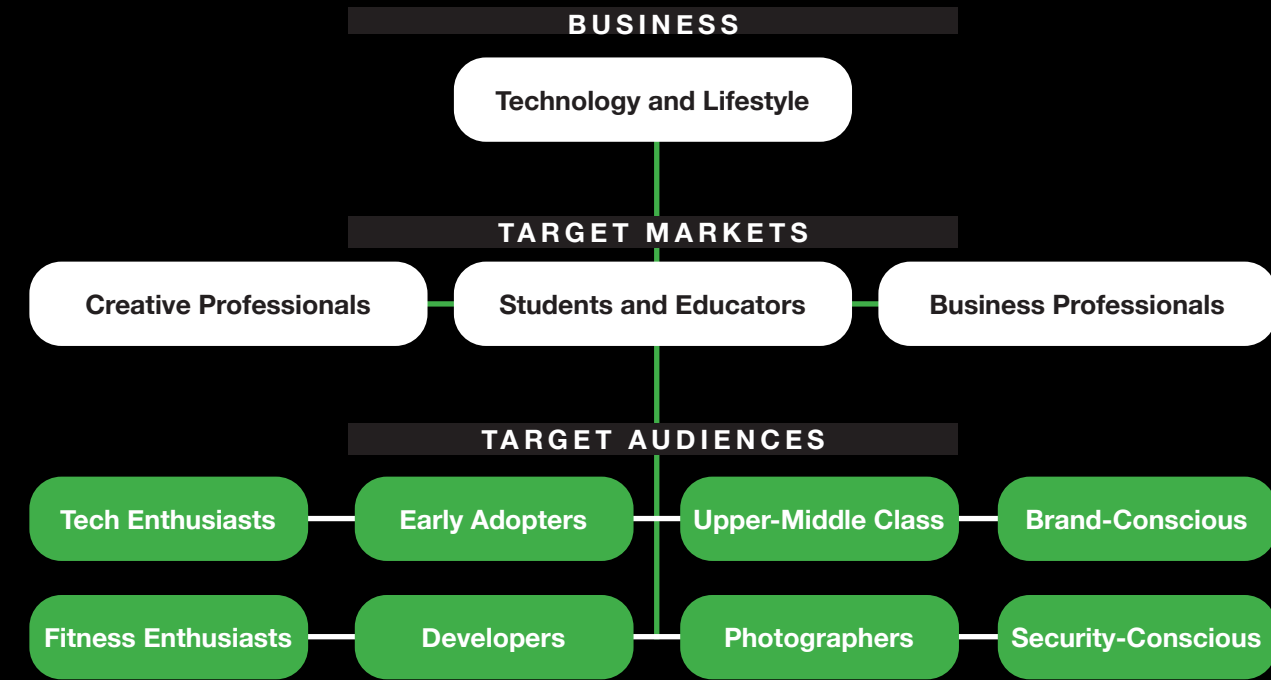
	2022	2021	2020
iPhone	\$205,489	\$191,973	\$137,781
Mac	40,177	35,190	28,622
iPad	29,292	31,862	23,724
Wearables, Home and Accessories	41,241	38,367	30,620
Services	78,129	68,425	53,768

Figure 2: Apple (2022) "Product new sales"

Figure 3: Apple (2019) "Business: Audience and markets". Influenced by Ropo, J.p. (2009) Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).

## BRAND POSITIONING

Apple enjoys a high level of brand loyalty. Customers often exhibit a strong attachment to Apple products, frequently upgrading to newer models. With a diverse product range, Apple has a broad target audience that spans various demographics. Apple’s target audience and market can generally be characterised as follows:



## BRAND EQUITY

Apple’s brand equity, based on Keller’s Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model (2001), is very high. The company has successfully built a strong brand identity, meaning and resonance which contribute to customer loyalty and advocacy.

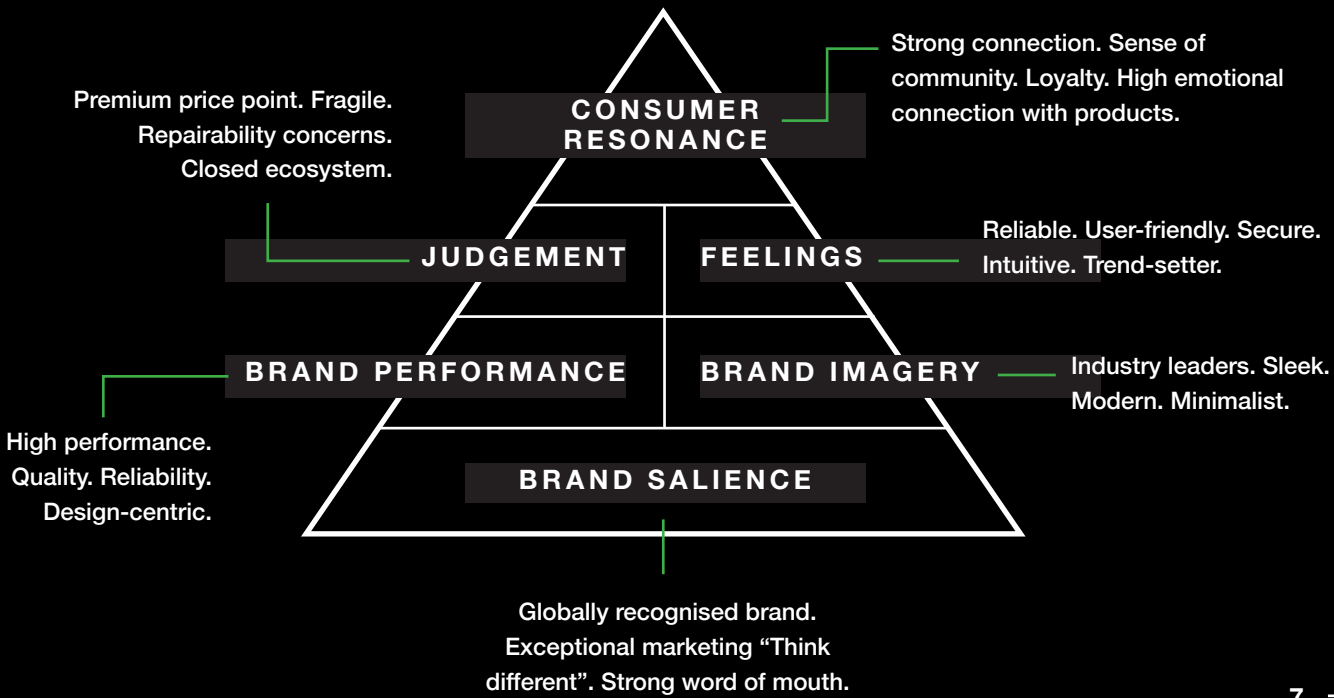


Figure 4: Keller (2021) "Customer Based Brand Equity model". Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).



# Competitors

Apple faces competition in various product categories, and its competitors vary depending on the specific market (Tankovska, 2019). Apple’s primary competitors in different sectors:

**SMARTPHONES:**

**Samsung:** A major competitor in the smartphone market with a wide range of Android devices.

**Huawei:** Competes globally with a strong presence in Asia and Europe.

**Google:** Known for its Pixel smartphones and Android operating system.

**TABLETS:**

**Samsung:** Offers a range of Android tablets.

**Microsoft:** Surface tablets, especially in the productivity-oriented tablet market.

**LAPTOPS AND COMPUTERS:**

**Microsoft:** Competes with its Surface lineup of laptops and tablets.

**Dell, HP, and Lenovo:** Major competitors in the PC market.

**ASUS and Acer:** Compete in both the PC and laptop markets.

**WEARABLES:**

**Samsung:** Competes with its Galaxy Watch and Galaxy Fit devices.

**Fitbit (now part of Google):** A key player in the fitness tracker and smartwatch market.

**MUSIC AND STREAMING SERVICES:**

**Spotify:** Competes with Apple Music in the music streaming industry.

**Amazon Music:** Offers a streaming service as well as integration with Amazon Echo devices.

**Google Play Music and YouTube Music:** Competitors in the music streaming space.

**SMART SPEAKERS:**

**Amazon (Echo devices with Alexa):** Competes with Apple’s HomePod.

**Google (Google Home and Nest devices):** A competitor in the smart speaker market.

**SOFTWARE AND OPERATING SYSTEMS:**

**Microsoft:** Competes with Apple’s macOS and Windows operating systems.

**Google:** Competes with Android and Chrome OS.

**ECOSYSTEM AND SERVICES:**

**Google:** Competes in terms of cloud services, search, and various online applications.

**Microsoft:** Rivals in terms of productivity software, cloud services, and operating systems.

**MAIN COMPETITORS**

Apple operates in fiercely competitive markets with aggressive pricing, rapid product cycles, evolving standards and imitative rivals. Price sensitivity among consumers and businesses add to the challenges, exerting constant downward pressure on gross margins (Apple, 2022).

**SAMSUNG**

Samsung Experience Stores: Samsung, a major competitor of Apple, also has retail stores where they showcase and sell their products.



Microsoft Stores: Microsoft operates retail stores that sell a variety of hardware and software products, including their Surface devices and Windows-based PCs.



Google Store: While Google primarily sells its products through online channels, it also has physical retail spaces, such as pop-up stores or spaces within larger retailers, where customers can experience and purchase Google devices.

**MARKET POSITIONING**

As of 2022, Apple still dominates the global tech industry by revenue, followed by Samsung and then Google (Statistica, 2022).

