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INDEX

Sr. No.	Title	Author	Subject	Page No.
1	Antioxidant activity of opuntia stricta	S. Jasmine Mary, Dr. A .John Merina	Chemistry	1-3
2	Consumers Perception and Attitude Towards Consumerism	Dr. M. Dhanabhakyaam, M. Kavitha	Commerce	4-6
3	Foreign Direct Investment In India & Indian Economy	Dr. M. K. Maru	Commerce	7-8
4	Service Marketing: An Imperative Ideology for Attracting Customers	Dr. Vipul Chalotra	Commerce	9-10
5	“An Evaluation of Human Resource Accounting Disclosure Practices in Indian Companies”	Dr. Nidhi Sharma Hitendra Shukla	Commerce	11-13
6	Changing Products of Life Insurance Corporation of India After Liberalization-an Overview	Dr. Niranjan Kakati	Commerce	14-16
7	Consumer Behaviour And Marketing Actions	Dr.A.Jayakumar K.Kalaiselvi	Commerce	17-19
8	Corporate Social Responsibility & Ethics in Marketing	Manojkumar Mohanbhai Parmar	Commerce	20-22
9	Regulated Market – an Overview	S. Ravi Dr.K.Uthaiyasuriyan	Commerce	23-25
10	A Socio-Economic And Statutory Approach Towards Right To Life	Manish Parshuram Pawar Dr. Ashok Pawar	Economics	26-27
11	An Analysis of the Impact of Power Sector Reforms in Haryana on the Generation, Transmission and Distribution	Dr. Pardeep S. Chauhan	Economics	28-30
12	Professional Education And Employment Of Banjara and Dhangar Community in India	Dr.Pawar Ashok S Naik Priti A. Dr. Rathod Sunita J.	Economics	31-33
13	Educational condition of Banjara and Vanjari Communities in India: An Over view	Dr.Pawar Ashok S. Tidke Atish S. Dr. Ambhore Shankar B.	Economics	34-36
14	Socio-economic Conditions of Tea Plantation Workers in Bangladesh: A Case Study on Sreemongal	Shapan Chandra Majumder Sanjay Chandra Roy	Economics	37-40
15	The impact of Yoga on Anxiety of Secondary School Students	Dr. D. Hassan	Education	41-45
16	Portfolio Writing: An innovative reflective learning strategy in Teacher Education	Dr.K.Chellamani	Education	46-48
17	Instrumentation system for amperometric biosensor	Chethan .G, Saurav Pratap Singh, Dr. Padmaja .K.V, Dr. Prasanna kumar .S.C.	Engineering	49-51
18	“Performance Analysis of WiMAX Physical Layer Using Different Code Rates & Modulation Schemes”	Harish Prajapati Mrs. B.Harita Mr. Rajinder Bhatia	Engineering	52-55
19	Design Dual-Axis Solar Tracker using Microcontroller	Jigesh R. Shah V. S. Jadhav	Engineering	56-57
20	BER Performance of DS-CDMA System Over a Communication Channel	Rahul Parulkar Rupesh Dubey Angeeta Hirwe Prabhat Pandey	Engineering	58-60

21	Effect of Strain Hardening Rate on The Clamp Load Loss Due to an Externally Applied Separating Force In Bolted Joints	Ravi Sekhar V.S.Jadhav	Engineering	61-63
22	Advances In Derivative Free Mobile Robot Position Determination	Swapnil Saurav	Engineering	64-66
23	Mechanical Behavior of A Orthodontic Retraction Loop : A Analytical And Experimental Study	Swati Gunjal V.S.Jadhav	Engineering	67-69
24	Enhancement of Surface Finish and Surface Hardness of Burnishing Process Using Taguchi Method	V. N. Deshmukh S. S. Kadam	Engineering	70-72
25	Design & Structural Analysis of an Automobile Independent Suspensions type Mac-Pherson Shock Absorber	Vandana Y. Gajjar, Nihit Soni, Chauhan Sagar, Shaikh EzazAhmed, Surti Pratik	Engineering	73-80
26	A survey on secure file synchronization in distributed system	Chhaya Nayak Deepak Tomar	Engineering	81-82
27	Design of Road Side Drainage	Mehul I. Patel Prof. N.G.Raval	Engineering	83-85
28	Study on Relation Between CBR Value of Subgrade Soil and Moisture Content	Mehul I. Patel Prof. N.G.Raval	Engineering	86-87
29	Design and Optimatization, Weight Reduction of Rear Axle Banjo Housing for Light Weight Vechicle.	S Surya Narayana	Engineering	88-90
30	Product-Mix Strategy of Jammu and Kashmir Co-operatives Supply and Marketing Federation Limited in Jammu District of J&K State	TARSEM LAL	Engineering	91-93
31	Micro Finance: A Study of Semi Urban Women Workers	Soheli Ghose	Finance	94-98
32	"Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs): An overview of Structure & Legislative Framework"	Mr. Rohit Arora	Finance	99-101
33	Title: "Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs): Development in India"	Mr. Rohit Arora	Finance	102-103
34	An Assessment of Relationship between Crop Production and Climatic Elements: A Case Study of Karveer Tehsil	Mr. Prashant Tanaji Patil Miss. Mugade Nisha Ramchandra, Miss. Mane madhuri maruti	Geography	104-107
35	Measuring The Performance Of Hypothetical Ltd. Using Z-Score Model	Dr. Prameela S. Shetty Dr.Devaraj K	Management	108-110
36	A Study on Factors Affecting Buying Decision of Garments in Surat City	Dr. Hormaz Dali Patel Dr. Mehul P. Desai.	Management	111-115
37	Hutchinson Essar - Vodafone – A Case Study	Vukka Narendhra	Management	116-118
38	To Study The Effect of Basement with Retaining Walls and The Behavior of The Structure	Patel Shailesh Prof. P. G. Patel	Management	119-121
39	AIDA model of Advertising Strategy	Prof.Arvind Rathod	Management	122-125
40	"A Balanced Corporate Responsibility"	Simon Jacob C	Management	126-127
41	Study and analysis Trend and Progress of Banking in India	Triveni Singh, Prof. (Dr) Sanjeev Bansal, Dr. Amit Kumar Pandey	Management	128-131
42	"Marketing Communication-an Inevitable Part of Business Activity"	Dr. Rakeshkumar R.Jani	Marketing	132-136
43	Users' Opinion Regarding Advertisements on Social Networking Siteswith Special Reference to Facebook	Priyanka Patel	Marketing	137-139

