**RECENT TRENDS IN SERVICE MARKETING**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

Service Marketing is a sub-field of marketing, which broadly refers to the marketing of services which are intangible offerings with specific features, with the purpose of satisfying the consumer needs and wants. While in practice since last few decades, there are new trends being witnessed in this area of marketing. Most of these trends are a results of the new age of technology in the field of service ordering and service delivery. Internets is said to have brought a revolution in the service marketing leading to increased customer expectations.

**II. RECENT TRENDS IN SERVICE MARKETING**

The following are some of these trends witnessed in the Service Marketing:

1. **Niche marketing :**

Niche market refers to the small but a potentially profitable and growing segment which is currently not being served to the fullest satisfaction of the consumers. Though the concept of niche market is not new, it is applied only recently in the service marketing, in particular to the professionals or business services. For example, there are few business organisation needing services for the purpose of accommodating a senior expatriate in India. Some service organisation offer a complete package of service including the arrangement of the house, grocery requirements, kids school and sometimes job for spouse as well. This new trend is especially picking up along with MNC’s Operations.

1. **Product Marketing technique in service marketing:**

Recently, the salespeople are trained to view and understand the services as a product and then pitch it to the potential consumer. For example, buying a membership of Club Mahindra – a holiday package service provider, is no more simply buying a tour to any destination. The company offers a lifetime membership of staying at one of its “Properties’ (hotel, resort, home) for certain hours in various domestic and overseas locations. The package includes not only the transport arrangements it includes travel to the destination as well as the local transport; food and lodging but also sells rights over its property for certain predetermined hours.

1. **Use of technology in service marketing:**

With the introduction of internet, the use of technology has seen an extraordinary boom in the way services are marketed. With the increase in number of nuclear and double-income households being witnessed in most of the cities of North and South India, a bunch of new services are on the offer to facilitate in the routine industrial and domestic chores. There are new generation entrepreneurs offering services in Delhi region like “Urbanclap.com” which markets bouquet of services including Car Wash, Car Cleaning, House Cleaning, Beauty services, Cloth washing services to name a few by placing the request on online. Areas of Gurgaon and Noida in the Delhi – NCR are witnessing a boom in urbanization due to sudden spur in industrialisation and mushrooming of corporate and educational institutions. There are smaller but significant electrical and plumber services transfer of target market. During festival seasons, there are customized hose cleaning services offered in online many areas. Delivery of such services is possible and is flourishing due to the technology support.

1. **New era of services / E-Services:**

Some of the new trends being witnessed in the service marketing actually make it difficult to differentiate between the actual marketer’s business – i.e. it is difficult to identify whether marketer is selling products or services. The services are so intricately interwoven with the marketing of goods that it may be difficult to categorise the business in one of the two marketing sections of products or services. This is particularly true about a bunch of e-marketers offering various products with the positioning of ease of shopping. There are local e-retailers like “mergrocer.com”, “localbaiya.com”, “peppertap.com” etc. in the NCR region marketing regular groceries, fruits and vegetable son a common positioning platforms that ordering groceries online and it saves consumer time and efforts of shopping regular items and get them delivered for free at their homes. In such cases, almost all the e-retailers are selling common brands. The point of differentiation is the quality of order taking and order delivery along with the ease of payment. This marketing strategy makes use of services as the main features instead of products in all its promotional messages and hence may be considered as a recent trend in service marketing.

1. **Branding of services:**

Branding refers to a set of decisions to be taken by a marketer to make it offerings easily identifiable and distinguishable from the competitors by the target customers. While many services were branded traditionally, there are new players and newer strategic being adopted for Branding of Services. Let us take the example of “magicbricks.com”. It is a web portal dealing in the sale, purchase and renting out services of buildings, flats and plots. It simply states that it works as a Property Dealer but is present on the Web. Property dealing as a business activity is not new. There are some other players like “99acres.com” and “commonfloor.com”, but ”magicbricks.com” claims itself to be the number of one property portal of India. This positioning is a result of its presence on the National Media in a phased and planned manner. The company has carefully selected a unique and attractive name, high frequency advertisements in appropriate media and has added some technological features through which it is possible to show a 3-D image of the property on its website. This initiative of the company has made it stand differentiated from its competitors and is being viewed as a new trend of branding services.

1. **Package Sale Services:**

Traditionally, a majority of the services were being sold long with the product by the marketer of the goods. This percentage of services was a high as 60 percent of the total services being sold in the Indian market till few years back. This packaging of services along with the products continues even today. But a new sales channel has been added. For the marketers of business solutions, team selling is being adopted. In this strategy an account representative offers a package of goods and services to a customer with the support of specialist in different traditional and professional services. This trend is also being witnessed in the event management business whereby a team of specialist ranging from arrangement of music, light, sweets, stage, gifts, cloths, jewellery, flowers, theme etc are brought together by one account representative to market a compete event management.