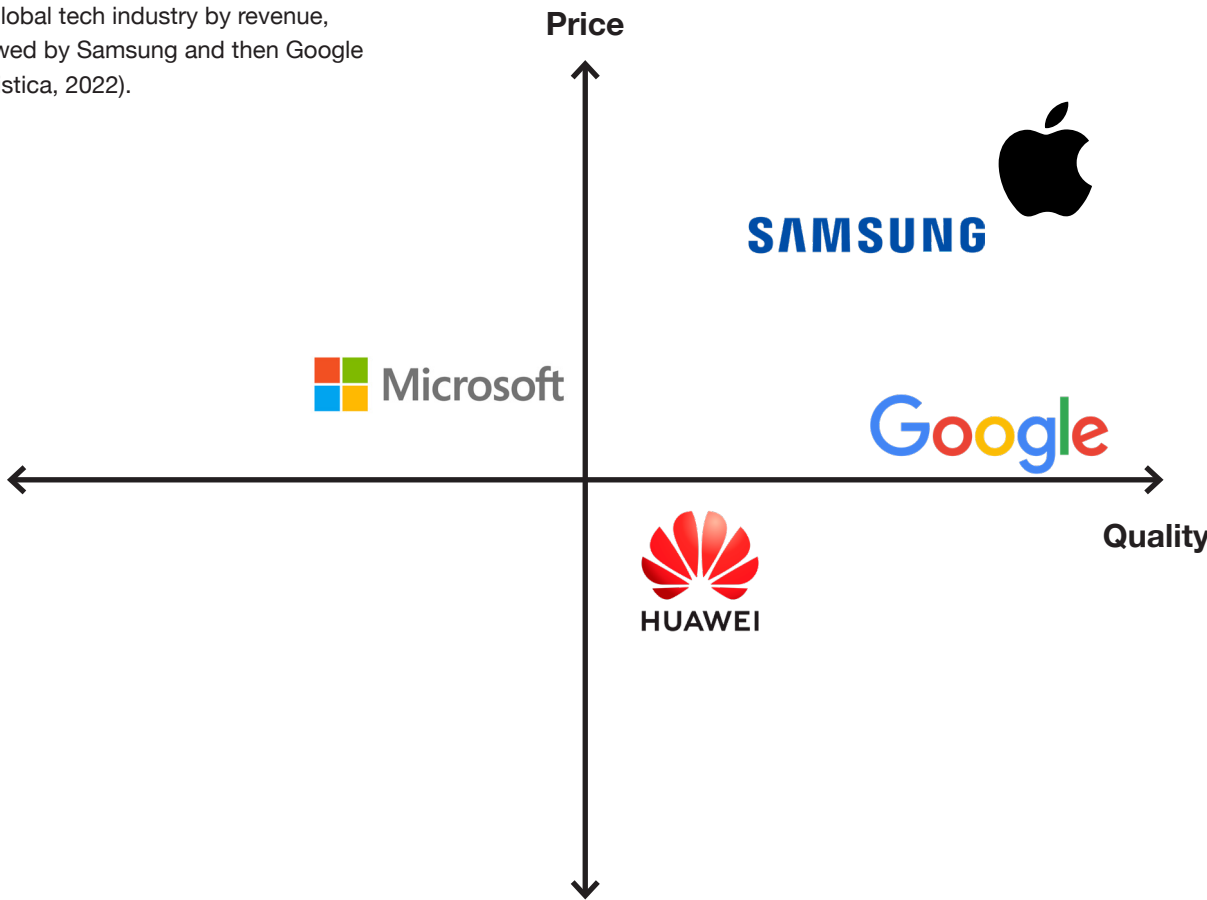
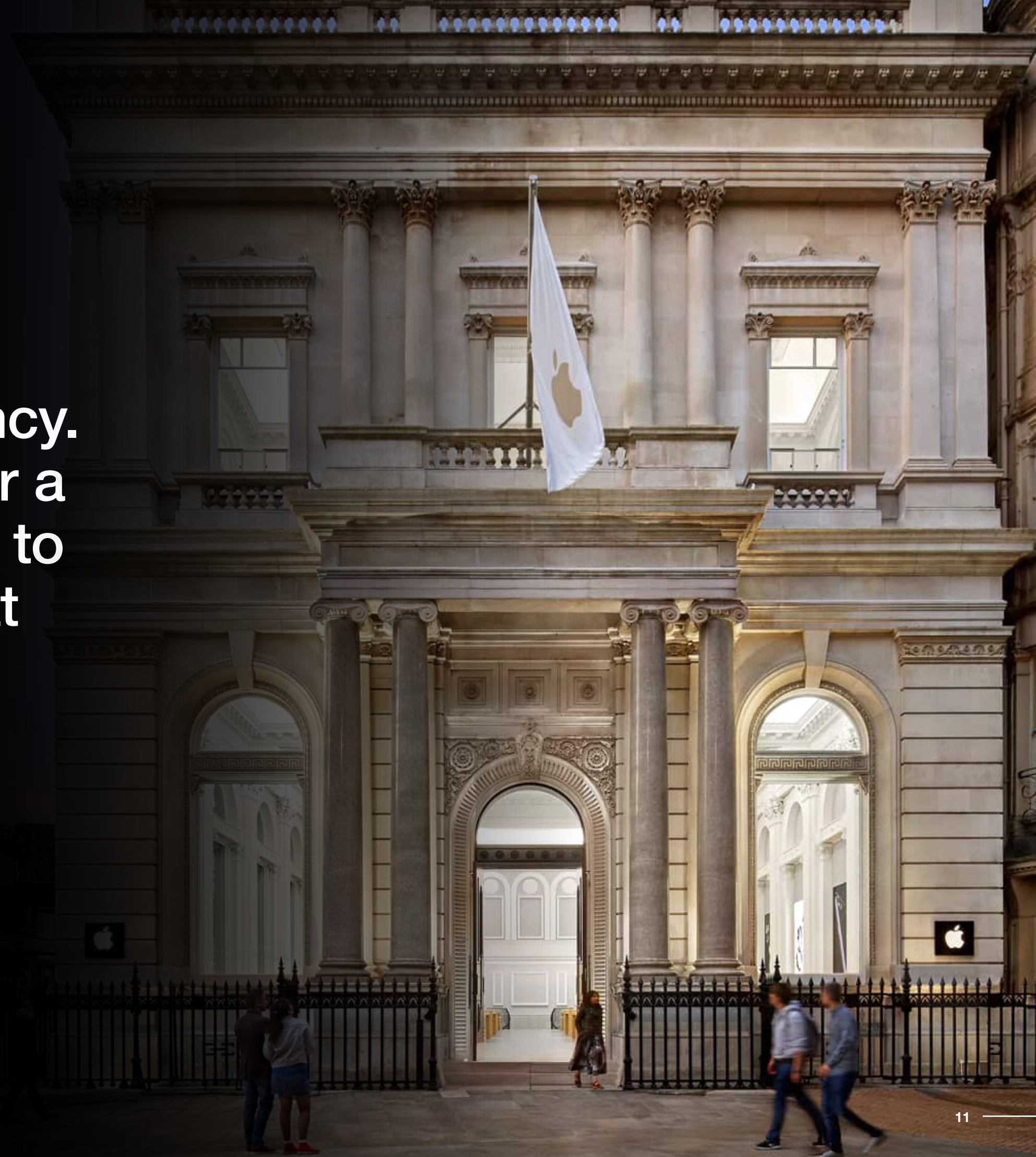


Figure 5: IBM (2019) “Apple Brand Positioning”. Adapted by Islaam, A (2023)



**“People like consistency.  
Whether it’s a store or a  
restaurant, they want to  
come in and see what  
you are famous for.”**

– Mickey Drexler, Former CEO and current Chairman, J. Crew Group





# Apple store: Battersea 2023

One of Apple’s most recent stores is in Battersea Power Station, London. Deirdre O’Brien, Apple’s senior vice president of Retail describes the store as “a place where the community can come together to discover all of Apple’s incredible products and services, and we’re proud to be expanding to serve even more customers” (Apple Newsroom, 2023).

## DESIGN

The materials and design choices when creating the Battersea store aligns well with the innovative and environmental values of Apple’s carbon neutrality mission by 2030 (see Figure 7. Apple, 2023). The store is designed around accessibility and universal design principles including assorted table heights, wider routes around product displays for wheelchair users and acoustic clarity. The wood used for the product displays is harvested sustainably and the Battersea stores runs on 100% renewable energy (Apple Newsroom, 2023).

Missing elements from the physical and environmental qualities is the psychological, intangible, user journey whilst in a typical Apple store such as; ease of access to a specialist, service quality, ease of finding and comparing products, wayfinding, emotions and time spent in store (Halvorsrud, R., Kvale, K. and Følstad, A. 2016). These aspects of the customer experience will be further explored on page 17.



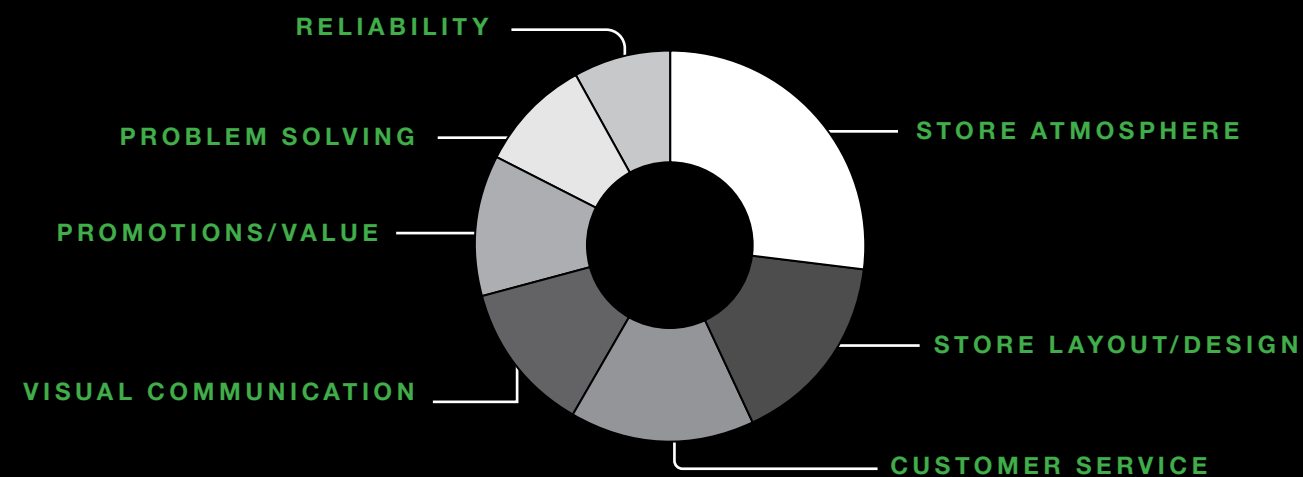
Figure 8: Apple (2023) “Battersea store”.



# The impact of store layouts

Priyanka Singh, et al. (2014) conducted a study to depict the psychological effects of store layouts on a random selection of 162 retail customers across the United States (92 female/70 male) with the median age of 35.

They found that there are 7 dominant factors to customer satisfaction concerning tangible and intangible elements of a retail experience:



1. **Store Atmospherics:** components of this factor include window displays, equipment and fixtures, among others.
2. **Store Layout/Store Design:** the principal element within this factor is the planned planogram.
3. **Customer Service:** employee knowledge about the product, prompt service and individual attention. The study highlights the impact of prompt service and employee knowledge on customer buying patterns.
4. **Visual Communication:** point of sale and point of purchase and category navigation. The study underscores that proper signage and merchandise categories serves as silent sales assistants.
5. **Promotions/Value for Money:** comprises brand and price point.
6. **Problem Solving/Policy:** such as returns, exchanges and grievance handling, contribute significantly.
7. **Reliability:** providing services as promised, influencing purchase decisions.

Figure 9: Priyanka Singh, et al. (2014) "7 dominant factors". Adapted by Islaam, A. (2023)

Donovan and Rossiter (1982) suggest that the enjoyment derived from a physical retail experience correlates with increased shopping duration and repeat visits. Customer satisfaction is defined by the fulfillment of expectations, fostering a positive relationship with the brand but also the creation of an emotional connection through an engaging, compelling and consistent context can foster store and retailer loyalty (Baker et al. 1992).

The psychological model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) outlines how individuals respond to specific environments. According to their proposition, a shopper's behavior is shaped by the surrounding environment with the store ambiance influencing emotions and mood and customer service subsequently impacting the shopper's behavioural responses. Mehrabian and Russel (1974) linked environmental stimuli and approach-avoidance behavior through three emotions: pleasure (P), arousal (A), and dominance (D) or PAD. They argued that sensory variables, information rate and individual differences in store assistance and design can influence people's reactions to the environment, determining shopping duration, purchasing and mood.

