

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION AND MANAGEMENT

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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF VARIOUS APPROACHES IN SERVICE QUALITY, DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENTS

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ABSTRACT

There have been various research studies undertaken by management experts and academicians in the field of services management to understand the dynamic nature of services as whole and service industry. All these studies help us to understand the intricacies of various services products. There are many concepts and theories are proposed on how to make services more profitable to the organizations. The very important factor in services management is to create more value to the customer by fulfilling the customer expectations. Through this paper an attempt is made to find out the various research approaches provided to analyze the service process, the various steps involve in service creations, the service delivery system, the service quality aspects, the customer expectations, services as customer experiences, the challenges in services creations and innovation etc.

KEYWORDS

Challenges, Design, Development, Experience, Service quality, Value.

INTRODUCTION

he services sector has grown over the last 50 years to dominate economic activity in most advanced industrial economies, yet scientific understanding of modern services is rudimentary (Henry, C., jim S., July 2006). Service companies are facing problems to create, innovate and market the services. It's necessary for service organizations to dig out the problem areas by adopting various tools and concepts and come up with innovative solutions in services design and development.

The world economy is witnessing a major contribution of service sector in its growth. Services represent approximately 80 percent of the U.S. GDP and a growing percentage of the GDPs of countries around the world. There are many giant service providers which provide different kind of service products like Restaurants, Banking, Insurance, Healthcare, Information Technology and Enable Services (ITES) etc. to their customers but they are facing various problems while marketing their services because of the service characteristics and service quality related issues.

There have been various research studies undertaken by management experts and academicians in the field of services management to understand the dynamic nature of services as whole and service industry. All these studies help us to understand the intricacies of various services products. There are many concepts and theories are proposed on how to make services more profitable to the organizations.

The very important factor in services management is to create more value to the customer by fulfilling the customer expectations. Through this paper an attempt is made to answer the various questions like what are the various research approaches provided to analyze the service process, which are the various steps involve in service creations, how to deliver the service, what are the various service quality aspects, what are the customer expectations, how to make services as customer experiences, what are the challenges in services creations and innovation etc.

The plan of the paper is like; Section 1 brief about the contribution of services in the economy and the the various questions related with service design and development. Section 2 explains about the characteristics of the services and how to tackles the challenges associated with it. Section 3 focuses light on quality dimensions and quality gap in service creations and its delivery. Section 4 speaks about service design and development through service blueprinting, red and blue oceans strategy and the innovation strategy in service development. Section 5 concludes the research paper.

SERVICE PRODUCT CONCEPT

It is very important first to understand the service product concept before its design and development. The service product concept can be defined as activity or benefit that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product. A service is the action of doing something for someone or something. It is largely intangible (i.e. not material). A product is tangible (i.e. material) since you can touch it and own it. A service tends to be an experience that is consumed at the point where it is purchased, and cannot be owned since is quickly perishes.

A person could go to a hotel or restaurant one day and have excellent service, and then return the next day and have a poor experience.

It's also very important to know exactly all the characteristics of services and how the services are different from the product. In fact many organizations do have service elements to the product they sell, for example McDonald's sell physical products i.e. burgers but consumers are also concerned about the quality and speed of service, are staff cheerful and welcoming and do they serve with a smile on their face. This same concept is applicable to many other service businesses.

Hence the researchers talks about the nature of services and tries to devices various marketing strategies to satisfy their customers. To consistently deliver the service excellence, service organizations must get right the four things Service offering, Funding Mechanism, Employment Management and Customer Management (Frances X. Frei, 2008). These are the four parameters organizations need to control to deliver the best service to their customers.

The world economic data shows that the service industry contributing almost 70% into the economic development (Drejer, 2004; Gallouj, 2002b; Hauknes, 1998; Tether etal., 2001). This sector is providing various employment opportunities to all level of the people. At the same time there is great competition among the service companies in same service product line. There are many characteristics which differentiates service products from physical products (S. L. Vargo and R. F. Lusch, 2004). All these service characteristics are creating many challenges for service providers in service design and its creation. Hence it's very important to understand all those service characteristics before designing services.

- 1. Lack of ownership You cannot own and store a service like you can a product. Services are used or hired for a period of time. For example when buying a air ticket to fly abroad the service lasts maybe specific hours each way, but consumers want and expect excellent service for that time. Because you can measure the duration of the service consumers become more demanding of it.
- 2. Intangibility You cannot hold or touch a service unlike a product. In saying that although services are intangible the experience consumers obtain from the service has an impact on how they will perceive it. What do consumers perceive from customer service the location, and the inner presentation of where they are purchasing the service.
- 3. Inseparability Services cannot be separated from the service providers. A product when produced can be taken away from the producer. However a service is produced at or near the point of purchase. Take the example of visiting a restaurant, you order your meal, the waiting and delivery of the meal, the service provided by the waiter is all a part of the service production process and is inseparable, the staff in a restaurant are as a part of the process as well as the quality of food provided.