44	Bilateral Accessory Peroneal Muscle - A Case Report	Dr. Renuka B. Adgaonkar, Dr. Archana Shekokar	Medical Science	140-141
45	Decentralization and Dilemmas in Development: A Debate	Dr. N. M. Sali	Political Science	142-143
46	Study of Microstylolites from Carbonate Rocks of Kurnool Group, Andhra Pradesh, South India.	P.Madesh, P.Lokesh Bharani , S.Baby Shwetha	Science	144-147
47	Evolution Of Rural Tourism and Its Prosperity	Joysingha Mishra,	Tourism	148-150



Service Marketing: An Imperative Ideology for Attracting Customers

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ABSTRACT

Customer service activities are a critical and inseparable part of doing business for any offering along the gamut. Since service sector products are intangible, the buyer uses satisfaction with customer service treatment as an indicator of the quality of the core service purchased. The present paper gives a glimpse to service marketing, the importance of service marketing, its review, features of services marketing and strategies for managers in case of service marketing.

Keywords : Service, Marketing, Management, Business.

INTRODUCTION

Service is an offering to the customers with sale such as free installation, free carriage, good congenial relationship, free home delivery etc. Its part of product which can't be separated now a days as most of the marketers says. Service marketing encompasses the philosophy of marketing orientation by concentrating on looking after customers and maximizing their satisfaction in the context of competitive offerings while remaining profitable as an organisation. There are many perceptions of what "service" is, and it may be useful to differentiate between services which are salable products and those customer services which are tangential to the product (such as empathy, a friendly attitude, and superior customer treatment). Corporations provide a range of offerings along a continuum from pure services to pure products with very few things at either extreme.

The book by Berry, Bennett, and Brown (1989), Service Quality, describes how important the service process is to the customer's perception of quality: The way customers judge a service may depend as much or even more on the service process than on the service outcome. In services, the "how" of service delivery is a key part of the service. Purchasers of tangible products judge quality on the basis of the finished product-its durability, functioning, appearance, and so on. Purchasers of services judge quality on the basis of experiences they have during the service process as well as what might occur afterwards.

Most frequently, a service has been described as an act, a process and a performance. For example, activities such as accountancy, banking and hairdressing can be recognized as being predominantly service based. Also services can be more widely described as economic activities that create 'added value' and provide benefits for customers (consumers or organisations). Today most products include some element of service. Customer service usually entails answering questions, handling complaints, dealing with queries, taking orders, the provision of maintenance and repairs and other after sales services. There are many products that depend upon service-based activities to give them a competitive advantage. For example, someone buying a new computer may be attracted by a genuine service for installing programmes, and other services, in addition to their preferred computer. Recognizing the value of this to potential customers, computer store service managers will aim to offer many additional useful services for customers. This illustrates the value and relevance of understanding and recognizing the importance that service issues have on today's society. A service busi-

ness is one where the perceived value of the offering to the buyer is determined more by the service rendered than the product offered. In this way the nature and scope of services pose different challenges for managers in service businesses. Such businesses include those that provide an almost entirely intangible offering, such as legal services, healthcare, and cleaning services and businesses that offer both services and products such as restaurants and retail outlets.