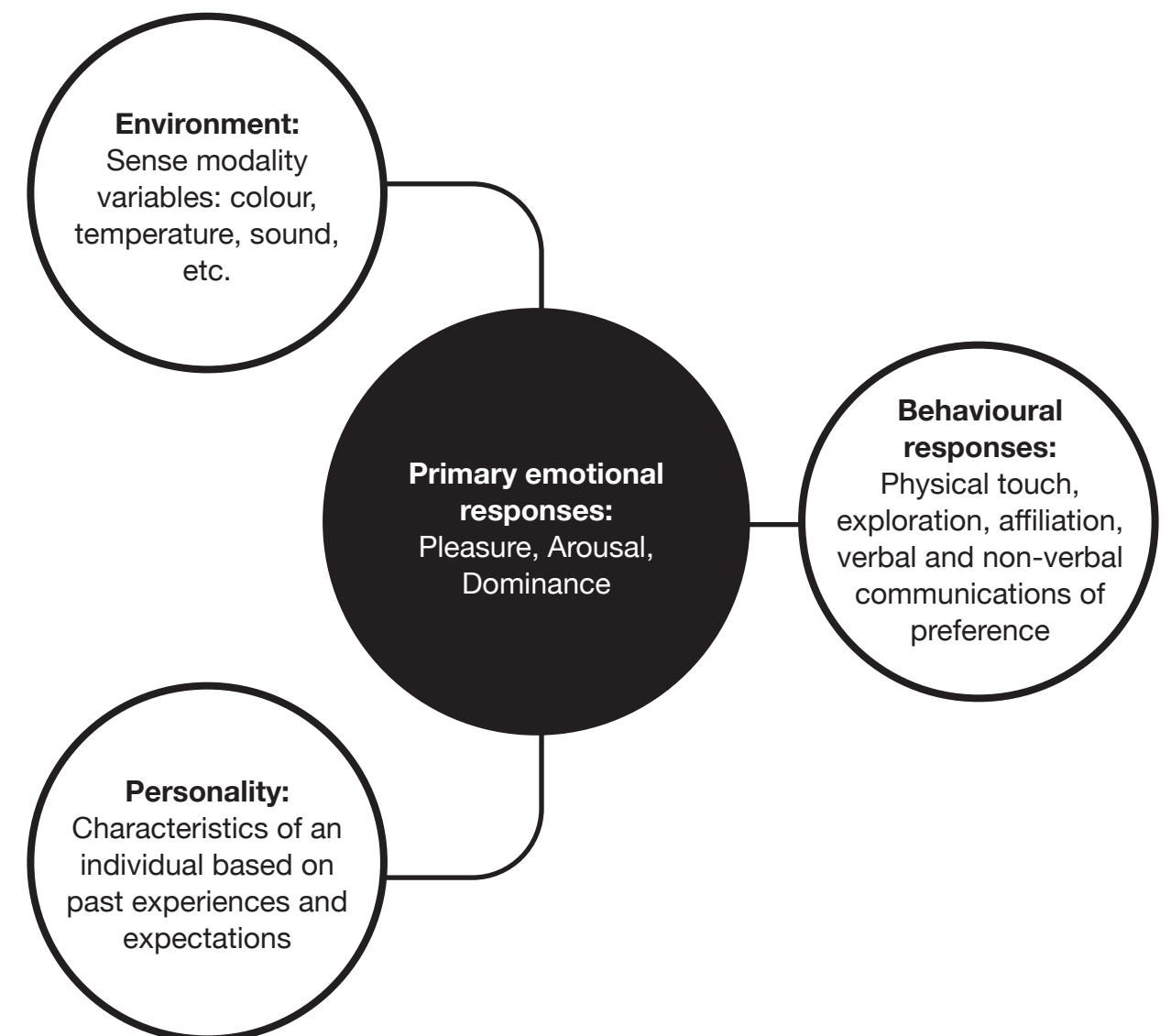


Figure 10: Mehrabian and Russell (1974) "Emotional response, PAD". Adapted by Islaam, A. (2023)





Figure 13: Islaam, A (2023) "Customer journey map".

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY OF BUYING AN IPHONE

Conducted December 11, 2023 at New Street, Birmingham (see Appendix A).

What does a customer journey visit look like when attempting to purchase an iPhone from a Apple retail store?

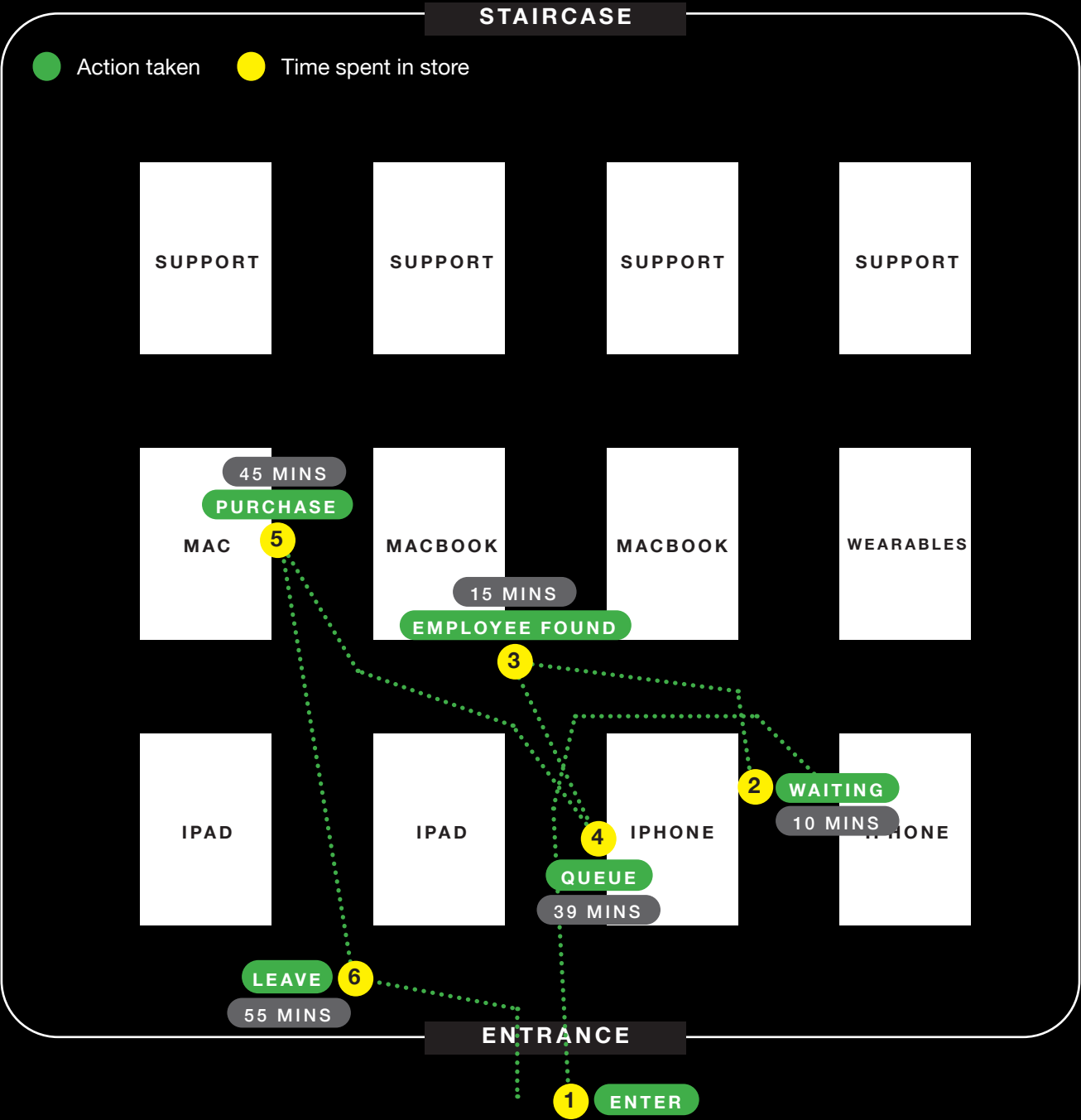


Figure 11: Apple (2023) "Battersea store".

## The opportunity

Despite its success in the digital realm, Apple faces challenges in the physical space of its retail stores. Gaining the attention of specialists and signage within Apple Stores have occasionally perplexed customers, leading to a less-than-ideal shopping experience. Navigating through the store can also be challenging, affecting the overall customer experience (See Appendix B).

The overall in-store duration amounted to 55 minutes. Securing an iPhone purchase proved to be a straightforward process once the assistance of a specialist was engaged. However, garnering their attention presented a challenge as all specialists on the store floor seemed occupied with existing customers, newly assigned clients, engaging in conversations among themselves or surrounded by numerous customers seeking assistance. The overall experience was less than enjoyable, given the store's bustling atmosphere.

SURVEY RESULTS

A survey was undertaken to examine the thoughts, emotions and process of a subset of individuals who have purchased, or collected, a product in an Apple store within the last 24 months. The objective of analysing this information is to identify connections among various segments of the population at a particular point in time (Schramm, 1971). Please refer to Appendix B for detailed results.

Main takeaways (11 total respondents):

- 50% of purchases were iPhone. 21% Mac. 21% Wearables. 7% iPad.
- 36% who purchased online to collect in store had a easier and quicker time purchasing than those who did not.
- The ease of finding the desired product was high. 4/5.
- The overall usefulness of the store layout and signage was low. 2/5
- 91% responded they did interact with a Specialist during their visit.
- The ease of finding a specialist was low. 2/5.
- The overall mood was low. 2/5
- Factors to influence a return visit include: Clearer signage, easier access to specialists and a central system.

*“I purchased online to collect in store, wanted to be in and out as I was on my lunch break. I spent a little longer in there than I wanted to as all specialists seemed to have their hands full.”*

*“It was very hard to buy the watch once I had stood next to it for around 10 minutes, is that the normal process?”*

*“Purchased online to pick up from the store, was in and out fairly quickly. It would be easier if there was specific signage for different sections of the store but I was greated and shown the right person to talk to to finalise my purchase.”*

Customer experiences are positive when a customer is proactively approached. Notably, 36% experienced a smoother online-to-store purchase process indicating the effectiveness of this method. While locating desired products received a high rating (4/5), the store’s overall layout and signage scored lower (2/5), aligning with sentiments expressed in participant quotes. Interaction with specialists was prevalent (91%), but the ease of finding them received a lower rating (2/5). Overall mood and satisfaction were rated at 2/5, suggesting areas for improvement.

Figure 12: Phadermod, B. et al. (2019) “SWOT Analysis”. Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Products can be handled and explored easily before purchase.	Minimalist store layout leaves customers perplexed.
Apple stores are seen as innovative, clean and minimalist.	Hard to gain the attention of an Apple Specialist/employee.
	Lack of signage to know where to find a product or support.
	Purchasing can not be done traditionally i.e. pick up a product, goto a cash desk.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Knowledgable specialists already exist. How do we make it easier on them when dealing with multiple customers?	Customer frustrations could lead to a decreased time in store or change in mood.
Most Apple customers are upgrading or replacing. Can we utilise existing software to make the physical, customer journey easier?	Other smart phone and technology stores are less crowded and employees tend to approach the customers.

Apple’s retail strategy boasts strengths in hands-on product exploration and innovative store designs. However, challenges include a minimalist layout causing customer confusion, difficulty engaging Apple Specialists and a lack of clear signage (Priyanka Singh, et al. 2014). Opportunities lie in better specialist support and leveraging existing software for a streamlined customer journey.

Potential threats include customer frustrations impacting in-store time and mood (Mehrabian and Russell. 1974), as well as competition from less crowded, more approachable rival stores. To maintain its retail dominance, Apple should address these challenges by enhancing store navigation, optimising specialist support and leveraging technology. This will ensure a seamless and satisfying customer experience.



QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

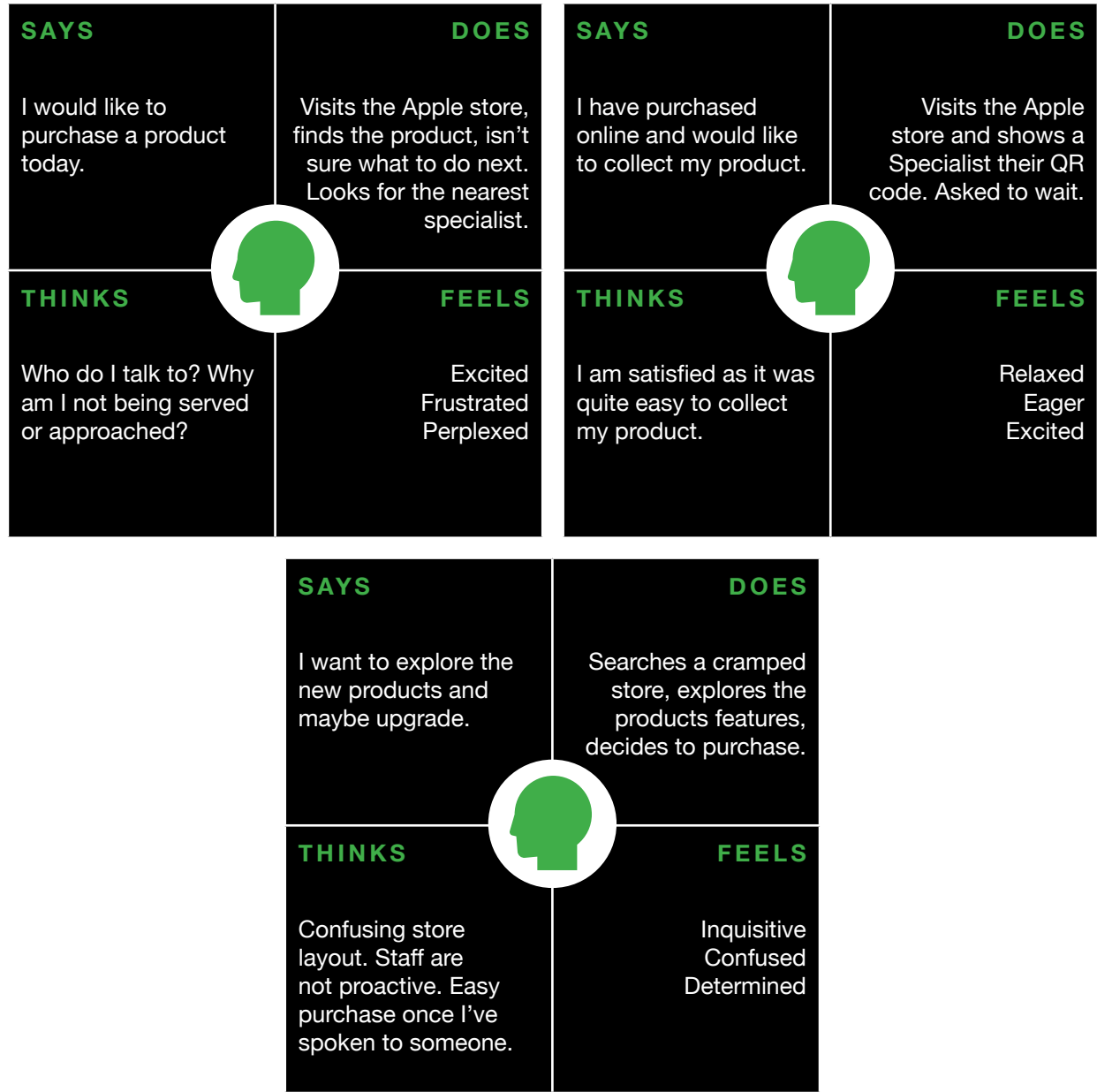
Structured interviews have been conducted with consumers leaving 2 Apple Stores in Birmingham, UK, to gain a deeper understanding of individual opinions and experiences (Russel & Gregory, 2003). The results have been categorised into inductive thematic analysis using general statements which can be found in Appendix C. This will determine the main themes, patterns and pain points from my interviews (Nowell et al., 2017).



The questionnaire revealed mixed experiences at the Apple Stores in Birmingham. Customers highlighted issues with store layout, staff assistance and a lack of noticeable innovations. Suggestions for improvement included better product signage and more interactive displays. Recommendations varied, with some conditional and others favoring online purchases for convenience. Addressing these concerns could enhance the overall customer experience at the Apple Store.

Figure 14: Islaam, A (2023) "Thematic analysis".

EMPATHY MAPPING



Empathy mapping enables the description of users' intangible characteristics. The primary objective of the map is to foster empathy with users, allowing the solution to gain a profound understanding of user needs and increased awareness of their genuine requirements. (Gray, D., et al. 2010). See Appendix C for full transcripts.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of digital triumphs, Apple's physical retail stores grapple with challenges that impact the customer experience. Issues in engaging specialists and navigating the store create hurdles, compromising the seamless shopping experience Apple is renowned for. This overview highlights the struggle with attention-grabbing and signage confusion, prompting a closer examination of opportunities for innovation.

Figure 15: Islaam, A (2023) "Empathy mapping".



# Innovation

The application of design principles to value proposition and strategy significantly enhances the success of innovative initiatives. According to the Design Value Index by the Design Management Institute and Motiv Strategies, companies with design-led approaches have outperformed the S&P 500 by an impressive 211% over a 10-year period (DMI, 2015).

Figure 16: Apple (2023) "Manchester store".

## The innovation process

The redefinition of value through the design thinking approach starts by focusing on people rather than products. It aims to identify the emotional, cultural, functional and social values inherent in a brand's DNA or those that can be incorporated, aligning them with the present and evolving values of consumers (Mootee, I. 2013).

In a rapidly changing retail landscape, Apple has the opportunity to elevate its already exceptional in-store experience by addressing key pain points. We are more connected than ever hence why taking a human-centric approach to innovation through design thinking is crucial to creating solutions based on the opportunity presented previously.

### VALUE PROPOSITION CANVAS

The Value Proposition Canvas is a strategic framework that facilitates the development and refinement of a business's value proposition. Divided into the Customer Profile and Value Map, it systematically explores customer needs, pains and gains, aligning them with corresponding product or service features (Strategyzer. 2023). Triangulating all previous opportunities to gain further clarity on Apple's retail customer-centric value creation will enable Apple to clearly and concisely better understand its audience's current pains.

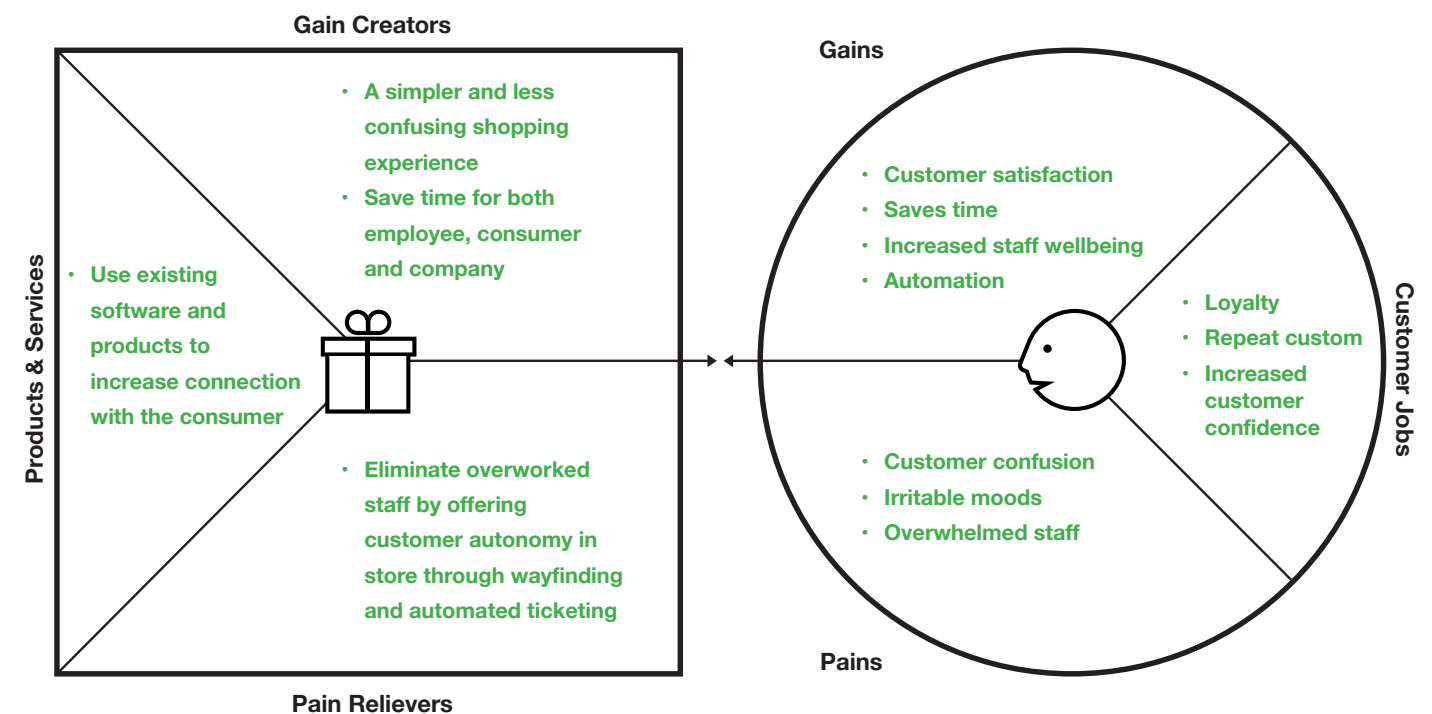
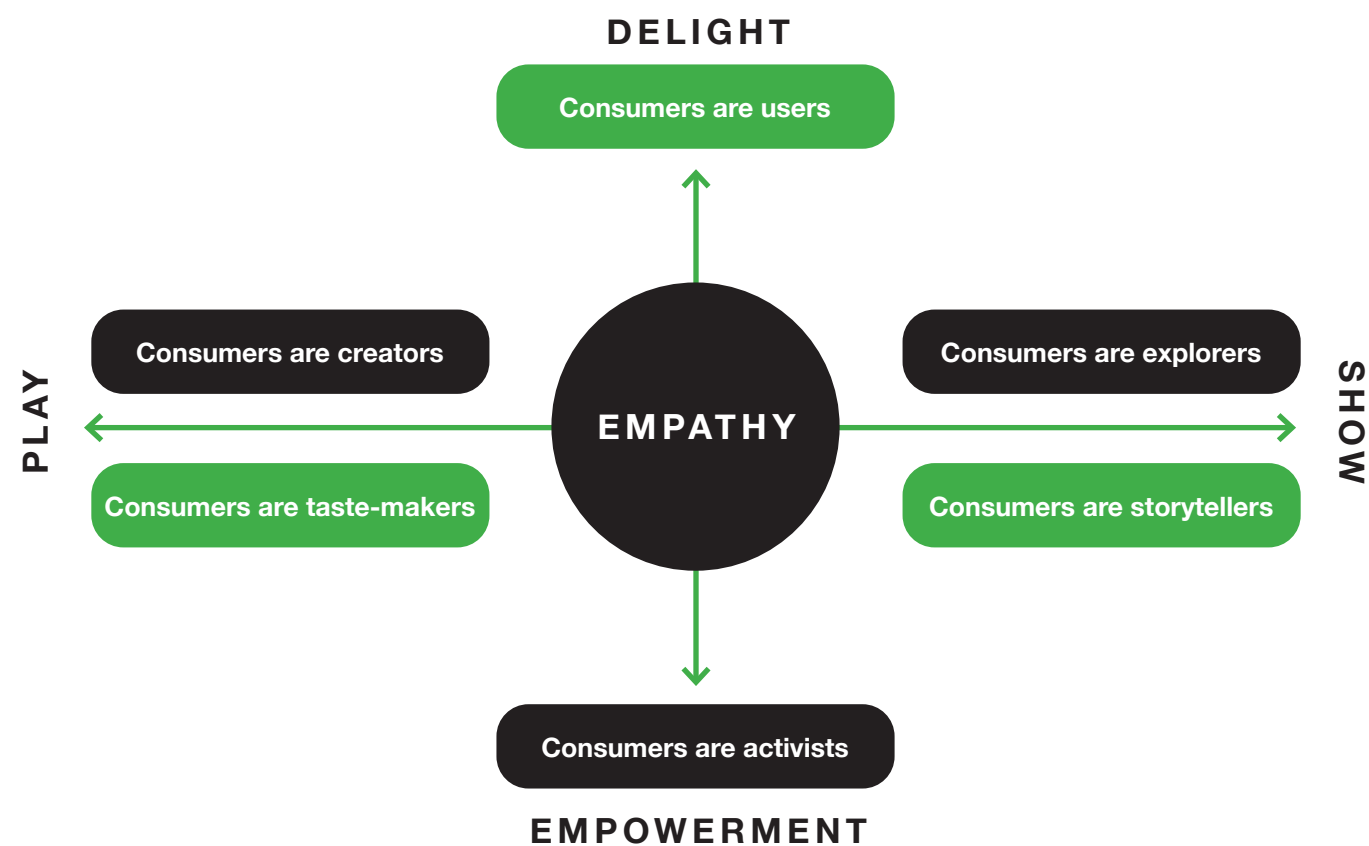


Figure 17: Strategyzer (2023) "Value Proposition Canvas" Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).



