

Apple Customer Care Apocalypse: Strategy Evaluation and Suggestions for Improvement

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Abstract. This study critically examines Apple's customer care strategy through the lenses of its mission statement, corporate objectives, and comparative standards with competitors and national benchmarks. Utilizing a Total Quality Management (TQM) framework and SWOT analysis, the research evaluates the effectiveness of Apple's customer care practices. While Apple's mission and objectives are found to be strongly aligned with customer satisfaction, the study identifies deficiencies in employee reward mechanisms, regional consistency of service standards, and problem resolution efficiency. Strategic recommendations are proposed to address these issues, aiming to enhance customer loyalty and maintain Apple's market leadership.

Keywords: Customer Care; Total Quality Management; SWOT Analysis; Employee Motivation.

1. Introduction

Customer care is the strategic practice of proactively providing customers with information, resources, and support services to ensure a positive experience at all touchpoints of interaction with a brand. (Alex Iacoviello, et.al., 2024)

Apple's customer service culture is user-centered and committed to delivering innovative and exceptional experiences. Apple has always adhered to Education Responsibility, Employee Responsibility, Community Responsibility, Product Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility and Supplier Responsibility. (Apple Corporate Responsibility Report China, 2019)

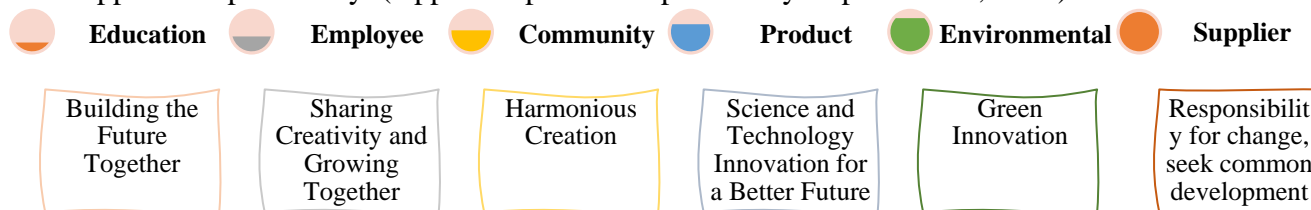


Figure 1. Responsibilities

Through the elaboration of these responsibilities, Apple has successfully gained the trust of its customers, which in turn has had a favorable impact on the construction of its customer service culture.

In summary, customer care in Apple Inc., which is characterized by efficiency, convenience, and customer-centricity, has earned a good reputation around the world.

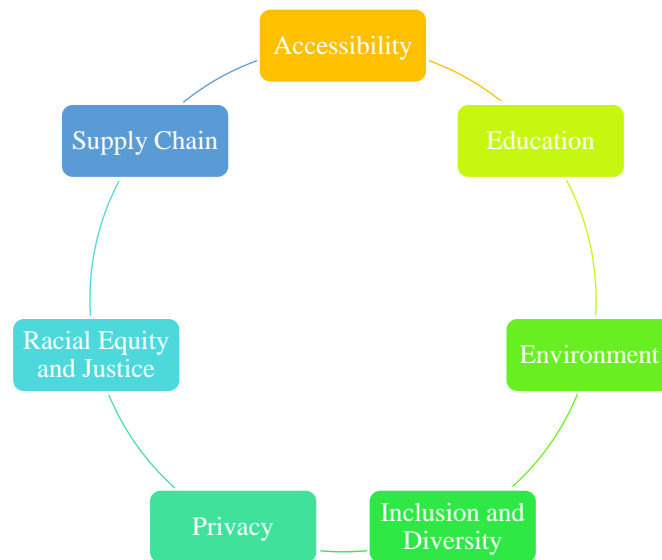


Figure 2. Apple's Customer Care Culture Values

2. The Suitability of The Standards for Customer Care

2.1. Mission Statement and Customer Care

“Mission statements” are defined as formal declarations of an organization’s overall purpose, objectives, and values (Barbara Bartkus, et.al., 2006).

