

RETAIL SALES MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE MARKETING

MODULE 5: INTEGRATED SERVICE MARKETING

INTRODUCTION

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) can be defined as the process used to unify marketing communication elements, such as public relations, social media, audience analytics, business development principles, and advertising, into a brand identity that remains consistent across distinct media channels. It allows public and private organizations and businesses to deliver an engaging and seamless consumer experience for a service, and to optimize an organization's image and relationship with stakeholders. Professionals with a background in integrated marketing communications might pursue employment throughout the marketing and communications industries, in areas such as social media marketing, digital media, journalism, market research and consulting, public relations, non-profit and government, entertainment, television and radio, and other related fields.

Integrated marketing communication is a multi-disciplinary field that combines traditional and new media practices. As its name suggests, integrated marketing communications is a holistic marketing approach that considers marketing strategy within the larger context of an organization's aims and business development and maintenance needs. In other words, rather than having marketing, advertising, public relations, social media, and consumer/audience analytics be separate teams or efforts within an organization, integrated marketing communications encourages the integration of these disciplines to create a more powerful and concerted approach.

By using IMC theories and strategies, marketing specialists, public relations directors, brand managers, digital media associates, social media marketers, and other media professionals can create, execute, and track multi-channel advertising and communication messages that target and influence specific

audiences. IMC's influence can be seen throughout modern society, in website display advertisements, enterprise blogs, search engine optimization, newspaper editorials, outdoor billboards, magazine advertisements, and more.

INTEGRATED MARKETING

Integrated marketing is the process of unifying all aspects of marketing communication — such as advertising, PR, and social media — and using their respective mix of media, channels, and tactics to deliver a seamless and customer-centric experience. In practice, that means having a consistent look, feel and tone to your message across all the channels you use.

Integrated marketing is an approach that uses different forms of media, called channels, to tell a story or convey an idea. An integrated marketing campaign might start with a TV ad featuring a memorable character. That character could then appear in other channels: on billboards and in-store displays, in social media posts, in the original TV ad reposted to YouTube, even in direct mail sent out by the company. By marketing their character across complementary channels, the company creates strong consumer awareness and association with the brand.

A solid integrated marketing campaign should include a striking logo and slogan as well as a consistent visual aesthetic. It's important for all of these to be constant across every channel involved in the campaign. Consistency ties the message together and nurtures brand recognition. Awareness and association aren't the only desired outcomes. Effective integrated marketing campaigns also encourage consumers to get involved on social media, both by sharing content and, ideally, by creating their own.

Integrated marketing offers you the opportunity to engage with customers more deeply than is possible with traditional marketing. It also saves money. This is a boon for any business, but especially those with small marketing budgets.

Components of Integrated Marketing

In today's world, marketing isn't just about being creative or original. It's also important to be diversified, particularly in terms of how you're marketing your products and services.

Many people talk about the Internet as though it's a single entity, but this view couldn't be further from the truth for marketers. Digital marketing requires a fully integrated campaign that is spread across multiple platforms. And while online marketing is crucial for companies, you shouldn't forget about traditional forms of advertising to round out the campaign.

1. Print Marketing.

Even in this digital age, print is an important component of an integrated marketing campaign. After all, you can't engage in email or social media marketing without establishing a presence, and print is a great way to be seen. Print advertising generates brand awareness and can serve as a gateway to more personalized marketing and it doesn't require an Internet connection to read or share.

2. Banner Ads.

Some feel the banner ad has gone out of style, but if you're looking for exposure, you could do a lot worse. Banner ads create awareness of your brand and help to facilitate inquiries by prospective customers. Additionally, through targeted advertising, you can make sure your banner ads are targeted to certain demographics at certain times so they are seen by those most likely to be interested in your product and when they are most likely to purchase.

3. Landing Pages.

When someone clicks on an ad, you want to make sure they receive the right message. You also want to make sure these people have an easy way to take the next step in building a relationship. Landing pages give you the opportunity to make a great first impression and to deliver very specific content. If your landing page is powerful enough, you'll have people signing up for your email list in no time.

4. Email Marketing.

The most customizable, personalized and convenient way to market, email marketing allows you to constantly stay in touch with customers and keep them updated on your latest deals. Email marketing also enables you to track which recipients click on your links and ultimately make purchases, helping you to understand the tendencies of your best customers.

5. Social Media.

It's easy to get social media wrong, and there have been plenty of examples in the news when companies have blundered. But, if you take time to establish guidelines for your organization's posts and replies, you'll reap the benefits. By creating relevant content for your followers, you'll also strengthen their ties to your company and you'll even find that they will market on your behalf. Establishing dialogue with and gathering from your followers is also a great way to make them feel special.