## EXPERIENCE DESIGN

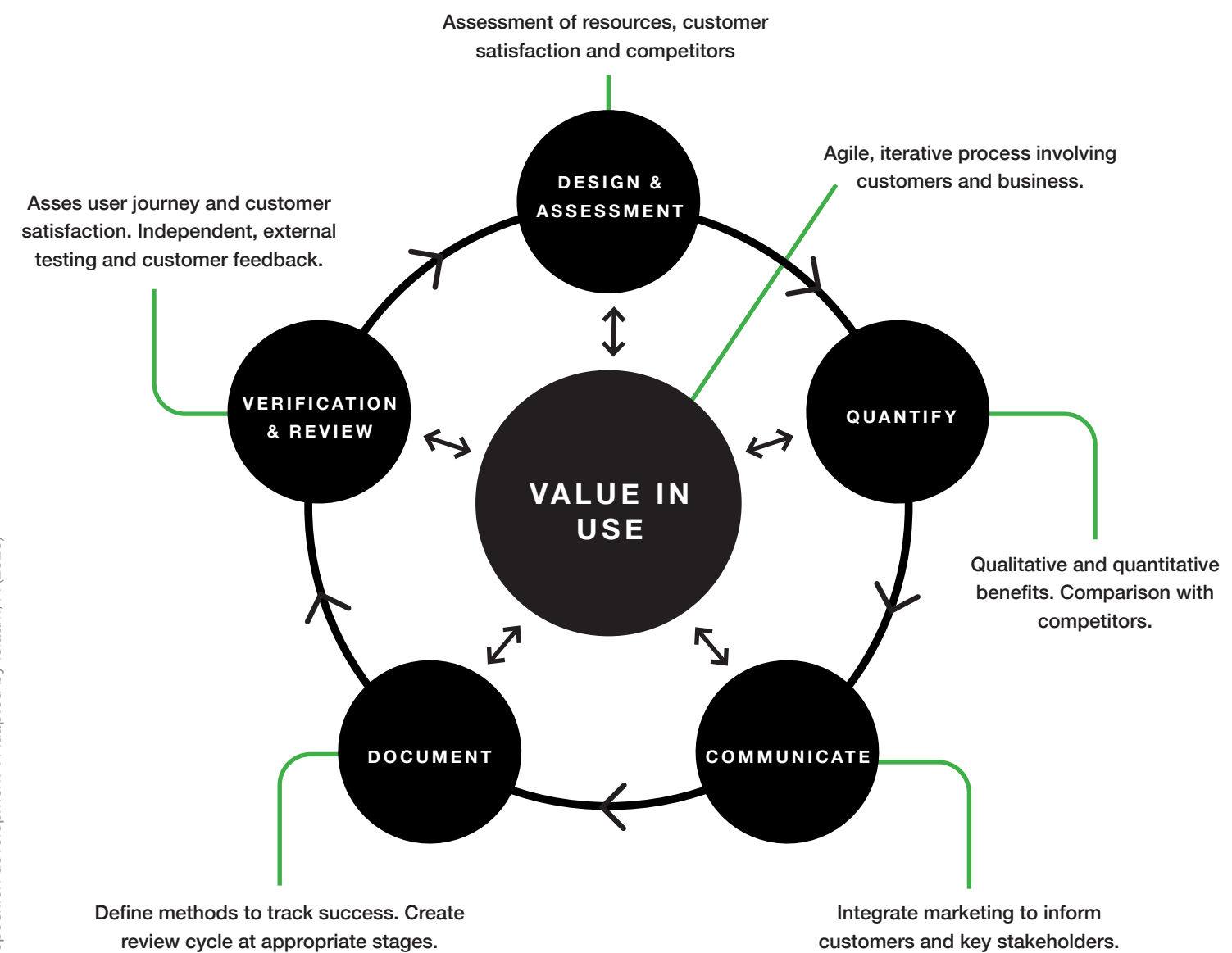
As competition tightens Apple's distinctions from rivals in price, features and design has narrowed. Design thinking seeks to exploit these nuances, turning them into a innovative competitive edge. When emotions come into play, key questions arise: When does the emotional value of an Apple experience outweigh its products? How far does emotional value go before diminishing returns? What's the significance of the emotional premium, and can we infuse emotive elements into Apple's customer journey cost-effectively? (Mootee, I. 2013). Much like The psychological model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) we can examine where Apple currently sit (see page 15).



Experiences vary widely, ranging from routine tasks executed swiftly to complex, emotionally charged endeavors. To maximise impact, it's crucial to discern and prioritise efforts in the elements of an experience that blend both rational and emotional aspects, where intensity and stakes are at their peak (Pullman, M.E. and Gross, M.A. 2004).

Apple are leaders in the Play and Show aspects of empathetic experience design but in the pursuit of effective experience design, pinpointing key triggers in Delight and Empowerment is paramount. These triggers encompass visuals, symbols, assistance, interaction and sounds.

## DESIGN STRATEGY




The comprehensive framework comprises five stages that depict the development and molding of Value Propositions through design, interaction, learning, evaluation, feedback and review. Apple's brand values and track record of agile and innovative technology means this framework will compliment the creation and implementation of enhanced customer experiences within Apple's retail stores. Emphasising a transition from static offerings to dynamic, reciprocal and co-created enhanced value-in-use (Payne et al., 2020).

Interaction with stakeholders and customers is paramount as well as a on-going review of how competitors are finding solutions to similar issues. This mutual learning facilitates the exchange of feedback among Apple, its customers and other crucial stakeholders (Frow et al., 2014)

Figure 18: Mootee, I (2013) "Design thinking for strategic innovation". Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).

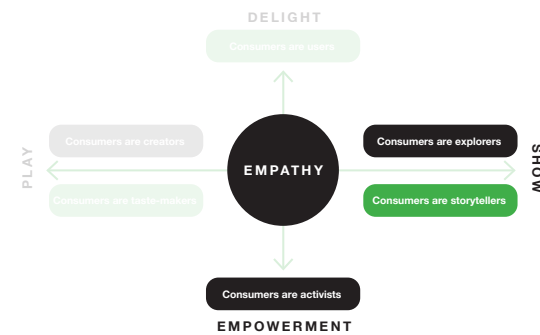
Figure 19: Payne, A., et al. (2020). "Toward a comprehensive framework of value proposition development". Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).



“Price is what  
you pay.  
Value is what  
you get.”

– Idris Montee, Design Thinking for Strategic Innovation. (2013)





# Solutions

## WAYFINDING

Based on the study conducted by Priyanka Singh, et al. (2014) which focuses on the psychological effects of store layouts on customer satisfaction, particularly in retail environments, we can leverage the opportunities defined by Apple customers (see page 20).

Generally, Apple customers express positive sentiments regarding the design and structure of their physical stores. However, a few customers found themselves bewildered and slightly overwhelmed by the bustling crowds within the store. This heightened foot traffic often posed challenges in navigating the store layout, with product displays conveniently positioned just above waist height, making it somewhat challenging to discern specific zones and their associated products. Notably, garnering the assistance of a staff member proved to be a recurring challenge in such bustling environments.

### Identified factors for wayfinding in Apple stores are:

- Clearer markers for categorised product zones
- Clearer identifiers for different types of staff (support, specialist, sales etc.)

Ensuring that there are available specialists at every desk. Support, specialist and sales should be defined through different coloured uniforms to assist customers with identifying whom to approach, giving the customer autonomy within the store. This can be heightened by coloured zones which would influence the first four psychological effects of Apple's customer journey: atmosphere, layout, service and visual communication (see page 14).



Figure 21: Etsy Apple uniform. (2023) Adapted by Islaam, A (2023)

Positioning product displays above their respective zones streamlines the Apple store shopping experience, aiding customers in finding items effortlessly and serving as a dynamic showcase for new products. Aligned with Idris Mootee's Empathy Matrix (2013), this empowers Apple consumers to explore various products or head directly to their desired section, including services like technical support (as indicated by the black banner at the back of the store mockup seen below).

This response to customer feedback addresses confusion and difficulty in identifying products in bustling stores (see page 21). Maintaining minimalistic displays aligns with Apple's clean branding, aiming to improve the shopping experience in line with their design and community philosophy. However, a potential challenge is the cost associated with producing and installing banners for all stores.

Considering Apple's Environmental Strategy 2030 (2023), it is advisable to explore digital screens as an alternative to traditional displays. This not only supports sustainability by reducing material usage but also allows for easy updates. The overarching goal remains to enhance the shopping experience while upholding Apple's commitment to environmental responsibility.



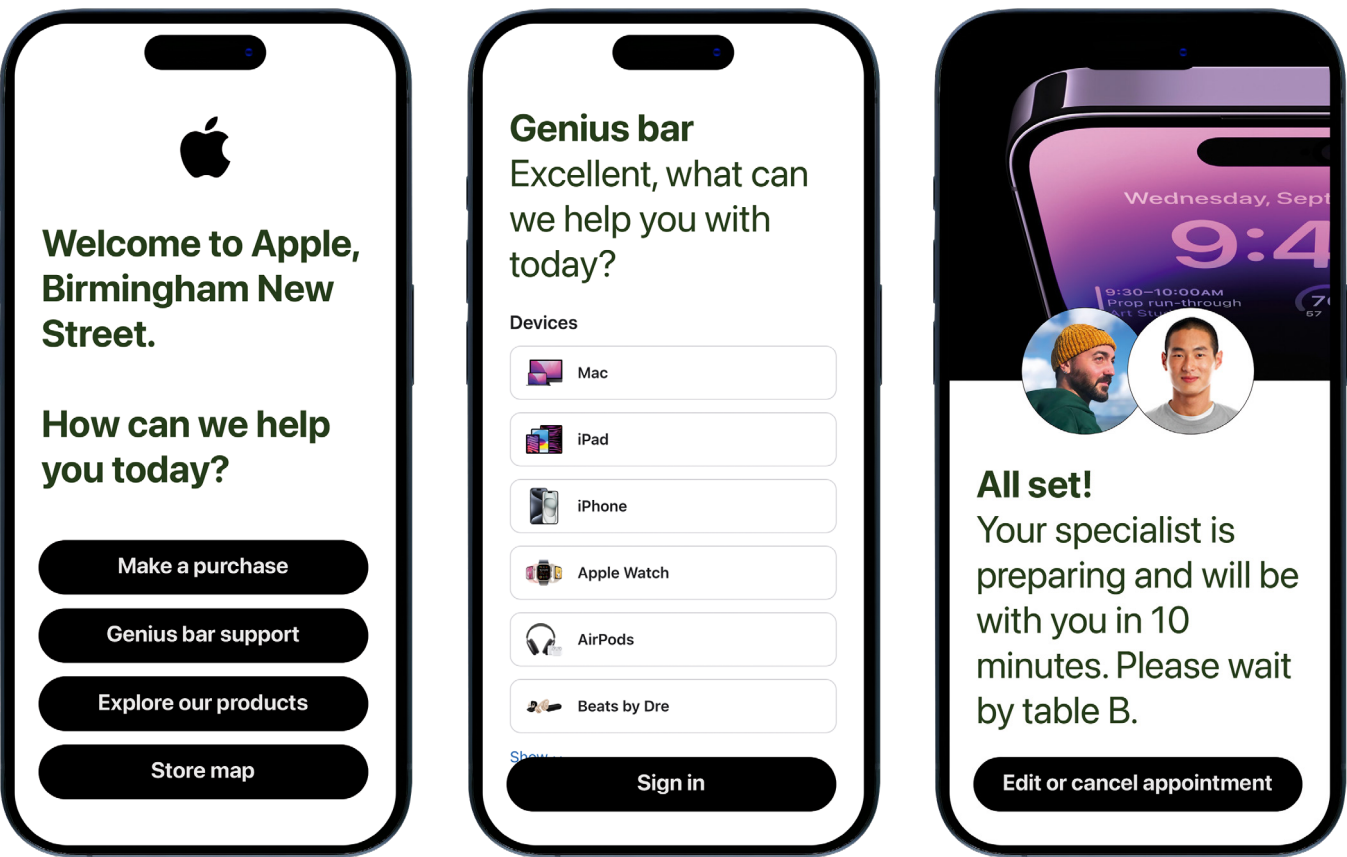
Figure 22: Apple (2023) "Battersea store". Adapted by Islaam, A (2023)