Apple’s mission statement is: “To bringing the best user experience to customers through innovative hardware, software, and services.” (Ava Abbott, 2024)

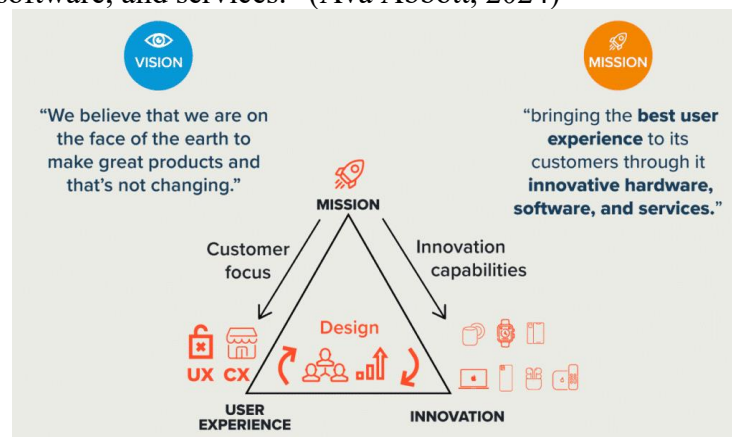


Figure 3. Mission and Vision (GRAYFOX, 2021)

Apple’s mission statement emphasizes the importance of innovation. As a technology company, Apple has always been committed to continuous innovation in products, technologies and services to meet the ever-changing needs of consumers, such as the iPhone and iPad, which have led global technology trends.

It focuses on user experience. Whether in product design after-sales service and other aspects, Apple strives to achieve perfection. This has made Apple win the trust and love of consumers.

Additionally, Apple’s mission statement also highlights the concept of sustainable development. Apple actively pays attention to environmental protection and resource utilization, and strives to realize the coordinated development of economy, society and environment.

Aspect	How Apple Achieves It	Analysis & Implications	Advantages
Mission	– Provides innovative hardware, software, and services.	– Focuses on delivering exceptional user experiences.	– High-quality, integrated product ecosystem.
	– Prioritizes user-centric design and functionality.	– Ensures customer satisfaction and loyalty.	– Strong brand loyalty and customer retention.

Figure 4. Advantages of Apple’s Mission Statement (Gennaro Cuofano, 2024)

To summarize, Apple’s mission statement reflects Apple’s outstanding strength in the field of technology innovation and also shows the Apple’s great importance to user experience and sustainable development. This mission statement provides a clear direction for Apple’s development.

2.2. Corporate Objectives and Customer Care

A corporate objective is a specific, measurable, and time-specific target by which you can achieve your overall corporate goal. (Penpoin, 2024)



Figure 5. Types of business objectives

Apple’s Objectives in recent years have been categorized into four main sections: Innovation, Customer Privacy Protection, Environmental Sustainability and Technology Development.

Apple CEO Tim Cook often emphasizes that innovation is at the heart of Apple. (Alex, 2024) For example, the development of Vision Pro, enhance customer care by providing new ways to serve customers.

In terms of customer privacy protection, Apple recognizes privacy as a fundamental human right. (Alex, 2024) By using application tracking transparency and end-to-end encryption, Apple ensures that customers feel safe and trusted when using its products and services.

Apple is committed to environmental protection and sustainability, setting a goal of achieving a carbon-neutral supply chain and products by 2030. Apple enhances the customer experience through cleaner packaging and easier device use.

For example, Apple's work toward making products using only recycled and renewable materials. Last year, 56% of the cobalt shipped in Apple batteries came from recycled sources. This is the first-ever Apple product to be made with 50% recycled material. (Newsroom, 2024)

In terms of technology development, Apple continues to improve product performance through the development of technologies such as the Apple Silicon chip.