- 4. Perishibility Services last a specific time and cannot be stored like a product for later use. If travelling by train, coach or air the service will only last the duration of the journey. The service is developed and used almost simultaneously. Again because of this time constraint consumers demand more.
- 5. Variability Since the human involvement in service means that no two services will be completely identical. For example, returning to the same garage time and time again for a service of your car might see different levels of customer satisfaction, or speediness of work.
- 7. Right of ownership One cannot own the service, since you merely experience it. For example, an engineer may service your air-conditioning, but you do not own the service, the engineer or his equipment. You cannot sell it on once it has been consumed, and do not take ownership of it.

The service organization needs to understand the above mentioned nature/characteristics of the services. Based on it they can develop standards to assure consistency in service offerings. Systems and procedures can be put into place to make sure the service provided is consistent all the time, training in service organizations is essential for this, however in saying this there will always be subtle differences.

SERVICE QUALITY MODELS

The various researchers and experts in services management have developed service quality models. All those models tried to define the concept of "Service Quality". They each have their strengths, and weaknesses. The definition of Service quality is: Customers thinking they are getting better service than expected. This is often referred to as the perception gap, ie the gap between what the customers expects and what they think they got. It's worth noting that both sides of the gap are in the customers mind. You may actually deliver better service than your competitors, but if the customer thinks that your service is worse than that's all that matters. Because the perception gap is based on the difference between what a customer expects to receive from a service and what they think they received both sides of the gap are "soft" – they are based on customer impressions rather than a "hard" definable quality. This means the perception gap is difficult to measure, difficult to manage and is likely to change with time and experience. Nevertheless it's vital to business success. Before considering quick wins and strategic improvements there are a number of key questions which contribute to our understanding of the perception gap. Following models are the result of significant research which helps us to understand various services dimensions:

RATER

A complementary analysis of the perception gap is the RATER model produced by Zeithaml (1990). RATER identifies the 5 key areas which together form the qualities of a service offering from a customer perspective. Where the Gap model describes how the *provider* can minimize the perception gap RATER focuses on the dimensions of *customers expectations*. The research also suggests the relative importance of each of the factors.

RATER dimensions sorted by relative importance (Zeithaml 1990)					
Dimension	Description	Relative importance			
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately	32%			
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service	22%			
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence	19%			
Empathy	Caring individualized attention the firm provides its customers	16%			
Tangibles	Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials	11%			

RATER dimensions sorted by relative importance

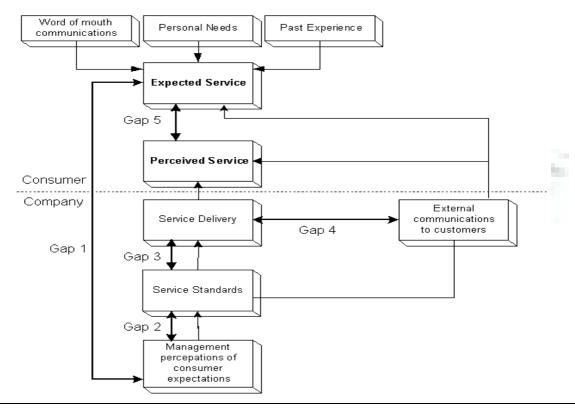
The RATER factors help provides specific dimensions which can be used to analyze and measure customer expectations.

THE GAP MODEL

The figure below shows the "GAP" model of service quality from Parasuraman et al. (Zithaml & Bitner 1996). This model offers an integrated view of the consumer-company relationship. It is based on substantial research amongst a number of service providers. In common with the Grönroos model it shows the perception gap (Gap 5) and outlines contributory factors. In this case expected service is a function of word of mouth communication, personal need and past experience, and perceived service is a product of service delivery and external communications to consumers.

However the GAP model goes further in its analysis of these key contributory factors. It not only provides a more rigorous description of the contributory Gaps, it lists key drivers for each gap and generic breakdown of each of these drivers. These are illustrated below in summary form below.

GAP model of service quality



• Parasuraman et al. GAP model (Zeithaml 1996)

Gap 1

Inadequate market research orientation Lack of upward communication

Insufficient relationship focus

Gap 2

Absence of customer driven standards Inadequate service leadership

Poor service design

Gap 3

Deficiencies of human resource policies Failure to match supply and demand

Customers not fulfilling roles

Gap 4

Ineffective management of customer expectations

Overpromising

Inadequate horizontal communications

• Key factors in the GAP model (Zeithaml 1990)

This level of detail allows powerful analysis of the contributory factors to a perception gap at a practical level. The model shows the importance of marketing, business leadership quality and HR systems in the management of the expectation gap.