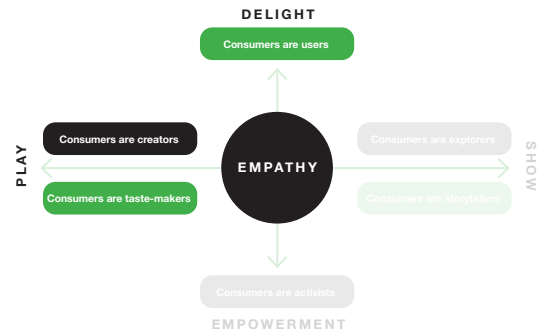
## VIRTUAL TICKETING

A noteworthy avenue for improvement based on consumer feedback is the enhancement of the interaction between customers and specialists at Apple. It was observed that many customers faced challenges in capturing the attention of store floor employees, while specialists appeared to be stretched thin, addressing queries from multiple consumers simultaneously. This situation undermines the cherished one-on-one experience that Apple values as part of its brand identity (2019).

To address this, the implementation of a virtual ticketing system emerges as a promising solution. This system would empower specialists by allowing them to organise and understand customer inquiries before a session begins. Simultaneously, customers would benefit from knowing who their designated specialist is, the anticipated wait time and the autonomy to decide whether to wait, explore the store further or leave.



Introducing such a system not only streamlines the customer-specialist interaction but also aligns with Apple's commitment to delivering a personalised and attentive service. By providing both specialists and customers with a structured and transparent approach to consultations, this innovative solution aims to foster a more efficient and satisfactory experience for everyone involved.



# Return On Investment

## OPTIMISING WAYFINDING:

- Enhanced customer satisfaction and ease of navigation.
- Potential challenges and costs associated with implementing visual cues.
- Consideration of Apple's Environmental Strategy 2030 for sustainable alternatives, such as digital screens.

## VIRTUAL TICKETING SYSTEM:

- Improved efficiency in customer-specialist interactions.
- Preservation of the one-on-one experience valued by Apple.
- Structured and transparent consultations contribute to a more satisfactory experience.

## BENEFITS:

- Enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Improved operational efficiency in customer-specialist interactions.
- Positive impact on Apple's brand identity and commitment to design and customer service.

## METRICS FOR MEASUREMENT:

- Customer satisfaction surveys.
- Reduction in wait times and improved specialist availability.
- Sales data and customer feedback on the effectiveness of wayfinding improvements.

## TIMELINE:

- Phased implementation to minimise disruption.
- Regular monitoring and adjustments based on feedback.

## CONCLUSION:

This ROI proposal outlines strategic enhancements to the Apple store experience, aligning with customer expectations, brand identity and environmental responsibility. By addressing wayfinding challenges and optimising customer-specialist interactions, the proposed solutions aim to provide a tangible and measurable return on investment, contributing to empathetic, sustained customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Figure 23: Islaam, A (2023) "Virtual ticketing system".



# Measuring success

David Parameter (2019) describes 7 foundational stones that need to be laid before we can utilise or develop any successful KPI. For the above solutions to be implemented in-store specialists and customers need to be at the forefront of re-imagining the psychological customer experience, a key design thinking principle.

“The Company believes that its distinctive and inclusive culture is a significant driver of its success. If the Company is unable to nurture its culture, it could materially adversely affect the Company’s ability to recruit and retain the highly skilled employees who are critical to its success, and could otherwise materially adversely affect the Company’s business, reputation, results of operations and financial condition.” (Apple, 2022)

Establishing KPIs such as customer and employee satisfaction scores, time spent in-store and sales conversion rates. Regular evaluations and adjustments based on feedback will ensure continuous improvement such as: ‘How was your experience today?’ for both the customer and Specialist. This enables Apple to measure the success of the new wayfinding and ticketing solutions as well as gather statistics for employee wellbeing.

The introduction of an executive KPI president would be ideal to lead this task and would give Apple the opportunity to widen its executive diversity to match its competitors.

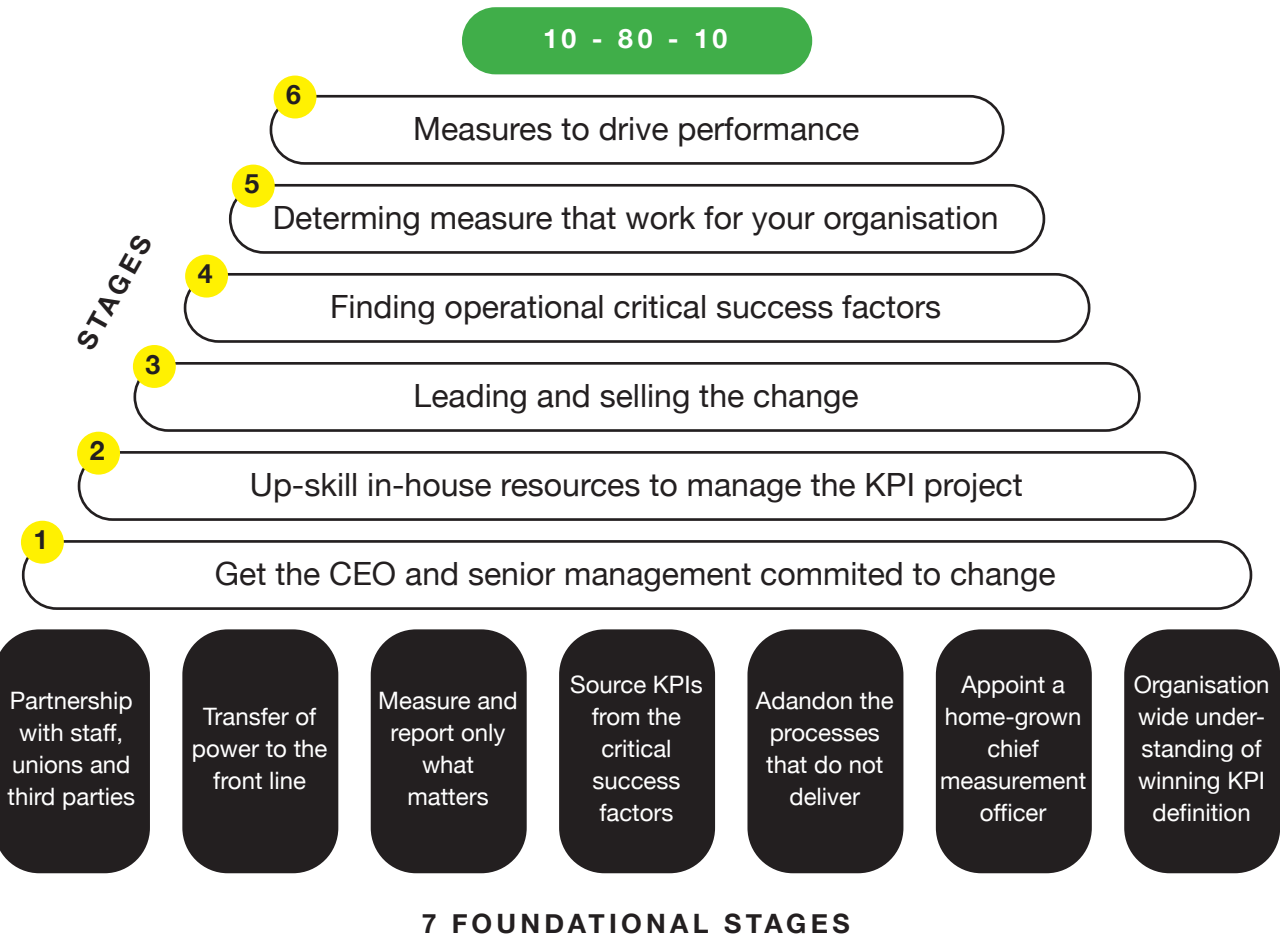


Figure 24: Parameter, D (2019) “The Seven Foundational Principle Stones in the Winning KPIs Methodology”. Adapted by Islaam, A (2023).

# Potential barriers

## Employee Training and Change Management:

Introducing new knowledge or technologies necessitates comprehensive training for store employees, who must adapt to changes in their workflows. This could incur further costs for new training schemes or an increase in Specialists. Apple should invest in thorough training programs to ensure employees are proficient in using and supporting the new systems. Clear communication and change management strategies will be crucial to overcoming resistance or confusion among staff (Lauer, T. 2010).

## Integration with Existing Systems:

Integrating new digital systems with Apple’s existing backend infrastructure and databases may pose compatibility challenges. Apple should work closely with its IT department and technology partners to ensure a seamless integration process. Regular updates and maintenance will be crucial to address any compatibility issues that may arise over time.

## User Adoption and Accessibility:

Ensuring that a diverse user base, including those less familiar with technology, can easily adopt and navigate these digital solutions may be challenging. Apple must design interfaces that are intuitive and user-friendly, considering various demographics. Additionally, providing assistance and tutorials within the store can help users become familiar with the new systems (Zhou, T. 2013).

## Privacy and Data Security Concerns:

Collecting and processing customer data for digital ticketing and personalised recommendations raises privacy and security concerns. Apple must prioritise and communicate a strong commitment to customer privacy. Implementing robust encryption measures and transparent data policies will be essential to address these concerns (Mehmood, A., et al. 2016).



## Conclusion

In summary, this value proposition advocates for strategic enhancements to the Apple store customer experience, emphasising customer satisfaction, product identity and environmental responsibility. By addressing wayfinding challenges and refining customer-specialist interactions the proposed solutions aim to deliver a measurable return on investment through empathetic design principles. Aligned with Apple's values of simplicity, innovation and user-centric design, these enhancements seek to strengthen the company's position as a community-led, premium and aspirational brand in the competitive consumer electronics industry.

Incorporating Apple's Environmental Strategy 2030 reflects a commitment to sustainability, considering eco-friendly alternatives like digital screens. The Virtual Ticketing System improves operational efficiency while preserving the valued one-on-one experience. The benefits encompass enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty, improved operational efficiency and a positive impact on Apple's brand identity and dedication to design and customer service.