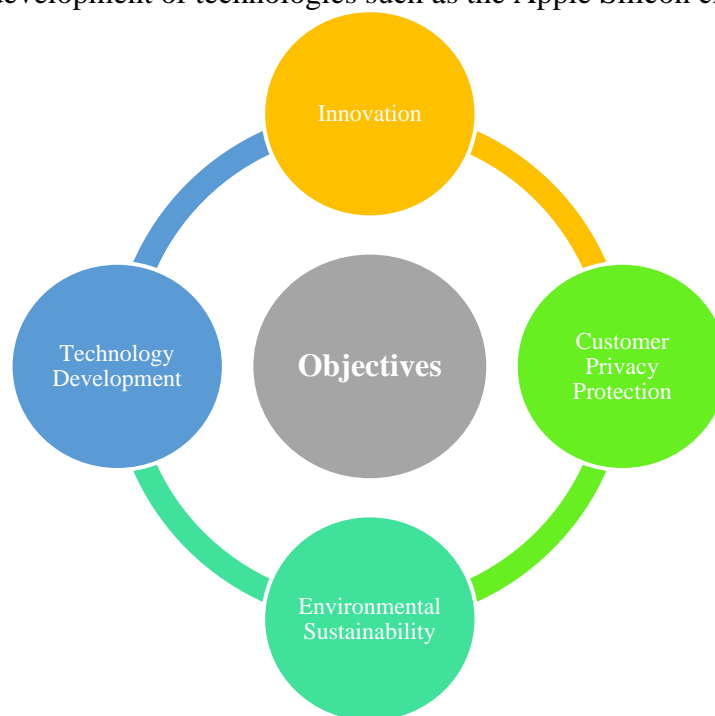


Figure 6. Apple's Objectives in Recent Years

To summarize, Apple's objectives are highly compatible with customer care, which ensures that customers can enjoy high-quality services when using Apple products and services.

2.3. Comparison of Customer Care Standards

Lenovo is a global technology powerhouse, ranked at 217 in the Fortune Global 500, focused on delivering "smarter technology for all". (Lenovo, n.d.)

2.3.1 Clean Commitment to Customers and Staff

For external customers, Apple offers a broad range of product lines and services, including iPhone, Mac, Apple Watch, and is committed to protecting user privacy, and providing timely and effective assistance through the Apple Store's Genius Bar support and online customer service.

For internal customers, Apple inspires its employees to be innovative and enthusiastic about their work by giving them project autonomy and ownership, organizing innovative events such as hackathons. Apple also offers compensation and benefits to support their education and career development. In addition, Apple encourages employees to maintain work-life balance. (Dash Hire, 2023)

	Apple	Lenovo
Objective and Needs Identification	Apple deeply analyzes its customers' personal preferences and emotional needs, and reflects these needs in its product design and services, such as comparing the design of Mac computers to high-end Porsche sports cars, in an effort to personalize and emotionally resonate in the consumer experience.	Lenovo's strategy for upgrading the customer experience is sometimes viewed as a strategic project, suggesting that there may be challenges in identifying external customer needs. But there may be a lack of fine-grained stratification and personalized attention.
Transactional Relationship	Apple's emphasis on maintaining transactional relationships with consumers through quality products, such as the extremely high demand for product design during the Jobs era, shows the company's focus on how to optimize the customer experience through the products themselves.	Lenovo may be more focused on traditional customer service and technical support when dealing with transactional relationships.
Influence and Management	Apple's emphasis on maintaining transactional relationships with consumers through quality products, such as the extremely high demand for product design during the Jobs era.	Lenovo tries to make customer experience upgrading a part of its corporate culture, such as maintaining the consistency between corporate business goals and customer experience upgrading, and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of customer experience management.
Segregation of Responsibilities for Internal Employees	Apple has a clear delineation of responsibilities for internal employees and also encourages innovation and the pursuit of excellence so that employees naturally integrate customer-oriented behaviors in their daily work.	Lenovo may be more traditional in dividing responsibilities among internal employees, focusing on the operational efficiency of their respective functions and attempting to integrate customer experience into the corporate culture.

