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**Research Report**

**Main Question**

What impacts has the delivery service failures during the COVID pandemic had on the overall reputation of JD Sports?

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many Businesses across all industries worldwide. It has had a negative impact in regard to the revenues of many companies and has also resulted in many people losing their jobs. JD Sports is a company that faltered immensely as a result of the restrictions and lockdown that was imposed because they had to shut down all their stores because people were indoors thus doing their shopping online. As a result of this, JD Sports had to look into ways in which they could still operate and satisfy their customers’ demands despite not operating Business as usual hence taking a greater look at E-commerce. During this time many customers have openly voiced their frustrations towards JD Sports as they don’t feel as though they’re maximizing their delivery service to its full capacity. These concerns have been voiced on various platforms and means of media i.e through reviews on JD Sports social media pages such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. A vast majority of the complaints stemmed towards JD Sports not delivering items to customers on time. Out of the 5000 reviews on the trust pilot website, 65% of them were shedding JD Sports delivery in a negative light. JD Sports’ response to their supposed poor delivery service was the implementation of travel and shipping restrictions as a result of the COVID outbreak. One could argue that this is fair reasoning however others question why other companies didn’t experience these delivery issues at least to the extent that JD did. This is the reason we decided to partake this research; to investigate the problems that people had with JD Sports delivery services and whether these issues during the lockdown will affect their decision making process when it comes to purchasing from JD Sports in the future. To summarize, we want to find out whether JD Sports reputation and customer loyalty has taken a hit/ been tarnished as a result of its poor delivery service during the lockdown period.

The first step that was taken to answer this research question was the making of a Research proposal. The research proposal was made in order to formulate ideas about the Research question and how to improve and make it as explicit as possible in order to get as many accurate responses as possible. Our target audience were customers from JD Sports (Mainly ones that had purchased from JD Sports during the time of the lockdowns so March – August 2021). Next, we set up 2 objectives that we wanted to achieve from conducting our Research. These objectives were firstly, to find out the thoughts and opinions of JD Sports’ customers standing on how efficient or inefficient the company was during the time of the COVID pandemic and secondly to measure the impact that these problems had now that most lockdowns are over. The design of our Research was a questionnaire in which questions were asked to respondents (Customers of JD Sports) about their experience shopping with JD Sports especially during the time of COVID and how these experiences have impacted their overall perception of JD Sports. At first our questionnaire consisted of 8 closed questions and 2 open questions. We wanted to have 2 open questions so that respondents could elaborate and give more information about the specifics when it came to the extent of the shortcomings in regards to JD Sports delivery service. However, upon handing the questionnaire out, we noticed that many people were answering all the closed questions however when it came to the open questions, they either answered one or sometimes none at all. As a result of this, we altered the structure of the questionnaire and limited the open questions to just one in order to ensure that we received as many responses as possible. In addition, giving the time restraints we set a benchmark of at least 50 respondents before proceeding onto analysing our data. The questionnaire was constructed fairly and although in theory based on our previous findings, we assumed that JD Sports delivery during the COVID pandemic era was below par, we didn’t make this assumption in the questionnaire so it was fair and not misleading. We then used the data from our Research to either back the claim that JD Sports delivery influenced its reputation or go against it. Lastly, we made a GANT chart to keep tabs on our progress and to make sure that the weekly tasks were clear so that we met our deadlines.

We accessed respondents by firstly asking our classmates and peers that had purchased from JD Sports, then asking people we knew that had also purchased from JD Sports. We limited the geography of our Research to people within the Netherlands only in order to keep our data fair and balanced. Asking people outside of the Netherlands would make our data broader and more diverse but would affect the nature of our results because JD Sports delivery services may have been different in other countries. We experienced some shortcomings; after a week and a half of collecting data, we noticed that we weren’t getting enough responses. We only had about 14 people complete the questionnaire. In addition to this, some people did not fully complete the questionnaire by answering every question that was mandatory. As a result of this we had to find a way to get more people to respond to our questionnaire therefore we went onto the field physically to ask people to complete our questionnaire. We had to do this due to time constraints because we wanted to stick to the schedule on our GANT chart. This tactic proved to be useful as the data we collected more than doubled. We went from about 14 separate pieces of data to about 34. We did this for a few more days over the next week and managed to get to our set threshold of 50 respondents. The only challenge we faced was getting people to answer the open question. A way to improve this in the future would be to possibly put the open question first in the questionnaire opposed to last because it requires more energy and thought than the closed questions. This way people get it out of the way early before proceeding to the other questions. After collecting our data, we had to go through the process of analysing it. We did this by firstly, putting all the responses on a spreadsheet on Excel. Then using our scales of satisfied to dissatisfied, we differentiated the responses which hinted at JD Sports delivery service being more poor during lockdown in contrast to the responses that shed JD Sports delivery in a positive light. We then put this data on bar and pie charts in order to get an idea on the percentages of people that were satisfied, dissatisfied and had a neutral opinion in regards to JD Sports delivery service.