Key metrics for success include customer satisfaction surveys, reductions in wait times, improved specialist availability and feedback on wayfinding improvements. The phased implementation plan, designed to minimise disruption, with regular monitoring and adjustments based on feedback, ensures a dynamic and responsive approach.

In a landscape where competitors continuously introduce new products, addressing the physical challenges in Apple's UK stores becomes imperative. This proposal positions itself as a proactive response to potential risks, emphasising the importance of sustaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. By leveraging design thinking principles and embracing innovation, Apple can overcome current challenges in wayfinding, reinforcing its brand identity and providing a lasting, empathetic customer experience.

## A NOTE ON INCLUSIVITY

Although Apple strives for inclusivity, diversity, racial equity and justice (Apple. 2019), the executive team comprises of 17% women. In a study entitled Women in the Workplace, Coury, S. et al. (2022) found that in the US workforce, women of colour are significantly underrepresented at C-suite levels whilst the total number of women in these roles rose from 17% in 2015 to 28% in 2022. The gradual progression of women in executive and directorial positions is resulting in a vulnerable mid-level stage within the corporate career pipeline, which predominantly houses female employees. Significantly, female directors are departing at a higher rate than in previous years, surpassing the departure rate of their male counterparts at the same level. Consequently, these dynamics have led to a reduced pool of women poised for top leadership positions.

In comparison to Apple's competitors, Microsoft's executive team comprises of 28% women (Microsoft. 2019) and Google, 47% (Craft. N.d.).

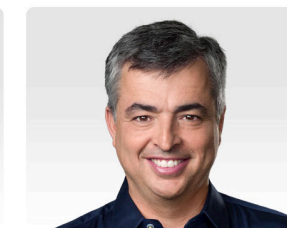
## Executive Profiles



**Tim Cook**  
CEO



**Katherine Adams**  
Senior Vice President and  
General Counsel



**Eddy Cue**  
Senior Vice President  
Services



**Craig Federighi**  
Senior Vice President  
Software Engineering



**John Giannandrea**  
Senior Vice President  
Machine Learning and  
AI Strategy



**Greg "Joz" Joswiak**  
Senior Vice President  
Worldwide Marketing



**Sabih Khan**  
Senior Vice President  
Operations



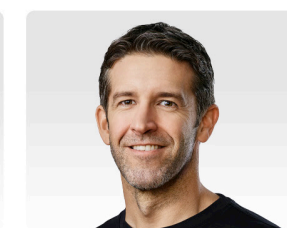
**Luca Maestri**  
Senior Vice President and  
Chief Financial Officer



**Deirdre O'Brien**  
Senior Vice President  
Retail



**Johnny Srouji**  
Senior Vice President  
Hardware Technologies



**John Ternus**  
Senior Vice President  
Hardware Engineering



**Jeff Williams**  
Chief Operating Officer

Figure 25: Apple (2019) "Leadership".



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# Appendix A

A user journey of purchasing an iphone at New Street, Birmingham UK at 14:03.  
Total time taken in store = 55 minutes.

## Section 1

- Store was very busy.
- Could not see any staff member immediately to take to so walked to find the desks with iphones.

## Section 2

- First desk to the right has iphones, many of them.
- Closer inspection they are different sizes, makes and colours.
- Many others also surrounding this desk so hard to find a comfortable space.
- Wait for a couple to leave, slot in.
- I came knowing which iphone I’d like to purchase, this feels a little tedious.
- Played with an iphone for a short while, looked at the various colours but can not actually approach them as other customers are handling them currently.
- Spot a employee not far from the table, she seems to be busy taking to various customers.

## Section 3

- Approached her, waiting patiently behind others (15 minutes here)
- Once she’s done she turns to another employee to discuss
- Still waiting (17 minutes)
- Finally get her attention, she seems stressed. Ask to purchase an iphone.



- Name taken, product details taken, put into a virtual queue. 15 minute wait.
- Asked to wait at table C, the table I was originally waiting at.

#### Section 4

- Once again playing with an iphone, reading the news to stay busy.
- Current time in store: 36 minutes.
- Have to listen out for my name to be called, it's quite loud which is difficult.
- After 15 minutes I wonder if I should ask if my name is still on the list but decide not to.
- Not sure who I'm waiting for. (38 minutes)
- Decided to not play with the phone, or anything else, so they're visually aware I am waiting.
- Other customers still hovering around as I now feel in the way of them exploring products.
- Assigned employee arrives (39 minutes)
- Have to describe the product I want to purchase again, I assume for confirmation.
- No information given about devices.
- No questions about if I need help setting up or if I've purchased an iphone before.
- Taken to another table.

#### Section 5

- Card reader doesn't work, employee has to find another. (45 minutes)
- Employee back, purchase made. Apple care and theft protection offered.
- Standing in awkward silence with him whilst we wait for the phone to come to us.

- Phone arrives (51 minutes)
- No longer comes with an adapted, environmental issues, offered to buy a USB-C charged, I declined.
- Asked for my email for a digital receipt.

#### Section 6

- Left the store. (55 minutes)

#### Reflections:

When going into the store knowing exactly what I wanted to buy, did it need to take nearly an hour? I'd have preferred to purchase online and have it delivered. The employees seems over worked, whilst dealing the one assigned to me he has multiple customers interrupt to ask questions. It seems they are thrown into the deep end when entering the store floor.

Appendix B

Apple wayfinding and customer experience

11

Responses

02:36

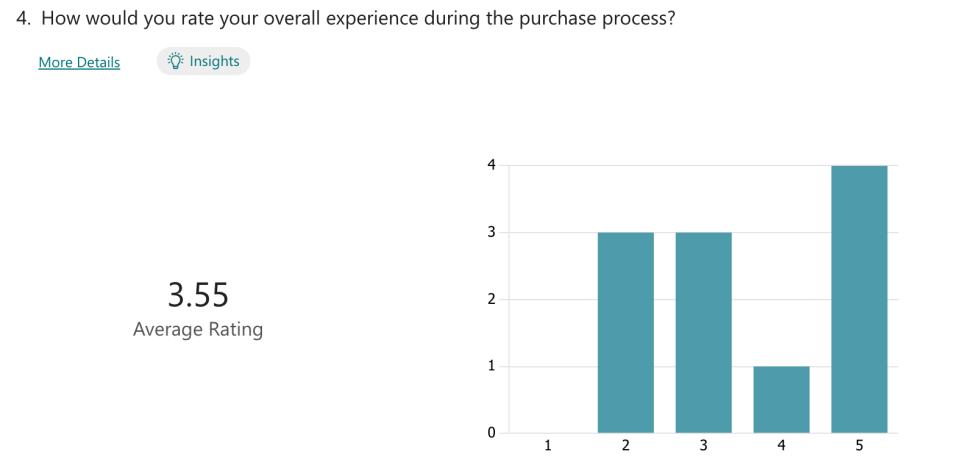
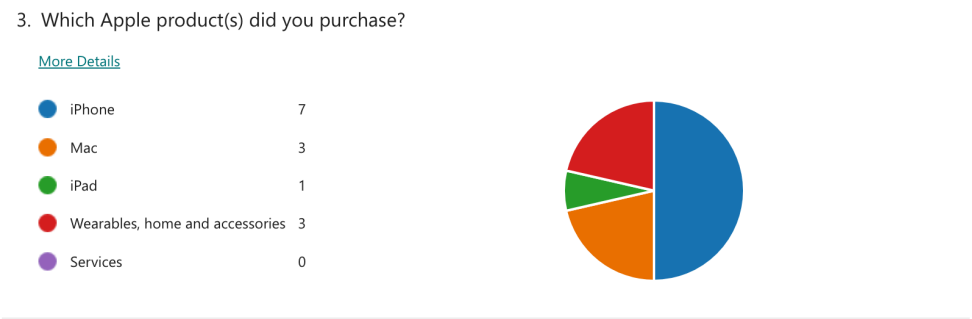
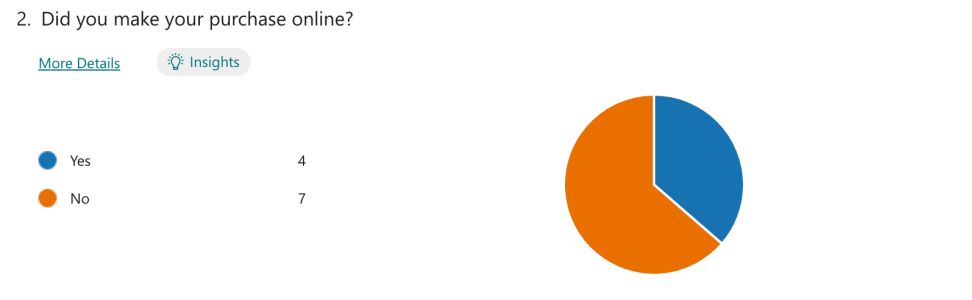
Average time to complete

Active

Status

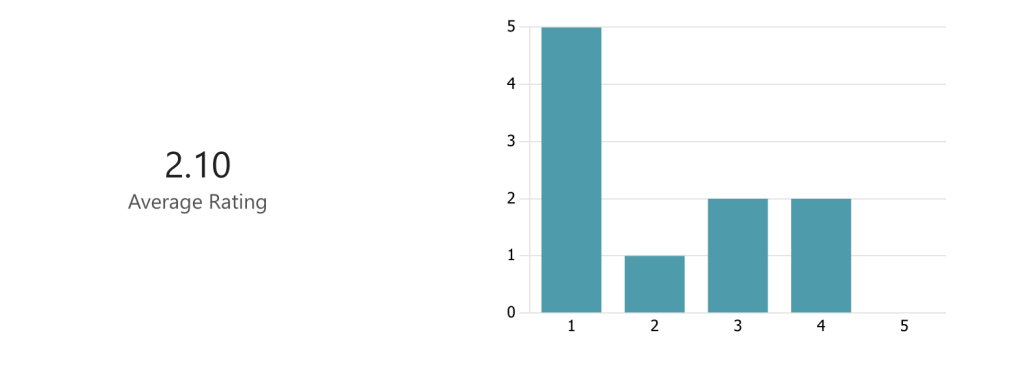
View results

Open in Excel



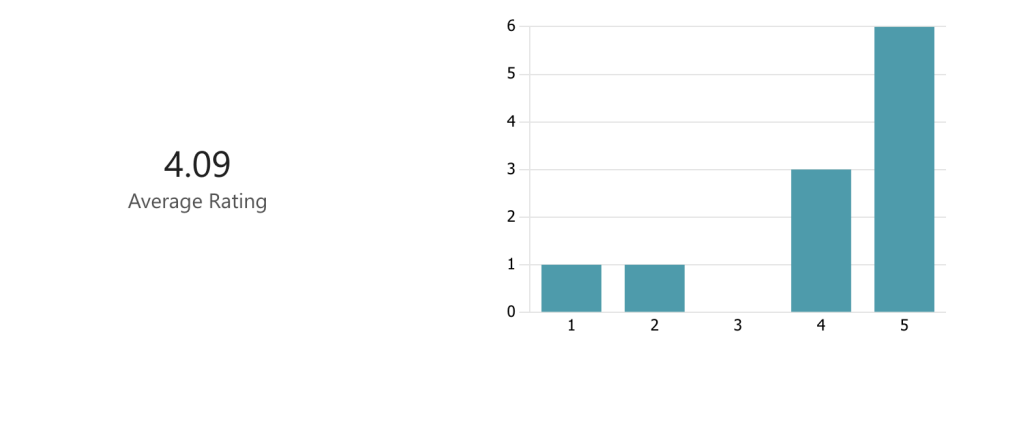
5. Did you find the store layout and signage helpful for navigating through the different sections?