Table 7. Comparison of Apple and Lenovo's division of responsibilities in customer care strategy

Apple and Lenovo show significant differences in customer care. Apple understands and meets the individual needs of its external customers, and internally it has a clear delineation of employee responsibilities. In contrast, Lenovo is more traditional and conservative.

2.3.2 Timeline

In terms of pre-sales services: Apple focuses on individualized needs and emphasizes customer experience. Lenovo provides comparative guidance as well as configuration suggestions, and demonstrates product advantages through marketing activities.

In terms of in-sales service: Apple provides real-time customer support, with an 80% satisfaction rate from its customer service team. Lenovo focuses on a smooth purchase process and immediate problem resolution, maintaining efficient order processing and logistics tracking.

In terms of after-sales service: Apple provides additional service benefits through AppleCare+. Lenovo provides services through service centers, hotlines and online platforms.



Figure 8. Apple's Customer Care Timeline

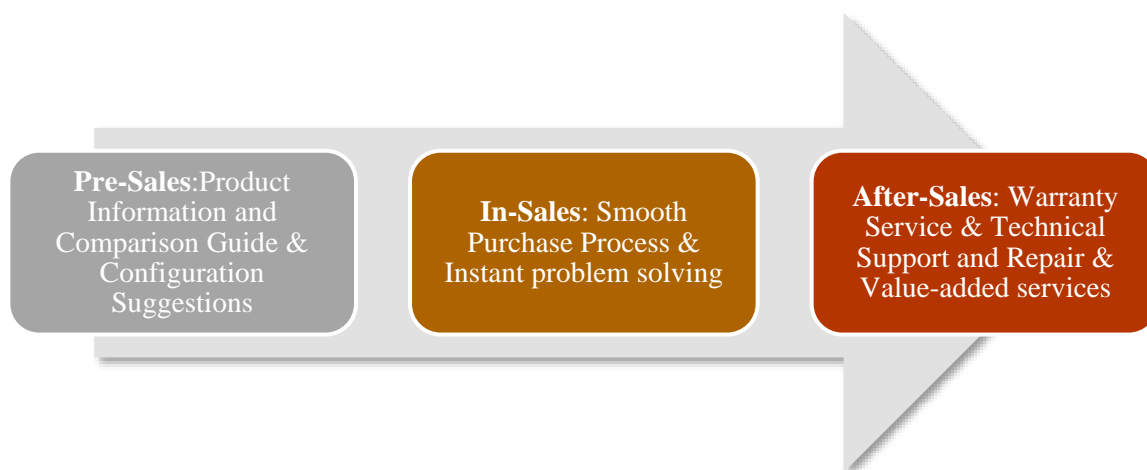


Figure 9. Lenovo's Customer Care Timeline

2.3.3 Organizational Standards and National Customer Care Standards

In terms of data protection, The UK has strengthened the protection of personal data through the implementation of regulations such as the Data Protection Act. In terms of product and service warranties, the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, which governs the terms of warranties offered by manufacturers and service providers. (GOV.UK, 2014)

Apple's efforts to protect user privacy, such as the introduction of features like App Tracking Transparency, dovetail with the BSI's (BSI., n.d.) goals in reducing customer risk. What's more, in terms of product and service warranties the entire iPhone and included accessories are covered by a 1-year warranty from the date of original purchase, while major components are covered by a 2-year warranty.

