



## Marketing a Service Brand-Challenges and Solutions

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to positioning of service brands specifically. This is because of the unique characteristics of services. Intangibility makes marketing service brands especially difficult. When it comes to building and maintaining a strong and distinctive brand in any category, the marketing landscape has never been more challenging. Arguably, the challenge is even more overwhelming for service brands. Although some authors argue that there are no much differences between positioning in services and that of physical goods, but the majority of marketing scholars believe that it is difficult to embark on positioning strategies in services. The marketers need to focus on the changes happening in the environment and equip themselves to face these challenges and to create a market of their own in the consumers mind. This paper mainly concentrates on the challenges and solutions for marketing a service brand*

**Keywords :** service brand, emotional appeal, perceived service, challenges and solutions

### 1 Introduction

Services sector, one of the major contributors of the economy of any country, is on its top gears. The developments in the services sector is mainly attributed to the advances that have occurred in the field of information technology, health care, knowledge based industries like consultancy, banking and insurance etc. These advancements in the services industry has opened up many opportunities for the firms in the various industry like banking, insurance, healthcare, hospitality, telecom or even tourism. Moreover the liberalization of the services sector has paved way to many multinational companies who are always in their stride to satisfy the customer in all possible ways. All these have created numerous challenges which make the marketers more and more conscientious and pioneering. The special features of the services like intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perish ability, which differentiate it from the products makes the marketing of the service brand all the more difficulty.

### 1.2 Factors influencing the growth of services sector

Like any other sector service also is affected by the changes happening in the environment, be it demographic changes or social changes, technological changes or even political changes. The changes and its effect on the service industry are briefly mentioned below.

**0.1.1 Demographic changes:** The demographic changes happening in the country is one reason for the growth in the services sector. When the population rate increases, and younger generation gets more employment opportunities, the purchasing power in their hands will improve and this will automatically create a demand for the services. The service marketers get an opportunity to market their services to the young customers. With the decrease in the mortality rate the older population increases and the demand for the services like, hospital, insurance and banking goes on an uptrend. Thus demographic changes have contributes to the growth of services.

**0.1.2 Social changes:** The changes in the society have also led to many changes in the services firms. The fact that more and more are entering the work force has been utilized by many marketers to create a demand for their innovative services like crèches, entertainment facilities, transport services and shopping malls where everything under the sun will be available. Shopper's stop, Big bazaar, and Lifestyle are examples of such developments. Moreover innovations brought by MNC's are also changing the scenario. People compare the services rendered by various companies and they select the best one. Thus the quality of the services is also escalating.

**0.1.3 Economic Changes:** The economic development in the country is another factor which contributes to the improvement in the service firms. The Globalization is the major factor, which led to removal of the trade barriers and huge inflow of capital form the developed countries to developing countries. This inflow of capital has lead to an increase in the provision of financial services to manage the capital. Thus the reduction of the interest has created a demand for the loans for home, education and other personal purposes. Thus the increase in the banking and other financial services.

**0.1.4 Technological changes:** Advances in the information technology has led to the development in many services. The firms have started using the IT to provide customer services in order to win over the competitors and to maintain a long lasting relation with the customers. For example, firms like Dell and Microsoft provide valuable support services to its customers with the help of sophisticated technology. The firm Caterpillar has created a record by providing services to any part of the world within 24 hours. Firms like Airtel, and even Government establishments like Railways and Public sector banks also enables customer to seek online assistance to solve their problems.

**0.1.5 Political changes:** Political and legal changes has also influenced the growth of the service sector especially retail

ant telecom. The growth of the retail industry and the innovative aspects like 3G and other telecommunication developments are evidences of this fact. The super markets and hyper markets managed by Pantaloons and reliance can be apt evidences for this growth issue.

The deregulation and liberalization happening in these sectors have bound the marketers to concentrate on improving the quality of the services provided to the customers. The Government's to improve the infrastructure for communication also served as a boon to the software industry.