IMPORTANCE OF SERVICES MARKETING

Due to the importance of the relationship between the service provider and consumer, quality customer service is increasingly being viewed as a key subset of service marketing. Even though many of the tactics of product marketing (e.g., advertising) require only minor adaptation to be applied to services, the role of interpersonal relationships distinguishes service and product marketing in strategic vision and organisational considerations. Most physical goods tend to be relatively high in search qualities, these are attributes, which a customer can determine prior to purchasing a product, such as color, style, shape, price, fit, feel, hardness, and smell. Other goods and some services, by contrast may emphasize experience qualities, which can only be discerned after purchase or during consumption, as with taste, wear ability, ease of handling, quietness and personal treatment. Finally, there are belief qualities, characteristics that customers find hard to evaluate even after consumption. Examples include surgery, legal services, etc. Services on the other hand emphasize experience qualities, which can only be discerned during consumption, and credence qualities, which customers have to take on faith, since they involve characteristics that are hard to evaluate even after consumption. As a result, it is relatively harder to define the nature of a service product prior to, purchase and evaluate it against competing alternatives (Henkoff, 1994).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Services marketing is founded upon the fundamental concepts of marketing. The development of service marketing concepts over the years has evolved in accordance with the philosophy of customer orientation. A marketing orientation puts the customer at the core of an organisation's purpose and activity. In many organisations the philosophy is manifested in terms such as 'the customer is king' and 'everything the organisation does is with the customer in mind'. For example, British Airways used the slogan 'putting people first' in the 1980s, United Airlines used 'you are the boss' and Burger King invited customers to 'have it your way'. The philosophy of reaching the customer more precisely has dictated marketing activity throughout its history. In the early part of the

twentieth century, "commodity services" was one form of services marketing. Indeed, this notion is recognized by Regan (1963) as the origin of services marketing when debating the "service revolution" at that time. In reinforcing that a revolution was taking place in the early 1960s, Regan and others (Judd, 1964; Rathmell, 1966, 1974) set about trying to define services in this new domain. This debate recognized and anticipated the emergence of more formal and autonomous services marketing in areas such as transportation, communication, education and retailing. By the end of the 1970s research in the services domain had grown and become a body of work in its own right. An international study, commissioned by the Marketing Science Institute of Cambridge, Massachusetts and authored by Languard et al. (1981) represented the most comprehensive analysis and marketing issues that were considered to be central to the management of consumer service business. The findings, based on evidence from several large service companies and surveys of both consumers and managers, linked three separate themes: consumer participation in service production and delivery, management's ability to understand customers' needs and the relationship between operations, marketing and personnel functions in a service organisation. However, during the 1980s many instances empirical studies helped to create new concepts and theories designed to contribute to more effective and efficient services marketing, for example, the work of Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) in developing the SERVQUAL measurement technique was widely accepted and disseminated in the 1980s. Indeed research in services marketing in the late 1980s and early 1990s was dominated by the adaptation of the SERVQUAL model to almost every service application possible. Eventually studies became more focused on developing more appropriate models for different service situations and management priorities.

FEATURES OF SERVICES MARKETING

Intangibility

The benefits of buying a product are based on its physical characteristics whereas the benefits of buying a service are from the nature of the performance. The intangible nature of services often means that customers have difficulty in evaluating and comparing services. As a result they may use price as a basis for assessing quality and they may place greater emphasis on personal information sources. This all leads to consumers having higher levels of perceived risk. The intangibility of services makes them very different from the traditional product mix that is frequently analysed in terms of tangible design properties.

Inseparability

Because services are processes, deeds or acts, customers are involved in the production of a service. For most services both the buyer and the seller need to be at the same place at the same time for the service to occur. Because centralized

mass production is difficult, consumers often have to travel to the point of service production. For example, it is hard to imagine a haircut without both customer and hairdresser or barber present. For a bank clerk or hairdresser the manner in which the service is produced is an essential element of the total promotion of the service.

Perishability

Given the intangible nature of services, they cannot be stored, warehoused or re-used. The hairdresser cannot store haircuts so that when a rush occurs on a Saturday morning all customers can have their hair cut at once. Thus the availability of enough opportunities for service delivery at relevant times is important for service managers.

Heterogeneity

Again the intangible nature of services means that standardization and quality are difficult to control. Given that people are involved in providing the actual services in most sectors and that people are unlikely to operate as reliably and constantly as machines it is often difficult to measure and control quality. Therefore it may be difficult for customers to evaluate quality and for employers to measure and control quality.

WHAT SHOULD A SERVICE MARKETEEER DO?

By identifying the drivers of consumer choice, a service marketer can identify the factors, which can be leveraged in different service conditions to add value to the consumer and thus differentiate the offering. Issues relating to which elements of the offering to emphasize when adding value may be particularly important in the case of services, as the characteristics of the typical services offering may have major implications. An organisation's ability to compete effectively in a particular market is increasingly seen as being dependent on its capacity to deliver offerings that comprise a competitive bundle of benefits, or value, to the consumer. The process of adding value is in essence differentiating one's offerings effectively in the eyes of the consumer. One of the means to achieve this is through "Branding".

CONCLUSION

Service marketing differs from product marketing due to the fact that services are intangible and typically require personal interaction with the customer. As a result, the quality of this service interaction becomes an important subset of marketing strategy. Marketers are challenged to define their businesses as broad systems of customer benefits; to create a market-driven culture through selection, education and motivation of employees, as well as development of appropriate business procedures and technologies; and to design marketing programs which continually create new benefits and value for the customer, make the offerings more tangible, and control the level of promises so that customers are not led to expect more than can be delivered on a continual basis.

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