In conclusion, Apple's customer care is very effective, mainly, externally: Apple has a 92% retention rate among iPhone users. Apple had 74.6% trade-in brand loyalty (Yaqub M., 2024). Internally: Apple's employee retention rate has remained steady at 71/100 in 2024. (Comparably, 2024)

3. The Effectiveness of The Organization's Customer Care Strategy

3.1. Total Quality Management System

Total quality management is a management philosophy that fosters an organisational culture committed to customer satisfaction through continuous improvement. (Kanji, 2002)

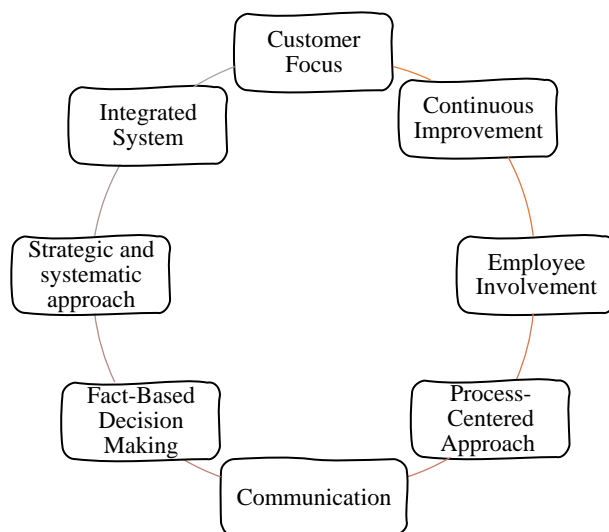


Figure 10. The Eight Principles of a TQM (Eunice Arcilla Caburao, 2023)

Apple builds its corporate culture and service model with a customer-centric approach, emphasizing the user experience, which is in line with the customer-centric principle of the TQMS.

Apple has adopted a balanced scorecard model that focuses senior management on a program that fosters discussion beyond contemporary metrics (Akhtar, et.al., 2018). The company established a committee to oversee the different measurement categories proposed by the balanced scorecard model. This reflects the principles of TQM's process-centered approach.

As shown in Figure 11, a survey of Apple's employee satisfaction in 2024 shows that nearly 70% of employees approve of their jobs at the company and are excited to come to work every day. 73% of employees are proud to be an Apple employee. Apple's Retention score is in the Top 40% of 1341 similar sized companies on Comparably. (Comparably, 2024)

This shows that Apple has a very strong relationship with its employees, allowing them to appreciate their value and reflecting the TQM principle of employee involvement.



Figure 11. Satisfaction Survey for Apple Employees (Comparably, 2024)

As shown in Figure 11, out of 1837 Apple employee reviews, 79% were positive. The remaining 21% were constructive reviews with the goal of helping Apple improve their work culture. (Comparably, 2019)

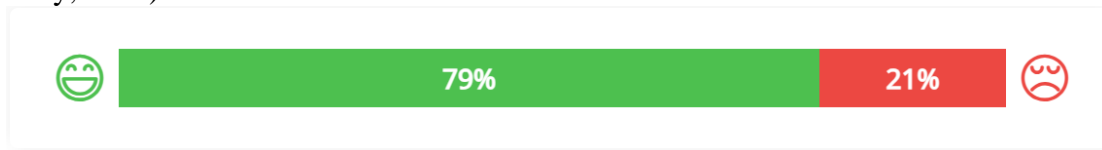


Figure 12. Apple Employee Reviews

However, Apple's reward mechanism focuses on market performance and short-term performance, and equity incentives are an important part of Apple's reward mechanism. This is not entirely consistent with the philosophy of continuous improvement and long-term quality enhancement advocated by TQMS.

In conclusion, although a bit flawed in some parts, Apple as a whole is highly compatible with the core concepts of TQMS. Apple has demonstrated its excellence in TQM through its customer-oriented corporate culture, establishment of loyalty programs, emphasis on employee experience, and BSC management, providing a solid foundation for Apple's leading position in the technology industry.