6. Organic Search Engine Marketing.

Search engines rank results based on how relevant pages are to specific search words and phrases. This means you can tailor your pages to become more relevant to popular search words, moving your website up the ranks. This is referred to as Search Engine Optimization, or SEO. While this is a delicate science, it's one that won't cost you any money to employ if you decide to do it yourself.

7. Paid Search Engine Marketing.

If organic SEO isn't up your alley, you can always buy your way to the top. Paid search means buying the rights to a specific search phrase and having your ad appear before, beside or below the organic search results. For example, you could buy the keywords "best digital camera" to ensure that your website is seen when someone's search includes those words.

8. Direct Mail Marketing.

Direct marketing is important and still brings big results. Taking the time and effort to mail something helps build brand perception.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The Integrated Marketing Communication seeks to have all promotional and marketing activities of an organization together, project a unified and consistent image of the organization to the target market. It has a centralized messaging function which focuses on a common goal and positioning.

It enhances the image of the organization as it sends all customers a consistent message about the company and its brands. The companies, who adopt this integrated marketing program over the traditional method of promotion where all elements of promotion are treated separately, are more effective in communicating all about themselves and their brands in the market place.

“A management concept that is designed to make all aspects of marketing communication such as – advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing work together as a unified force, rather than permitting each to work in isolation.” – ‘The American Marketing Association’

FEATURES OF THE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

1. Shift in Promotional Expenditure from Traditional Media to Non-Traditional Media:

Traditional media is more expensive and not as target oriented as the new tools of promotion. Consumers are less responsive to traditional media advertising and they may even avoid it by fast forwarding the recorded shows or by changing the channels at the time of commercial breaks. The best way to communicate with target audience is to integrate the brand with movies, shows or events. This is the characteristic which is far away from the traditional marketing tools.

2. Usage of Internet and Social Media to Communicate:

We are into the age of Internet revolution where every moment there are millions of consumers surfing on the Web. Internet has given rise to development and growth of social media which people use to share experiences, content, information and suggestions about products they have used. Today, marketing

communication is characterized by usage of social media where there is regular and close interaction with consumers.

3. Growth of Database Marketing:

Companies in the modern times have extensive databases which contain the names, geographic profiles, demographic profiles, and psychographic profiles of customers. Information about purchasing patterns, financial resources and media preferences of customers is also available in the data bases of companies.

4. Market Place Power with Retail Industry:

There has been a major shift in market place power from manufactures to retailers. The small and middle sized local retailers have been replaced by regional, national and international chain e.g., Reliance, More, Walmart etc. These retailers demand promotional fees from the manufacturers, which often siphons money away from advertising.

Technologies such as – check-out scanners provide retailers with all the information about the effectiveness of manufacturer's promotional programs. This had led to the marketers spending more on promotional tools than before. Sales promotion is the tool which is used more than others these days.

5. Greater Accountability Asked from the Advertising Agencies:

The producers are demanding greater accountability from advertising agencies by asking them to give instant results. The marketers are also giving an incentive to the advertising agencies for increasing their profitability. Organizations are looking beyond their traditional advertising agencies and turning to other marketing communication firms to work on development of their integrated marketing programs.

Agencies which specialize in internet marketing, direct marketing, media planning, sales promotion and public relations are being used more now. These agencies realize that their future depends upon how able they are in developing their clients marketing program.

IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Integrated Marketing Communication delivers many benefits. IMC can create a competitive advantage. It can boost sales and profits, while saving time, money and stress. IMC makes messages more consistent and credible. The main motto of integrated marketing communication strategy is to work towards the common goal of customer-focused marketing.

The importance of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) can be enlisted as below:

1. It Creates Competitive Advantages:

IMC can create competitive advantages. It can boost sales and profits, while saving time, money and stress.

2. It Makes Messages More Consistent:

IMC makes messages more consistent and more credible. More consistent and credible messages reduce risk in the minds of buyer which, in turn, helps to dictate the outcome of brand comparisons.

3. It Saves Money:

IMC eliminates duplication in area such as graphics and photography since they can be shared and used in, say, sales literature, advertising and exhibitions. In this way, IMC saves money.

4. It Cements a Bond of Loyalty with Customers:

IMC creates a bond of loyalty with customers which can protect those (firms) from cut-throat competition.

5. It Stimulates Buying Process:

IMC wraps communication around targeted customers and help them move through the various stages of the buying process. Simultaneously, an organization consolidates its image, develops a dialogue and flourishes its relationship with customers.