The liberal trade and economic policies of the Government has resulted in many leading players in diverse area. Automobiles giants like Hyundai, Chevrolet, and many others, fast food chains like McDonalds, Dominos, and KFC, and financial service firms like Max Newyork, Metlife and Future Generali are quotable examples.

There has been growth in the hospitality sector also. Hotels and hospitals are now allowed importing equipments and thus improving their quality. The tourism sector is also on its up-trend. Thus the various environmental changes have resulted in an increase in the services sector.

### 1.3 Marketing a service brand

Marketing is everything you do to make your service or product more desirable, profitable and visible. An efficient marketing plan would provide the direction and focus for various elements of the Marketing Mix-Product, place, price and promotion. Along with these 4 Ps, the service marketer should concentrate on other 3 elements-Process, people, and physical evidence. This is mainly because of the characteristics of the services.

Now, are the marketing concepts and practices that have been developed in manufacturing companies directly transferred to services organizations? The answer is No, because the marketing management tasks in the service sectors tend to differ from those in the product sector in many aspects. The main differences between marketing of services and goods are

- Many services are difficult for the customers to evaluate.
- Customers may be involved in the production process.
- Service products cannot be inventoried.
- Distribution channels take different forms.
- Customers do not obtain ownership of services.
- The services provided at different times will not be uniform.

To overcome these factors a service marketer should use the 7 Ps of the marketing Mix. In using these tools, managers must be aware that they should be selective in choosing which types of customers to serve and that success requires a continuing focus on achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Managers need to be more concerned about giving good value to the customers and treating them fairly in decisions involving all the elements of Marketing Mix.

### 1.4 How to establish a strong service brand

Brand building is an exercise which every business man is

excited about. The brand can be built along with the business. It's the business which helps to build a strong brand, and not vice versa. So a strong services brand can be built and sustained mainly with the customer's interaction with the service provider. A well presented brand can create a strong loyalty when it is backed up by pleasant customer experiences an organization can create, extend and protect a strong loyal brand, with unwavering commitment towards the customer service. The secret of business success is the ability to clearly define your service with precision and to deliver a clearly defined and consistent experience for the customers. This is called a strong brand equity that sings distinction. The points to be considered while building a service brand:

#### 0.3.1 Focus on the customer not on the company

Learn to understand your customer and his problems. If the employees learn the customers then it's easy to understand the issues they are facing. It gives an opportunity to use the company's services effectively to solve their problems in a better way. And the satisfied customers will be delighted on seeing the personal approach of the organization. Example: A very apt example for complete customer centricity is Singapore Airlines. The feminine touch which they endorse gives a warm welcome feel for the customers. And the in flight and other services also treat the customers as King. Their main focus of the airlines is making flying a memorable experience. In the era of empowered customer, delighting the customer making them loyal need the customers' centricity. With the latest enablers like hi-fi technology, the company can build a high-flying brand with customer as the focus.

#### 0.3.2 Put yourself in your prospects Shoes

Treat your service like a product and to try understand how it addresses your customers needs. It's about finding the value and communicating it. The marketer must be creative enough to sell invisible value. So to create values the services brand should be able to create and maintain a deep relation with the target audience. The target audience can be varied so segmentation is also required.

#### 0.3.3 Design the offerings with the emotional appeal that pull the customers

Tap into the emotions of the customers and reach them. This strategy is used by insurance marketers. More often services are purchased based on emotions. So it's the efficiency of the marketer to know how the customers want to feel and also to visualize how the services can apply to satisfy their.

### 1.5 Conclusion

The future of services marketing development and improvement will depend upon the management of all activity by continuously focusing on the quality of management decision making and attention to detail in all services implementation activities. This will entail keeping abreast of the new technological advancements, continuously assessing how these can help to improve service delivery and monitoring customer needs. Along with this the service managers need to be effective and proactive communicators with both the employees and customers, in relation to all aspects of business. Hence the combination of all the 7 P's of the marketing mix of utmost importance to create and maintain a loyal customer base and thus to develop a strong service brand.

## REFERENCES

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