Editorial: Customer touch-points and marketing strategy in the services industry

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In the customer-centric business modelling, customer accounting on various touch-points is increasing used to measure the customer satisfaction and performance of services organisation. Advancement in information technology and use of social media has encouraged customer-owned touch-points to share among peers, which could guide the firms in developing customer-centric marketing strategies. Customer touch-points are founded in the following concepts (Rajagopal, 2019):

- 4As – awareness, attributes, affordability, and adaptability to innovative services

- 4Cs – cost to customer, convenience, communication, and conflicts resolution with personal attention

- 4Vs – validation from peers, values based on perceptions, venue (physical evidence for contracting services), and vogue to match contemporary social trends

- 4Es – emotions, experience, empathy, and engagement towards co-create and co-manage services.

These touch-points are highlighted for products and services on the social media as user-generated contents and are central to determine the consumption practices. Customer-centric services firms, in leisure and tourism industries periodically analyse the information on various customer touch-points through text-mining the social media platforms and using qualitative surveys on customers. The analysis of information on various customer touch-points is often share with customers to co-create the marketing strategies (Baxendale et al., 2015). The customer touch-points are the major determinants of customer accounting, which helps firms in developing design-to-market and design-to-value marketing strategies.

The customer opinions on social media channels are viewed as an intangible asset for co-creating marketing strategies and build customer engagement. Such intellectual capital

is used by most services firms as an effective constituent of the balance score care exercise. Consequently, the majority of customer touch-points are taken into consideration as referral communication to acquire new customers. The analysis of customer touch-points therefore, have been emerged as core indicators of new management accounting process in services industries. A range of customer-related strategies have been evolved from the analysis of customer touch-points to support strategic management accounting system (Roslender and Hart, 2010). Besides, the leisure and tourism industries, the retailing industry has benefited from the analysis of information on customer touch-points to converge industry and customer ecosystems. Amazon, has gained greater push from the analysis of vital customer touch-points to understand the voice of customers (VoC). The process of quality function deployment is largely affected by the VoC in improving the service performance.

Mapping customer perceptions and value semantics provide core strategy directions in bridging the customer needs and solutions from the services firms. It is important to remember that customer today seek solutions to their existing problems and not merely products or services. Consequently, the customer experience is critical for companies, which can be explored from the online platforms and informal social networks, which provide guidance to the firms to define, measure, analyse, implement, and exercise collective control on the marketing strategies. The firms in leisure industries like customer entertainment firms (multiplex services, amusement parks and restaurants) and tourism services face major challenge to manage and control customer experience across all the touch-points that define the customer journey, in absence of adequate information. However, despite several voluntary efforts, the information on social media could not be filtered with the predetermined industrial and ethical platforms except some organised social media channels like Facebook and Twitter. Most social media sites such as blogs promoted by private owners do not meet the critical indicators including correctness, relatedness, competency, public information ethic and trustworthiness. Often, social media is criticised for posting unfiltered information on customer touch-points, which is somewhat in contrast to the information of the corporate communication channels. Such anomalies in information pose significant difficulties to establish customer accountability and determine the degree of customer engagement (Krishen et al., 2016).

Conventionally, customer opinions on key touch-points have been viewed as a rich source for managerial decisions and developing customer-centric marketing strategies. Upon analysing the outcome of customers' interactions with firms at touch-points largely owned by the firms, which are used as principal contents in advertising, point-of-sales communication, and validating information on corporate websites. The experience of using information on customer touch-points vary longitudinally (over time) and latitudinally (over geo-demographic segments) in intensity and volume. The customer opinion on categorical touch-points can be used in co-creating customer-centric strategies by the firms. Consequently, the customer-to-customer interactions on social media and documented interpersonal communication constitute the bottom-line of customer-centric marketing strategy (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

This issue of the journal includes four papers that address topics on customer accountability, wellness and satisfaction, consumer psychology, and social media and self-efficacy. These papers discuss contemporary research propositions and attempt to establish convergence between the role of consumers and managerial decisions in a competitive leisure and tourism marketplace. I hope the collection of research papers

appearing in this issue will enrich the existing literature on the topic and stimulate future research.

References

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