6. It Helps Increase Profits:

IMC helps increase profits through increased effectiveness.

7. It Helps in the Careful Link of Messages:

IMC helps in the careful link of messages. Carefully linked messages help buyers by giving timely reminders, special offers and updated information which, when presented in a planned manner, help them (buyers) move comfortably through the various stages of their buying process.

FACTORS AFFECTING GROWTH OF IMC

1. Cluttered Media Environment:

Due to more number of commercial messages media environment is now more cluttered, which leaves lesser scope for single message to have some significant effect on prospective customers. Marketers are therefore increasingly adopting non-advertising route to reach their customers.

2. Fragmentation of Media:

More number of television channels, more AM and FM channels on radio, more magazines, and more newspapers with more supplementary editions is what is meant by media fragmentation. The result of fragmented media is lesser scope for having customer attention. This in turn requires more focus in communication in terms of targeted audience. As compared to advertising, other promotion tools, however, could be better targeted for their impact.

3. Media Cost:

The absolute media cost has increased manifold over the last few years particularly in the case of television. Due to its higher cost, marketers many times use other less costly promotion tools to justify their promotion spend.

4. Technological Advancements:

With the advancements in computers and software technology, data management has become greatly possible and even much simpler also. Companies either collect the data themselves or get the job done from the outside sources. At the same time, the cost of using the data has decreased immensely. With good data management companies can better segment their audiences and so there is now the possibility of more focus in the selection of

target audience. In all, marketers achieve more effectiveness in reaching their target markets.

5. Client Expertise:

In the age of information clients are now better equipped with the understanding of various nuances of communication planning. They expect better returns on their investment and accountability from the agencies they hire for advertising purpose.

Many companies are even doing away with commission based remuneration and instead the remuneration is based on some objective measure such as sales, or market share as an incentive. Responding to this change, agencies now consider a variety of promotion tools as a less expensive alternative to mass-media advertising.

6. Increasing Number of 'Me-too-Products':

Manufacturers are now better able to offer the products which are similar to the existing successful competitive products. The fact that products are not having much point of differences, communication becomes a real challenge for the marketer. Marketing communication needs to create a strong pull factor for the product either through building a strong brand image or an intense commercial message delivery to gain enough of attention and sales over the short period of time.

7. Increasing Power of Retailers:

The trend towards organized retailing is on rise due to more and more consolidation taking place in the industry. There are now large retailers having retail chains spanning across national and international boundaries. The sheer size and the capacity to address large number of needs have given more power to large retailers and they are using this to have better negotiations with the manufactures.

They seek better services and also better allowances from the manufacturer, which usually has an adverse effect on advertising, spend. Marketers are, therefore, shifting their focus towards other promotional tools like sales promotion which they find as capable of producing more short-term results.

8. Increasing Global Marketing:

Global marketing adds intensity to the competition for every company whether or not selling in other country. Companies, therefore, seek more efficiency in their operations including communication.

9. Increasing Pressure on Bottom Line:

Due to competitive pressures, companies seek more financial accountability in various marketing initiatives. The focus therefore shifts to short- term rather than long-term financial gains. This has its direct impact on communication planning involving the greater use of various promotion tools and not just advertising.

10. Rapid Growth of Internet:

Internet as an interactive medium is assuming greater relevance in companies' promotion planning. Over traditional medium, particularly television and print, the digital medium offers various advantages like precision targeting, measurable return on investment (ROI), low entry-level fee and global reach.

ADVANTAGES OF IMC

There are several advantages of Integrated Marketing Communications in the ever changing world. The biggest advantage is that it creates synergy among the various promotional tools. When the consumers are less responsive to traditional advertising, it tries to reach through different tools like Internet Marketing, PR and other tools. It also tries to create interactivity in the sales and promotional messages through the usage of technology.

As there have been decline in the audience size for many media, it helps to develop more efficient and effective marketing communications program. Many companies try to indulge customers in the teaser campaigns through Internet.

Maruti created a teaser page on its website for Alto 800, to create a curiosity around the product prior to its launch.

INTEGRATED SERVICE MARKETING MIX

Marketing activity is normally structured around the 4 Ps – product, price, promotion and place. That is, when discussing strategies to market manufactured goods, marketers usually address these four basic strategic elements. However, this is not sufficient when we are talking about service marketing. How does the marketing mix for services look like? Understand how the 4 Ps of the classic marketing mix can be extended to yield a complete marketing mix for services.