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)



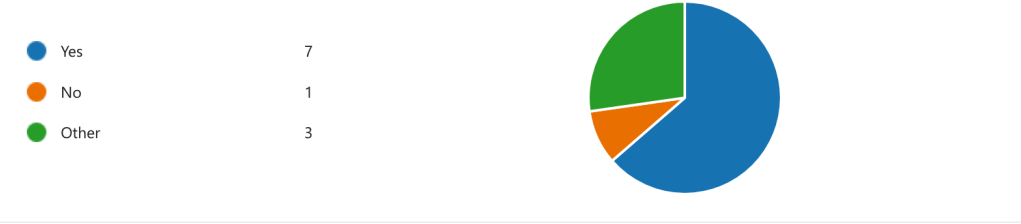
6. How would you rate the ease of finding the products you were looking for in the Apple store?

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)



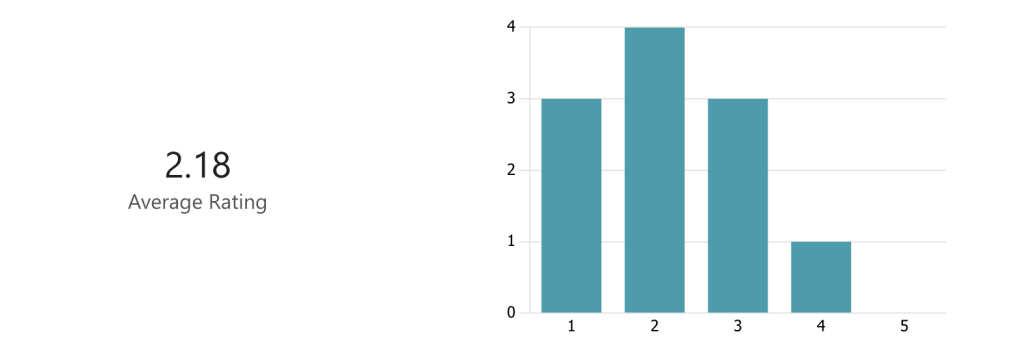
7. Did you interact with Apple staff during your visit to the store?

[More Details](#)



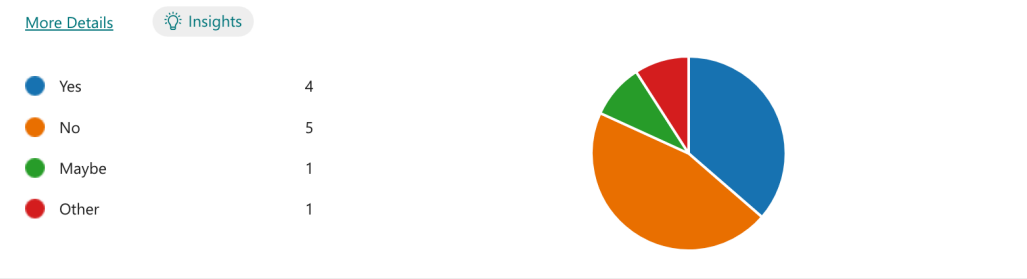
8. How would you rate the ease of finding a specialist in assisting you with your questions or concerns?

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)





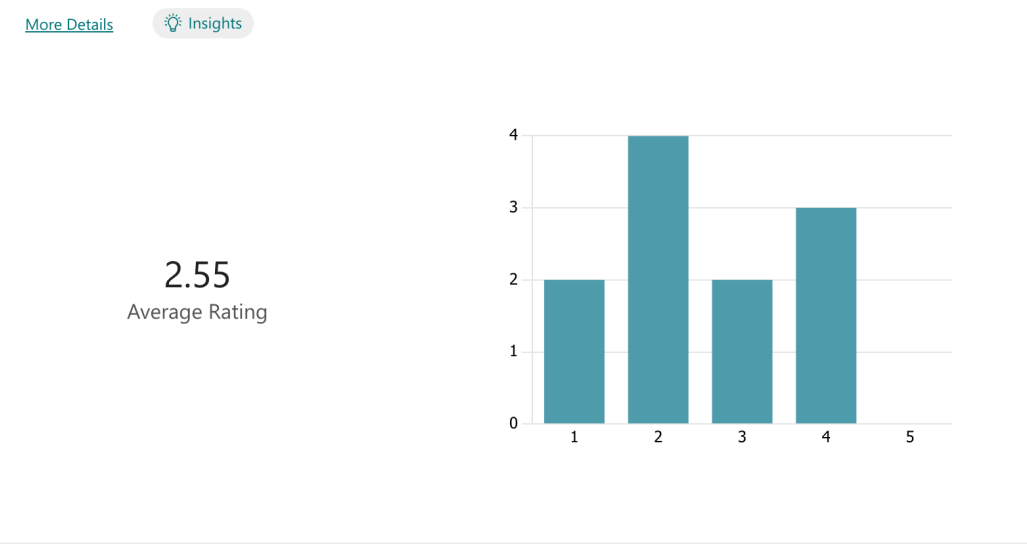
9. Did the store environment contribute positively to your shopping experience?



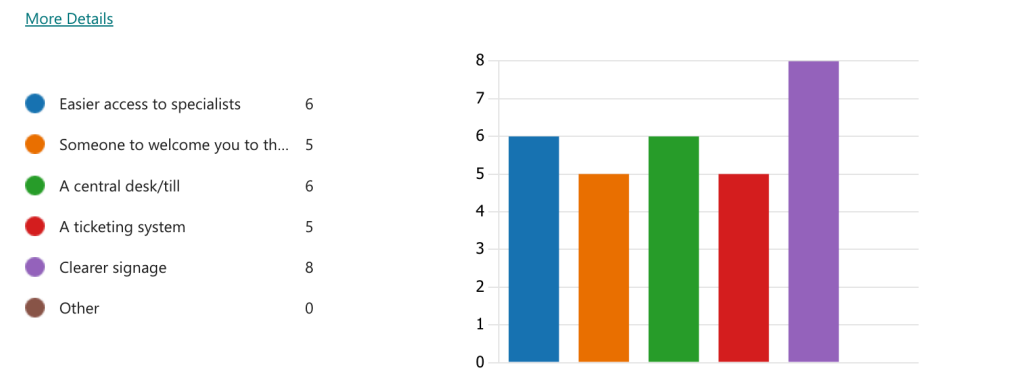
10. How would you describe the overall atmosphere and ambiance of the Apple store?



11. How would you describe your overall mood during and after your visit to the Apple store?



12. What factors would influence your decision to return to an Apple store for future purchases?



13. Any other comments on your experience at an Apple store?



# Appendix C

A structured questionnaire to gain an immediate, in-action Apple Store customer experience. I asked customers leaving 2 Apple Stores in Birmingham for their direct experiences to further compare and analyse the qualitative data. Public place interviews can be quite time-consuming, most customers approached did not want to participate (Kumar, 2019). The below responses were informed of the purpose of this questionnaire and agreed to participate anonymously.

1. How would you describe your overall experience at the Apple Store today? 1 (bad) – 10 (excellent)
2. Can you share your thoughts on the atmosphere inside the store? Did it feel welcoming or engaging?
3. Were you able to easily find the products you were looking for, or did you encounter any challenges with wayfinding?
4. How would you rate the level of assistance you received from the staff during your visit? 1-10
5. In terms of customer service, how would you rate the friendliness and helpfulness of the Apple Store staff?
6. Were there any specific features or aspects of the store layout that stood out to you positively or negatively?
7. Were there any unique or innovative elements in the store that caught your attention?
8. How did the Apple Store staff approach you? Did they wait for you to approach them, or were they proactive in offering assistance?
9. Were there any specific areas where you felt the store could improve in terms of customer experience?
10. Did you know you can book an in-store, one on one shopping session online?
11. Would you be likely to recommend the Apple Store to friends or family based on your visit today?

## Respondent 1:

Location: Touchwood, Solihull, Birmingham UK.

1. Overall Experience Rating: 6
2. Atmosphere: The atmosphere inside the store felt somewhat welcoming but it lacked an engaging vibe.
3. Wayfinding: I encountered some challenges in finding the products I was looking for, the layout could be more userfriendly as I had to search the entire first floor and wait for people to get out of the way.
4. Staff Assistance Rating: I would rate the level of assistance from the staff as 7. It was satisfactory but not exceptional.
5. Customer Service: The staff were friendly, the level of helpfulness varied among different team members.
6. Store Layout: The store layout was both positive and negative. While certain sections were well-organised, others felt a bit cramped and cluttered. I guess because of the Christmas period it may be busier than usual.
7. Innovative Elements: Nothing stood out prominently during my visit.
8. Staff Approach: The staff mostly waited for me to approach, proactive assistance would have been nice.
9. Areas for Improvement: The store could improve in terms of product visibility and offering more interactive displays for a better customer experience.
10. Booked session: I did not, I'm not terribly sure the benefit of that.
11. Likelihood to Recommend: Based on my visit today I might recommend the store depending on the specific needs of the person.

## Respondent 2:

Location: Touchwood, Solihull, Birmingham UK.

1. Overall Experience Rating: I'd say it was a solid 6.



2. Atmosphere: The vibe inside the store was decently welcoming, but it was quite lively, tons of people.
  3. Wayfinding: I found myself doubling back a few times but I found the iPads fairly easily.
  4. Staff Assistance Rating: I'd give the staff a 7. They were alright, but there were moments where I felt like I knew more about the products than they did.
  5. Customer Service: Some of the staff were super friendly and helpful, but there were a couple who seemed a bit disinterested or maybe just had a rough day.
  6. Store Layout: It's a mixed bag. Some parts were neat and organised but in others, it felt like they crammed too much in one place.
  7. Innovative Elements: There were a few cool things, but nothing mind-blowing. I guess I expected a bit more wow factor.
  8. Staff Approach: They mostly let me do my thing. I had to actively seek out help, they weren't pushing it.
  9. Areas for Improvement: They could definitely up their game in staff attention and a little rearranging of the store layout wouldn't hurt some sort of indication which table has what instead of having to double back.
  10. Booked session: No, I will definitely do that next time.
  11. Likelihood to Recommend: I'd recommend it to someone specifically looking for Apple stuff, but I'd throw in a heads up about the layout and maybe do some online research first.
4. Staff Assistance Rating: It took me ages to get someones attention to be directed to someone else to be put into a virtual queue with an unknown wait time because it was so busy.
  5. Customer Service: The first lady seemed annoyed, the second guy seemed disinterested, the third didn't speak to me whilst we waited in silence for my iphone to reappear.
  6. Store Layout: It's ok. The store itself is gorgeous architecturally but I've just had a bad customer experience to be honest.
  7. Innovative Elements: Not really? The stores are product-focused which is the innovation I guess. The store itself didn't seem innovative.
  8. Staff Approach: Nope. Was a struggle for me to get someones attention myself.
  9. Areas for Improvement: I just wanted to purchase a phone, it shouldn't take having to talk to 3 different people. I was unable to purchase it online so had to go into the store otherwise I'd have had it delivered. Next time I will.
  10. Booked session: I didn't no, but I'd still have to find a member of staff to begin my session surely? That's the problem, it probably wouldn't have made a difference because they seem so overworked.
  11. Likelihood to Recommend: I'd recommend anyone purchases their product online with free shipping.

### **Respondent 3:**

Location: New Street, Birmingham UK.

1. Overall Experience Rating: 2
2. Atmosphere: It was really cramped. The staff seemed stressed.
3. Wayfinding: Are there any signs? I only saw tables and people.

VALUE PROPOSITION, DES7060

ADAM ISLAAM