3.2. SWOT Analysis

Using the SWOT model to analyze my personal experience with the iPhone:

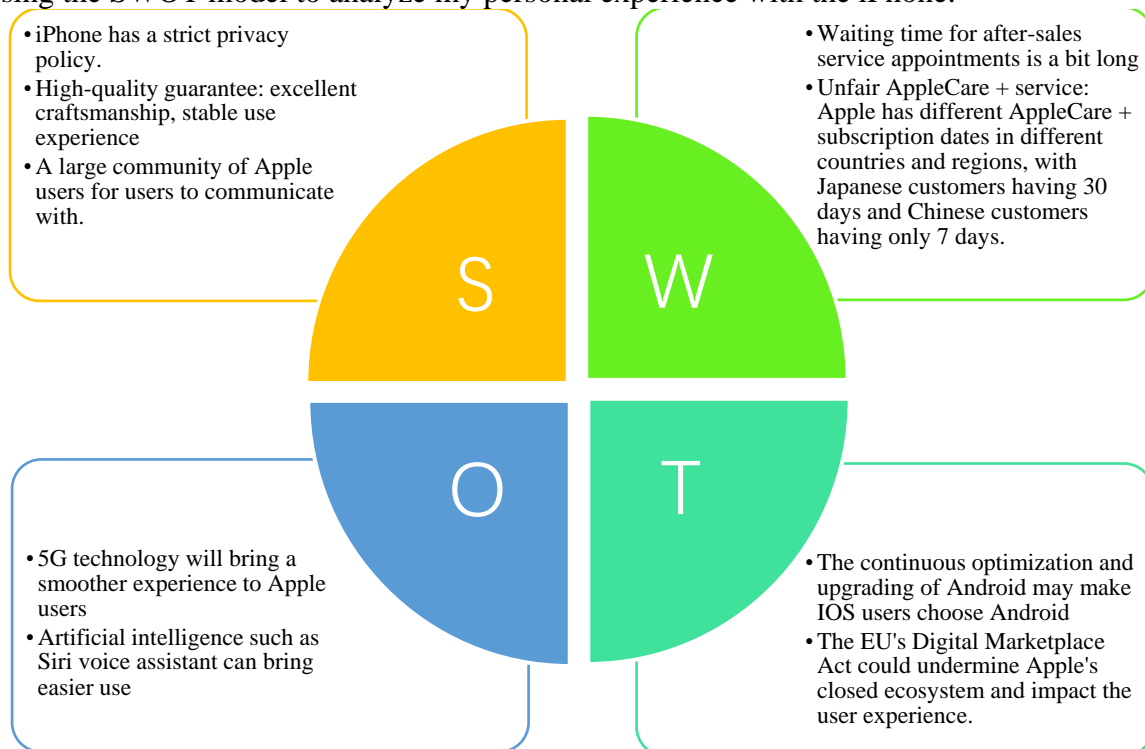


Figure 13 SWOT Analysis of Personal Experience with Apple Products

Using the SWOT model to analyze Apple Inc.:

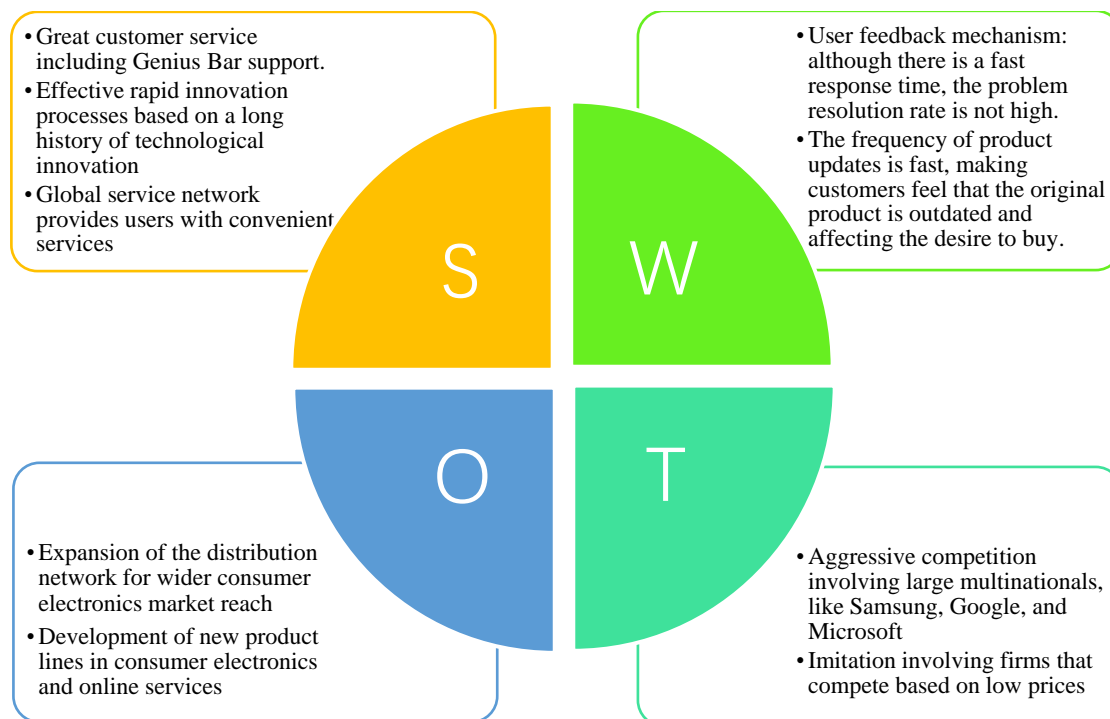


Figure 14 SWOT Analysis of Apple Inc. (Nathaniel Smithson, 2024)

In conclusion, Apple has done an overall good job in customer care and giving users a good experience, but there are still some issues such as battery technology and equity issues.

3.3. Employee Motivation

In 2015, Apple announced free shares to all of its employees, with initial grants ranging from \$1000 to \$2000. (Rani Joseph, 2024) Apple also offers its employees a health insurance plan that covers mental and physical health, as well as a wellness center at the company. (Apple, 2024)

Apple adopts the Balanced Scorecard assessment metho, emphasizing Apple's shareholder value, valuing individual core competencies and process structure, emphasizing employee engagement and coordination.

However, the BSC is more applicable to Apple's middle and upper management positions, while for operational level employees, its value focuses on executing tasks and ensuring the standardized achievement of job work, rather than the holistic and strategic level.

BSC – BALANCED SCORECARD

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Figure 15. Balance Scorecard (Khan, n.d.)

Apple motivates its employees and enhances their work ethic by providing them with stock options and restricted stock units, generous employee benefits, and plenty of learning opportunities. These initiatives not only encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility, but also promote team building and development.

4. Recommendations

At present, Apple still exists in customer care: employee reward mechanism neglects long-term quality improvement and is less applicable to middle and low level employees; customer service standards are inconsistent in different regions (e.g., AppleCare+); and the user problem resolution rate is low. Therefore, I recommend:

Optimization of employee reward mechanism

Increase the consideration of long-term quality and customer satisfaction in the employee reward mechanism, and establish long-term performance bonuses or career development opportunities.

Design incentive programs suitable for medium and low-level employees, such as increasing internal promotion opportunities and bonus programs.

Harmonization of customer service standards

Develop unified customer service standards to ensure that customers in different regions receive a consistent service experience. Such as unified service process, service quality standards and customer communication methods.

Considering the cultural differences and market demand in each region, adjust the service content and method appropriately. Take China as an example, Apple can strengthen the cultivation of local talents in China, and strengthen the cooperation with local service providers (e.g. Tencent).

Improvement of problem-solving rate

Increase the number and quality of technical support personnel to ensure that customer problems can be solved in a timely and effective manner.

Streamline the problem handling process to reduce unnecessary steps and waiting time. This can be done, for example, through the introduction of more efficient workflow technologies and customer relationship management systems.



Figure 16. Make 3 Proposals for Apple's Customer Care

5. Conclusion

This paper analyzes Apple's customer care practices and proposes a series of strategies and recommendations to improve its services. Adoption of these strategies is expected to enhance the

effectiveness of Apple's customer care, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty and ensuring that it maintains its leadership position in a highly competitive market environment.

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