3 additional Ps – 7 Ps as the Marketing Mix for Services

The 4 Ps, comprising product, price, place and promotion build the 4 critical pillars of every marketing strategy. However, the distinctive characteristics of services require the addition of three more Ps – people, physical evidence and process. This is necessary as services differ strongly from products in their nature: aspects such as customer involvement in production and the importance of the time factor require that additional strategic elements are included to yield an exhaustive marketing mix for services.



What is meant by each of them?

- **People** – the appearance and behavior of service personnel. People are the most important defining factor in a service environment: a service is obviously inseparable from the person providing it, which is different than in case of a tangible product. For instance, a restaurant is not only good because of good food, but because of a good service provided by its staff.
- **Physical evidence** – everything from the appearance, design, layout of the service setting, to aspects like brochures, equipment (the tangible parts of the actually intangible). Since services are intangible in nature, most service providers aim to incorporate certain tangible elements into the offering. This enables an enhanced customer experience. For instance, in a barber shop you usually will find well designed waiting areas with magazines, sofas etc. To return to the restaurant example, you may find that restaurants invest quite a lot in their interior design and decorations to offer a tangible experience to their customers.
- **Process** – how the service is delivered, the actual procedures and flow of activities. The process of service delivery is crucial since it ensures that the same standard is repeatedly delivered to customers. For this reason, most companies have something like a service blue print, lining out the details of the standardized service delivery process. For example, fast food chains have clearly specified processes for customer servicing, which may even include standardized phrases. Each of these three extra Ps is of central importance in services. They all refer to criteria that customers rely on in judging the quality and overall image.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SERVICE MARKETING SYSTEM

When service firms think of marketing strategies, they usually consider outbound and direct techniques i.e. messages that are sent straight to your prospective customers and clients. The goal, in this approach, is to be persuasive and compelling so that your audience responds to and engages with the service offered. These techniques will be undeniably in vogue as long as marketing exists. But service marketing strategies have evolved over the years, especially after the arrival of digital marketing. The behavior of service buyers has changed. They are more likely to carry out an internet search to find a service firm, and probably read client reviews to evaluate their services.

This, in fact, has broadened the range of service marketing strategies at your disposal. Staying competitive, today, means taking the fullest advantage of a variety of strategies.

Marketing Strategies for Service Companies

Following are some strategies:

1. Market Research

Research is the bedrock of all present-day marketing efforts. From marketplace to brand research, exhaustive scientific studies can help you to take more informed decisions. It will lend you an objective basis for service marketing and also extend valuable baselines to measure your results.

Research helps you to understand your customers better. Market research gives you an insight about how your business processes are performing. You will know on what counts your company is performing and what marketing strategy in service sectors you need to spruce up.

The impact of market research is obvious. Studies have revealed that firms carry out systematic research regarding their prospect. Clients often grow 3-10 times faster and are up to twice more profitable than peers who don't carry out any research.

2. Niche strategy

One of the most important business considerations for service marketing is niche targeting and specialization. Research has shown that some of the fastest growing service firms are specialists in a carefully selected niche. The niche must be a sector of the industry which you thoroughly understand, a space where you can become an undisputed leader and expert.

Specialization can make the all the difference to your marketing efforts. It defines what you do exactly and distinguishes you among competition. Specialization is a differentiator which proves it.

3. High performance website

In the professional service marketplace today, your company's website will be one of the most important asset. It's more than just a digital billboard, as many companies believed in the past. A good website is at the center of a service firm's

online presence as well as an info-rich projection of your expertise in the marketplace.

The website is a major tool to build brand visibility. Prospective clients usually search online to hire service providers. You must have an easily navigable website where people find all the information they need and you land a better chance of winning a business. Besides, the website will help you to demonstrate your expertise and grab better acceptability in the marketplace. It's usually seen that around 80% of people hunt online for service marketing firms. The internet has also emerged as the commonest source of all information.

When a visitor lands on your website, robust information and carefully devised offers can drive leads to closer engagements. It eventually brings qualified business to you. The process to nurture leads via content is shown below.

The second component of the website which you must consider is the design. Graphic and web designs can greatly influence audience perception and aid recall, and intuitively and swiftly differentiate business.

The power of a good website design is often undermined. This, in turn, gives a tremendous opportunity to a company to set it apart from the rest of competition and convey the credibility that's needed to drive home the rewards.

The compatibility of your website over a wide range of devices is also important. These include computers, androids, tabs, mobiles, and others. Responsive design, which allows a website to suit a viewer's device, has become one of the key features for business as more people are using mobile and handheld devices for business. Google have already begun to rank websites that are "mobile friendly" higher up the search results. Making a website responsive is now a necessity for service marketing firms.