Based on the results of our findings, some things were very evident. Firstly a large majority of our respondents stemmed from the 18-20 and 21-29 age groups. Only 2 people were outside this age range. This indirectly tells us that this is most likely the target market for JD Sports; or at least this is the age population that purchases from JD Sports the most. None of our respondents were 30 or above. This information doesn’t really answer our Research question but it was a useful piece of extra information that we were interested in and wanted to know. In regards to the length of time it took for JD Sports to deliver items to customers 37 out of the 54 respondents were within 1-7 days. This was very interesting to note because 3-7 days is the usual amount of time it takes JD Sports to deliver items before and post lockdown. It is also important to note that we did not include the term “working days” in the question. Using this term may potentially have altered the data from this question. If we included the term “working days” it is logical that less people would be in this region of 1-7 days especially if they purchased during the weekends. However, this is an assumption and we must take our data at face value as it is. In addition to this, 23 out of 56 people were very satisfied to somewhat satisfied with the number of days it took for JD Sports to deliver their items to them. This means that out of the 37 people that got their items delivered to them within 7 days, approximately 62% were overall pleased with the rate at which they received their delivery. In contrast, it took 8 to 21+ days for the delivery of 17 people to arrive. Statistically, that’s about 31% of the overall population of respondents. Furthermore, this correlation is shown when we asked about satisfaction where 23% of the respondents were somewhat dissatisfied to very dissatisfied. Something to note though is the fact that a vast majority of the respondents for the question concerning the satisfaction with the time taken for delivery voted “neutral”. This is 36%. This 36% is hard to account for in regards to whether they were satisfied with JD Sports delivery service or not because neutral serves as a bit of both sides. It’s quite inconclusive therefore it’s not fair to categorize this section of people in any category in terms of whether they were satisfied with JD Sports customer service during lockdown or not. Moreover, this information also hints that to the 23% of dissatisfied people, JD Sports overall reputation may have taken a hit in their eyes as JD Sports did not live up to the standards they expected. Additionally, when it came to the last question about possible suggestions to JD Sports regarding the topic of improving its delivery service, we had many interesting responses. Responses that are worth noting include, “Maybe have their own deliverers instead of using other delivery companies. This is so that they are in control of the speed of delivery”, “They should make sure their is tracker for the items purchases do that the customers can know where their items are at all times”, “Make sure that they let the user know that the item is out of stock so that customers won’t buy it and when it goes through the inspection stage it doesn’t take long”. These are 3 responses that demonstrate a sense of irritation and frustration. This is possibly because JD Sports competitors such as ASOS, Footlocker and Zumiez are companies that already have some of these features from the suggestions. Furthermore, JD Sports is regarded as a bigger Sports related firm than these competitors and the fact that they don’t have a track and trace is something that this respondent isn’t satisfied by. This also tells us that JD Sports overall brand image has taken a hit in the eyes of these respondents which supports the claim that JD Sports reputation has plummeted as a result of its delivery deficiencies during lockdown.

Overall, looking back at this Research, I’d say that there were some positives and negatives to take away from it. We took many measures to ensure that our research was reliable and valid. Firstly, we made sure that the questionnaire was as fair and unbiased as possible. We did this by completely leaving out our assumption that JD Sports delivery was poor during lockdown. As a result of this, our respondents had the opportunity to give their personal opinion on whether they were satisfied with JD Sports delivery service or not; our questions did not lead them into any particular direction. Next, we ensured that people who answered our questionnaire had purchased online from JD Sports before. This is so that our data was genuine and not random. A flaw regarding our research however is that not all our respondents had shopped from JD Sports within the lockdown months of March till August. As a result of this, some of our data is likely the experiences of people pre and post lockdown. This slightly affects the results of our research as it most likely exaggerates the quality of JD Sports delivery service during lockdown because pre and post lockdown, there weren’t many measures that were in place that would affect the quality and rate of JD Sports delivery services. Another measure that we took to improve the legitimacy of our data is that we didn’t take our own questionnaire. This is so that we didn’t alter the results in our favor in order to support our claim and assumption of JD Sports delivery service being poor during the times on lockdown. In addition to this, we made the questionnaire available to people of all ages. This was also to ensure that our data was an accurate representation of the entire population of JD Sports customers and not just a specific age group. Even though we did this, most of our respondents were aged between the age range of 17-30 which suggests to us that next time we take a Research of this fashion, we’d be better off emitting this question and replacing it with other questions that give us more clarity in regards to our research question.

To conclude however, it is clear from the data that we collected that what we assumed did not correlate with the opinions of the general public. The results of the desk research we took with data being collected online did not align with the data we received from asking people on the field ourselves. We came up with multiple reasons as to why this may have been the case. Firstly, we noticed that we limited our field research to only people within the Netherlands in contrast to our desk Research which had the opinions of a broader range of people. In addition to this, we also realized that it may have been possible that some respondents were not honest when answering the questionnaire for many different reasons. This could have been as a result of different reasons such as time constraints or even an unintentional sense of loyalty towards JD Sports. Furthermore, we had quite a fair number of people that didn’t commit to any side when it came to whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with JD Sports delivery service and whether it had affected their perception on them or not. Maybe next time it will be better to remove the neutral option so that we force respondents to commit to a side because “neutral” is very inconclusive and inadequate for us to fully analyse how they felt about JD Sports delivery service overall.