
Editorial: Rethinking managing services, and value and lifestyle for competitive business performance

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The increasing competition in the global marketplace has pushed companies to go customer centric and tap the latent demands to stay sustainable in the market by differentiating services to customers. As the consumer behaviour is getting multifaceted in the global marketplace by co-creating customer services with the support of new technology platforms that make the services more tangible through the self-service platforms. Though architecting sustainable services involving customers in the process is not getting any easier, a longitudinal growth of services brands in the telecommunication, media and entertainment, transportation, health, and executive education across the companies have been growing rapidly with differentiation and many have been able to alter the perception, attitude, and behaviour of consumer towards ‘service-to-design’ philosophy over time. The service companies are thus engaging consumers in building brands and developing symbiotic relationship with the consumers and market for managing the business performance amidst the chaos and competition. Companies make continuous attempt on building customer value on services being the most powerful intangible asset to drive the business performance. The social media has emerged as an effective channel for managing services across the geo-demographic segments and under the rapidly growing cross-cultural business environment.

Marketing of services is no more an intangible operation for companies as consumers not only evidence and document the quality of services and customer relations but also stand as referrals for new consumers. The customer-centric information technologies have revolutionised the bargaining power of the consumers and the way companies should deliver services and build relationships with customers. Conventionally, the

customer relationship in the services industries is managed via a push approach in communication by setting the self-appraisal goals as what can be sold to customers cultivating the customer loyalty. In the marketplace today, services are purchased by consumers basing their decision more on experiential marketing strategies than the routine corporate promotions. Hence, most financial and insurance services companies are leaning towards emotional push observing consumers' engagement, behaviour, and purchasing preferences. This rapidly evolving services landscape has prompted the companies to shift the traditional services marketing approaches to the digital channels that are designed, monitored, and managed. The digital customer relationships for delivering services are carefully crafted by the companies developing 'services to design' and 'services to value'. Services marketing companies should select right geo-demographic segment for launching the services, architect customer-centric design, and should attain competence in maintaining digital services by employing the competitive strategy and industry needs (Straker and Wrigley, 2016).

The local and regional services marketing companies are thriving to raise their level of customer service by developing proactive behaviour among their front-line employees to build the sustainable relations with customers. Often these companies face intrigued customers' feedback, which prompts them to redesign the services and conduct pilot market test and build tactical abilities to sustain competition from international companies. However, as the consumer preferences are changing rapidly due to various innovations in services, improved deliverables, and competitive advantages, the services marketing companies should strengthen the organisation to get the right support from the employees. It would also be advantageous for the new companies to initially invest resources in educating consumers on 'services differentiation' and 'service excellence'.

Assessments of consumer about the services quality and value, buying decisions, and referrals are all influenced by emotions. The success of services marketing, thus largely depends on the way customer relations is built and crafting customer services to mitigate the negative feelings. Such services strategy turns effective with 'high-emotion services' like birth, marriage, illness, and funerals trigger strong feelings before the service even begins. Services relating to major life events airline travel, car repair, and home buying and selling, and renovation might also fall under emotional services category. The emotional expectations of consumers on services and perceptions of quality and value, enhancing customers' satisfaction, and loyalty are the major challenges for a services company. These challenges can be met by a services company that has enough strategic choices and competitive intelligence to identify emotional touch points, develop right approaches and hire the right people to deliver services (Berry et al., 2015).

In multinational services organisations engaged in telecommunication, aviation, leisure and tourism sectors, design is moving closer to the centre of the customers. This shift has prompted to build user led services design across the market destinations, though shifting the focus of organisations from standardisation to customisation of services is not always cost effective. Co-creating services designs has emerged as an essential tool in the marketplace today. Creating a customer-centric design culture in services organisations requires understanding that they need to be continuously updated according to the customer preferences and no permanent services designs can be established. The customer driven services design helps organisations to cut through complexity and gain advantage over the competitors (Kolko, 2015). Given the trend of increasing business globalisation, most services companies are investing in building organisational infrastructure to understand consumers, local business partners, and

competitors. As the consumers are increasingly leaning towards seeking comforts and convenience, congestion in the services industry is growing faster with the entering of new services rapidly in the marketplace. Such situation has created queuing consumers for availing some services such as specialised health services in emerging markets. Local queueing preferences present managers with additional challenges and opportunities in international markets (Gillam et al., 2014).

In this issue of the journal, there are eight research papers that address the issues of service marketing in reference to technology adaptability, market competitiveness, and business performance. The papers appearing in this issue focus research on banking services, employee relations, retailing, insurance, and value and lifestyle. The discussion in the papers includes corporate and stakeholder value propositions and attempt to establish the role of customer-centric business decisions in a competitive marketplace. I hope the research papers published in this issue will enrich the existing literature on the topic and stimulate future research.

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