4. Search engine optimization (SEO)

As already said before, the target audience must be able to land on your site without any problem. The website must be effective in that way. And this where SEO comes in. So much is its importance in the online service marketing puzzle that high-growth companies consider SEO as one of the most important strategies available to drive traffic.

SEO is an always evolving, yet complex discipline. It comprises of two major components.

Onsite SEO:

VISHAKHA MANKAR

Shantiniketan Business School, Nagpur

This technique uses targeted keywords for communicating the content of your website which will appeal to your target audience. Keyword phrases typically focus on the services that you offer and helps search engines to come up with more relevant data to the searchers. And when the audience searches for some insight on service area of your specialization, they'll land on your website.

Offsite SEO:

It takes the form of back-links to your website; wither via guest articles on other websites, or through third-party engagement. These efforts increase the website's authority as an acknowledged leader in your area of interest.

As more relevant and high quality websites link to your sites, popular search engines will understand your credibility, leading to higher rankings.

5. Social media

If you require more evidence about the relevance of social media for professional services, here's some info. More than 60% of all buyers check new service providers over the social media which makes it one of the commonest used information sources than formal recommendations or referrals.

In fact, the nature of referrals has changed with the arrival of social media. A recent referral marketing study found that nearly 17% of all expertise-based referrals are carried out on the basis of social media interactions. Simply put, the social media acts as an accelerator to reach your expertise, reputation and content to your target customers. It helps you to connect to valuable influencers and contacts, along with monitoring your brand via social listing.

6. Advertising

There are several platforms on which you can advertise your service marketing firm. These commonly include the following.

- Service Industry websites and publications
- Social media
- Google Ad Words, search engine marketing (SEM), Yahoo, Bing and other portals.
- Retargeting: A cookie-based technology which uses a JavaScript code for anonymously following your audience across the internet and serve relevant advertisements.

Advertising doesn't merely promote your service marketing. It also plays a major role to drive content downloads, thereby increasing both visibility and expertise.

7. Marketing automation, CRM

Marketing automation:

It replaces repetitive manual repetitive and high-touch manual processes with the automated ones. The changeover is supported by technology. Automation brings together all the online service marketing channels into a single centrally managed system to create, manage, and measuring campaigns and programs.

Like any other technological tool, it's important that you select the correct service marketing automation software most suitable for your company. The complexity, scalability, and size of the solution must be a good match for your requirements.

CRM:

Valuable software is the customer relationship management (CRM) system. A large number of companies use CRMs for tracking and organizing client information and scouring opportunities. A CRM module, in short, can help you to stay connected and organized, regardless of how complex your operations become.

The CRM system functions as a database for all the connected information about clients and opportunities, including detailed notes about interactions. Information can be keyed in, stored and accessed by the staff as and when needed. It leads to the synchronization of efforts across various departments in your firm.

8. Testing and optimization

Testing and optimization allows you to schedule your marketing efforts and take decisions based on hard facts and not presumptions. While research is at the base of marketing, testing and optimization is a continuous guide. Testing of marketing campaigns should never stop. But they can be adjusted according to market demands.

SERVICE QUALITY MEASURES

Service quality is a combination of two words, Service and Quality where we find emphasis on the availability of quality services to the ultimate users. The term quality focuses on standard or specification that a service generating organization promises. We can't have a clear-cut boundary for quality. Sky is the limit for

quality generation. Scientific inventions and innovations make the ways for the generation of quality. More frequency in innovations, less gap in the process of quality up-gradation.

Like the goods manufacturing organizations even the service generating organizations are found instrumental in promoting research and devising something new that makes the services, schemes distinct to the competitors and creates profitable market opportunities to capitalize on. It is against this background that in the developed countries, the process of innovation is found more frequent.

Dimensions of Service Quality

Service quality is a perception of the customer. Customers, however, form opinions about service quality not just from a single reference but from a host of contributing factors. Service marketers need to understand all the dimensions used by customers to evaluate service quality.

1. Reliability

This dimension is shown to have the highest influence on the customer perception of quality. It is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Sahara Airlines, an upcoming domestic air carrier within India, has been striving to protect itself as a reliable airline. It hopes to differentiate itself from other airlines Indian Airlines. To protect this reliability, Sahara Airways has a scheme of full refund plus a coupon of Rs.3,000 to every passenger on delay of flights by more than 59 minutes.