1. **Dedicated Service Sellers:**

A new trend in selling of services in small cities and towns is to utilize dedicated services where sellers offering several services to the customers. There are service sellers available in various urban localities offering services related to depositing of monthly electricity bills, water bills, children’s school fees, telephone bills and such services which may be a botheration for the consumers yet important to be completed on time. These dedicated staffs keep a track of the due dates for the deposition of such bills of its clients and charge small fees. The need being fulfilled is the convenience to the customers in complying with routine work involving the Government departments where it is usual to find long queues on any public dealings window. There are dedicated service providers dealing exclusively in the filing and depositing of various competitive and other examination forms to the respective universities or government offices by charging a small fees in return. Such services area boom to the time scarce working couples and other nuclear families. In addition, there are service providers in the business markets to offer several repair and maintenance services for office equipments and installations like photocopies, printers, air conditioners etc. often they work on Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC), but of late the annual contracts are giving way to on call services.

1. **On-Call services:**

Increasing number of services in these days are available on call. If you want to buy insurance policy, you just need to call the agent and he would be glad to drop at your place and give you the details. If you are a businessman interested to put your promotional message on a radio channel all that is required to be done is to give a call to the marketing representative and the media booking packages, along with the sample voices to be chosen from are shared at the convenience of the customer. If you can provide the text for the advertisement, you can even get the proofs of the voice advertisements of the selected voices there and then. such services are the latest in marketing. Instead of visiting a media buing house, the media comes to the doorsteps of production house and getting the recorded messages through various social media. On call services are also available for the after-sale services required for vehicles. This includes reminding the customer of the due date of the service on phone, fixing in appointments for the service on phone, the pick and drop facility available for servicing etc. as is being offered by Toyota Motors agents the other players in the market. Corporate houses are increasingly making use of on – call taxis for its employees like Ola, Uber, where the cab can be called on phone. Several mobile applications are also available to provide the service of comparing the products, their features and prices and getting them delivered to the business consumer’s doorsteps like “foodpanda”, “Indiamart”, “Oyo”.

1. **E-Education:**

We have always been into a real classroom either in a school or in a tuition centre. Due to technology innovation as well as COVID pandemic emergence of e-education or online teaching learning methods has increased in large numbers. Virtual teaching is replacing the old methods of knowledge delivery in which various software like Skype, Viber, Google Classroom, MS Teams can be used to connect the teacher and students who are physically far but face to face in a classroom. Recently many companies like "BYJUS", "VEDANTA" and "UNACADEMY" entered into E-Education platform where they conduct classes online. The classroom interaction of such virtual classes is the same as that of a real classroom where a teacher shares knowledge with the pupils, pupils can put up queries, clarify doubts and seek detailed explanation directly from the teacher. Several specialised tuition centre academies hire subject experts, open coaching centres in different locations and get the expert connected to these classes virtually. There are examples of Mertinations, Vidyamandir to name a few academics which offer virtual coaching to the students. Interestingly, a number of business services including legal services, architectural services, job consultants, astrology, matrimonial services are also being delivered using various software for personal interaction. This virtual interaction saves the consumer time and energy of travelling to distant places and can hold the meeting within his/her comfort zone.

1. **E-Banking:**

With the introduction of computer and internet, banking services have undergone drastic change in its operation. Majority of the banking operations are done through online. Services like transferring of funds, application for cheque books, checking of bank balance can be done with the help on online banking services. One of the landmark promotional message was seen in the banking industry with the ICICI's Bank advertisement in 2012-13 endorsed by the legendary Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan that the Bank Saving account could also be opened at the click of the mouse by uploading the copy of the Aadhar Card and a Photograph. This was one new service which was offered to the customer for their convenience and that set a trend which was followed by other marketers like insurance policies "policybazaar.com", tourism services like "makemytrip.com", hotel booking services "oyo.com", in which the services are offered to the consumers at their doorstep with the help of internet.

**III. CONCLUSION**

Nearly a quarter into the 21st century, we are now living in a very fast paced world. We have less time to do tasks that were earlier done on our own – either looking around the city for the best house to buy or buying a flight ticket. We have increased our appetite, be it literally for the food from across the city or that product from a different country that we want to buy. With the help of technology, all of this is made possible while we sit in the comfort of our office chair or home sofa. The advancement in technology, mainly through the internet, has led to a boom in the service sector. Many new services have begun in recent times, that provide quality services – from bringing you your favourite hot dish and cold dessert from across the city to repairing your AC in half an hour – while all that one has to do is tap a few buttons on a mobile phone.

The demand and competition in this sector is so high, that we are seeing players deliver goods within 10 minutes at your doorstep. This is possible, and feasible, only because of the technology and the data being analysed behind the scenes. Technical experts can find out where time and cost can be saved and work out ways to achieve the same without compromising on quality. We will continue to see faster, better and more advanced services in the years to come.

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