When service delivery fails the first time, a service provider may get a second chance to provide the same service in the phase called 'Recovery'. The expectations of the customer are usually higher during the recovery phase than before because of the initial failure. The reliability dimension, which ensures timely delivery time after time, helps the service provider to meet the customer expectations fully at the lowest level of service expectation.

2. Responsiveness:

It is the willingness of the service firm's staff to help customers and to provide them with prompt service. The customers may have queries, special requests, complaints, etc. In fact, each customer may have problems of his or her own.

While the front- end employee may have been trained or equipped to deliver standardized services, the customers want them to go beyond this limit. It is the willingness to help the customer or willingness to go that extra distance that is responsiveness.

When response is delayed customers usually loses interest. Many sales representatives respond on the phone, 'I will call you back'. The call is never returned. The customer draws his or her own conclusion about the quality of service he is likely to receive in the future.

3. Assurance:

It defined as the ability of the company to inspire trust and confidence in the service delivery. It refers to knowledge and courtesy of the service firm's employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in the customer toward the company. This dimension is considered vital for services that involve high risk as customers may not be able to evaluate all the uncertainties involved in the process by them.

Example- There is property developers/builders who provide a list of previous buyers of flats or apartments to potential buyers.

4. Empathy:

It refers to the caring, individualized attention the service firm provides each customer. When service provider puts himself in the shoes of the customers, he may see the customer's viewpoint better. When customers feel that the provider is making his best effort to see their viewpoint, it may be good enough for most.

Example, a lady customer with a young child arrives slightly late at the check-in counter and requests the agent for a seat along the aisle and near the toilet.

Even if all such seats have already been taken up, the agent and the airline may make even effort to request another passenger to exchange seats and meet the customer demand. The lady passenger would be delighted if her request could be honored despite the last minute checking in, and even if she does not get such a seat, she would be grateful for their effort.

5. Tangibles:

It refers to physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of a service firm's employees. The job of the tangible and physical evidence of a service is multifunctional. When a patient in the waiting room of a clinic sees the doctor's certificate, he becomes aware of the quality of service he is about to receive.

If a dental clinic provides patients with clean rubber footwear and freshly laundered bibs or coats before the actual service, the patients and their accompanying relatives or friends will be impressed. A dentist dressed in a spotless white coat is likely to impress them even further. Tangibles provide the customer proof of the quality of service.

Measurement of dimensions of service quality

1. Service quality questionnaires

To improve your business's service, you need to understand how satisfied customers are and if their expectations are fulfilled. One of the best ways to do this is by asking customers for their feedback using service quality questionnaires.

These questionnaires are typically sent after a customer interaction, like a store visit or an online help form submission. They aren't meant for merely gathering data. If your customer reports a negative experience or interaction, you should follow up with them right away to resolve it and report on the action taken.

Advantages of service quality questionnaires

Service quality questionnaires have several advantages. Since they're sent immediately after an interaction, the details are still relatively fresh in the customer's mind and thus more accurate. They also offer information quickly so you can take swift action on the most pressing issues.

2. In-app surveys

In-app surveys are another effective mechanism for gathering customer feedback directly. Instead of sending a survey via email or paper format, in-app surveys pop up while the customer uses your mobile app.

You can use these surveys to ask customers one or two quick questions about an in-store experience they just had, or about the app itself, or another aspect of your service quality.

Advantages of in-app surveys

In-app surveys offer a quick and easy way for customers to give their feedback. Since the experience doesn't take them out of the app, they can give a quick rating. They also allow you to hone in closely on the app experience itself, which can be useful if that's one of the primary ways your customers interact with your business.

3. Qualitative analysis: documentation

You can also check the data and information you're already collecting to develop a deeper understanding of your service. Qualitatively analyzing written and recorded customer service records, like chat transcripts and call records, can yield insights about the customer experience you may have missed otherwise.

To perform this qualitative analysis, you can go through low-rated recorded interactions to examine what went wrong and use the insights to adjust rep behavior or solve systemic issues.

You can also examine highly-rated interactions to see what separates the best customer service agents from their lower-performing peers and use those insights to train reps as well.

Advantages of documentation analysis

Documentation analysis can be an effective companion to customer surveys. It allows you to determine how effective your customer service team is at providing high-quality service. And with the issues identified, you can provide further training for reps to improve future interactions or identify pain points in your system.

Market Research in services marketing

All companies have a genuine interest to beat customer's expectations, yet in several of my encounters as a customer with various service providers I found that, companies routinely fail to meet customer expectations or fare even worse when they turnoff the customer.

As a marketing professional, I am interested to write about how a firm can improve its service offering and beat customer expectations. In my observation, I have noticed that companies often fail on customer satisfaction - for a simple reason that they do not know what the customer wants! In other words, services providers do not listen or observe what the customer wants and instead they insist on offering what they think the customer is asking.

To explain this in easier terms, I want to quote a recent example: I often visit a restaurant near my house. So far I had good experience every time I visited. But on one occasion it was vastly different. My friend had ordered "Vegetable Noodle Soup". But the waiter returned (after a long wait) with "Vegetable Noodles". Since that was not what we ordered, we called for the manager. The manager on hearing our complaint, absolved the waiter of mistake and in turn insisted on us to have the "Vegetable Noodles", claiming that it was what we ordered. The end result, a bad customer experience and loss of reputation!

Though the above was such a lame example, the same is repeated in technology services as well. An IT services firm delivers software with different set of features than what the customer wanted, or the software works in a different manner, etc.

The reasons on such service failures are several. In this article I will not write about the reasons for service failures. Instead this article is all about how to detect, measure service failures, how to track service performance and gain insights to improve the quality of service and hence the level of customer satisfaction:

Market Research

The most common tool available for all marketers is market research. Market

research being such a complex exercise, it has to be used carefully to avoid creating additional customer agony and at the same time make research valuable to the company.

The term "Market Research" tends to invoke a feeling of an expensive exercise which is best done by an outside firm or consultant. Small firms with limited resources often choose not to indulge in it. This could be true if the world was flat and if the sun were to go around the earth. But that's just a myth. Any firm can (and must) do market research. It can be as simple as the owner of a small firm talking to a customer, or the salesman talking to the customer. The cost of market research is insignificant when compared to the cost of not doing it. i.e., lost sales & profits.

So depending on the impact to the firm, select an appropriate research methods & budgets.

Research Objectives

Like all other research, Market research should be driven by objectives. The most common research objectives (for services) are:

- To identify dissatisfied customers, so that service recovery can be attempted
- To discover the customer's expectations for the service
- To monitor or track service performance
- To assess gaps between customer expectations and perceptions
- To compare the company's service offering with that of the competitor
- To setup norms for performance appraisal within the company
- To track changes in customer expectations in the industry
- To forecast future expectations of the customers
- To determine customer expectations for a new service

The above list is not exhaustive, but is just a pointer. Individual firms can further redefine or refine their objectives for their market research.

The objective of market research in services

1. Service performance is subject to human variability. People providing the service may provide varying levels of service. Thus measuring a service quality only once is insufficient. To understand, consider the above example in a restaurant: The waiter might have had a busy day and were really tired thus confusing Vegetable noodles for Vegetable Noodle soup.
2. The process under which services are provided may vary - even though the waiter was doing his best. In our example, the hotel manager would have told the waiter not to return the food or make the waiter bear the cost of his error.
3. Customer's expectations are also subjected to variations. Customer will have different levels of expectations and different levels of perceptions of what constitutes a good service.
4. Service quality measurement has to be carried out several times to give meaningful results. (for goods a onetime survey on a set of products will work)

SERVICE MARKETING RESEARCH FOR GLOBAL MARKET

The global marketing research and analysis services market is expected to grow from \$65.08 billion in 2020 to \$68.73 billion in 2021 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.6%. The market is expected to reach \$83.39 billion in 2025 at a CAGR of 5%.

Major players in the marketing research and analysis services market are Nielsen, Kantar, Ipsos, GfK, Westat Inc., Gartner, Intage Inc, Information Resources, Inc. (IRI), Mintel, and Market Xcel Data Matrix Private Limited.

The marketing research and analysis services market consists of the sales of marketing research and analysis services and related goods by entities (organizations, sole traders, and partnerships) that are engaged in systematically gathering, recording, tabulating, and presenting marketing data. Marketing research and analysis services include marketing and management analytics and consumer insights. Only goods and services traded between entities or sold to

VISHAKHA MANKAR

Shantiniketan Business School, Nagpur

end consumers are included.

Artificial intelligence is a leading trend in the market research and analysis services industry. Increasing usage of the internet is forcing companies to make their product available online. The consumers rely on reviews, consumer surveys, and questionnaires before making a purchase. AI will ease the task of field engagement to perform these applications. For instance, Google Home, Amazon's Echo, and other chatbots are creating a wave of artificial intelligence (AI) in market analysis. Artificial intelligence is significantly contributing to the growth of market analysis by eliminating the traditional research methods including surveys and qualitative research.

Moreover, data scientists are expected to play a crucial role in enterprises to gather valuable insights on consumer behavior patterns through AI tools and social media platforms. Thus, artificial intelligence is anticipated to gain popularity in the marketing research and analysis services market.

The marketing research and analysis services market covered in this report is segmented by type into quantitative; qualitative; primary; secondary and by end use industry into IT services; manufacturing; financial services; construction; healthcare; others.

In January 2019, User testing, a human insight platform announced that the company has entered an agreement to acquire User Muse, a market research service company for an undisclosed amount. The acquisition is aimed at creating the highest quality and largest global testing panel for Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and Business-to-Business (B2B) companies. Moreover, the agreement is likely to strengthen User Testing's position in customer experience management. User Muse is a market research service designed for businesses that target corporate customers and institutions.

The companies operating in the various industries are concentrating on increased profits and expanding consumer base by focusing on customer satisfaction. This is likely to act as a major driver for the development of the marketing research and analysis services industry over the forthcoming years. Customer satisfaction leads

to increased revenues and profitability along with improved levels of customer retention. Marketing research and analysis help companies achieve these goals.

ETHICAL ASPECTS IN SERVICE MARKETING

Ethics are defined as “a branch of philosophy dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation”. Opportunities for ethical misconduct with in service sector abound and they can be attributed pre dominantly to the intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability dimensions inherent in the provision of services. Inseparability complicates the consumer’s ability to evaluate the quality of service provided. Heterogeneity reflects the difficulty in standardization and quality control. Inseparability reflects the human elements involved in the services delivery process. All three dimensions contribute to consumer vulnerability to and reliance upon the services provider’s ethical conduct during the service encounter.

Service marketing Ethics means a standard by which a marketing action may be judged ‘Right’ or ‘Wrong’. It is the area of applied ethics which deals with the moral principles behind the operations and regulation of service marketing. Ethics in service marketing applies to different spheres such as in product, pricing, placing, promotion and advertising etc.

Opportunities for Ethical Misconduct in Service Marketing

Services are intangible in nature and are provided simultaneously at the time of consumption. Services are being provided by human beings, deliverance of service is different from person to person hence it cannot be standardized. Due to all these factors there are lot many chances where the ethical misconduct can be seen.

- **Very little knowledge of services before consumption:** Due to intangibility of the services, consumers can not physically examine the services before

purchasing; consequently, consumers have little pre purchase information about the services.

- **Services are often specialized or technical:** Most of the services are technical or specialized in nature and can be misunderstood by the customer. For example the terms and conditions of an insurance plan cannot be understood by a lay man.
- **Time gap between performance and evaluation:** Services like insurance and financial planning is mostly done for future for example the success and failure of retirement planning may not be realized before retirement.
- **Non availability of guarantees and warranties:** Services are sold without guarantee and warranty. In April 2013 Dr. Chakrabarty, RBI deputy governor, supported Money life Foundation's appeal that banks should not be allowed to sell third-party or nonbanking products like is insurance, gold and mutual funds because they are untrained to so do and do not take responsibility of the outcome in any manner.
- **Boundary spanning services:** Many a time's services are provided outside the physical premises of the firm or institution. For example most of the bank accounts are opened at the residence of the customers, as a service gesture bank official visit the customer at their place. Due to this service provider often are not under the direct supervision.
- **Variability in performance:** Due to heterogeneity, standardization and quality control measures cannot be implemented in service deliverance. Each individual is different in their transaction. Consumer participation - People think that with involvement of the customer in the service encounter, there will be fewer opportunities for ethical misconduct. But the things are vice versa, the Consumer's involvement in the whole

process enables a service provider to influence the consumer through fear or greed for the product.

Reasons for Ethical Misconduct

In banking institutions personal selling is highly used and reliable media of communication. Due to individuality of service provider and consumer, the chances of ethical misconduct increases due to greed, self interest, profit maximization, to accomplish targets etc.

- **Lack of transparency:** When a customer is paying for the services, he has full right of loyalty and transparency from the institution but bankers recommend those investment plans to the customers in which bank is making maximum profit rather than informing the customer about the composition of the investment.
- **Conflict of interest:** Service provider can be in close proximity to the customer, consequently the service provider can experience conflict of interest. For example a insurance personnel can guide the customer to divide his whole amount of investment in small amount and increase the number of policies to evade the requirement of PAN number and to misguide the income tax authorities. In this scenario, customer and employee are in win situation, but the government does not get actual data about the potential of the customer.
- **Outcome based reward system:** In our country reward systems are outcome based and not service or behavior based. To fulfill the assigned target or to get recognition, officials often engage in practices to misguide the customer.