Above mentioned both the quality models helps to find out the quality dimensions and quality gaps respectively. Organizations must try to find out all those possible gaps in service creation and its delivery. This will assist the organizations to design and develop the various services as per customer requirements.

SERVICE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The nature and qualities of services as discussed above have imposed many challenges for service innovation and development. The organizations can establish service standards to design consistent service. The various service quality dimensions and gaps are to be considered while designing and developing the services. The compelling need for service innovation in competitive market and the current focus of many businesses on creating value through customer experiences suggest a need for innovative methods, techniques, and R&D practices for services design and development. There are many approaches and theories proposed by various researchers and experts to service innovations and development. All those concepts and theories are helpful to devices new services or innovate and develop existing services. We can study the most popular approaches in services innovation and deployment as detailed below-

SERVICE BLUEPRINTING

This is a customer-focused approach for service innovation and service improvement. The foundations of service blueprinting were introduced two decades ago in seminal articles by G. Lynn Shostack, the method has evolved significantly as a useful approach for addressing many of the challenges in services design and innovation, and it is particularly amenable to customer experience design. In comparison to other process-oriented design techniques and tools, service blueprints are first and foremost customer-focused, allowing firms to visualize the service processes, points of customer contact, and the physical evidence associated with their services from their customer's perspective. Blueprints also illuminate and connect the underlying support processes throughout the organization that drive and support customer-focused service execution.

While designing service concept organizations must be able to describe service process characteristics and depict them so that employees, customers, and managers alike can know in concrete terms what the service involves and understand their respective roles in its delivery or co-creation. Because service blueprinting results in a visual representation of the service process and an underlying organizational structure that everyone can see, it is highly useful in the concept development stage of service development. The main blueprint forms a common point of reference for all parties concerned with achieving a successful launch of the service. It also serves as a focal point for later refinements or last-minute changes.

RED AND BLUE OCEANS CONCEPT IN SERVICE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Business universe consists of two distinct kinds of space, which we think of as red and blue oceans. Red oceans represent all the industries in existence today—the known market space. In red oceans, industry boundaries are defined and accepted, and the competitive rules of the game are well understood. Here, companies try to outperform their rivals in order to grab a greater share of existing demand. As the space gets more and more crowded, prospects for profits and growth are reduced. Products turn into commodities, and increasing competition turns the water bloody. Blue oceans denote all the industries not in existence today—the unknown market space, untainted by competition. In blue oceans, demand is created rather than fought over. There is ample opportunity for growth that is both profitable and rapid. There are two ways to create blue oceans. In a few cases, companies can give rise to completely new industries, as eBay did with the online auction industry. But in most cases, a blue ocean is created from within a red ocean when a company alters the boundaries of an existing industry. There are companies that created those blue oceans and their less successful competitors, which were caught in red oceans.

In studying these data, we can observe a consistent pattern of strategic thinking behind the creation of new markets and industries, what we call blue ocean strategy. The logic behind blue ocean strategy parts with traditional models focused on competing in existing market space. Indeed, it can be argued that manager's failure to realize the differences between red and blue ocean strategy lies behind the difficulties many companies encounter as they try to break from the competition. We believe that an understanding of blue ocean strategy will help today's companies as they struggle to thrive in an accelerating and expanding business universe.

THE INNOVATION STRATEGY IN SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Most of the companies follow traditional approach for new business development processes and the marketing of new products within the firm boundaries. The fear of competitors makes the companies not to involve external agents in business development activities.

Recently, growing attention has been devoted to the concept of "Open Innovation", both in academia as well as in practice. Chesbrough, who coined the term "Open Innovation" describes in his book "Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology" (2003) how companies have shifted from so-called closed innovation processes towards a more open way of innovating.

However, several factors have led to the erosion of closed innovation (Chesbrough, 2003). First of all, the mobility and availability of highly educated people has increased over the years. As a result, large amounts of knowledge exist outside the research laboratories of large companies. In addition to that, when employees change jobs, they take their knowledge with them, resulting in knowledge flows between firms. Second, the availability of venture capital has increased significantly recently, which makes it possible for good and promising ideas and technologies to be further developed outside the firm, for instance in the form entrepreneurial firms. Besides, the possibilities to further develop ideas and technologies outside the firm, for instance in the form of spin-offs or through licensing agreements, are growing. Finally, other companies in the supply chain, for instance suppliers, play an increasingly important role in the innovation process.

As a result, companies have started to look for other ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their innovation processes. For instance through active search for new technologies and ideas outside of the firm, but also through cooperation with suppliers and competitors, in order to create customer value. Open Innovation can thus be described as: combining internal and external ideas as well as internal and external paths to market to advance the development of new technologies.

Now day's companies have to become aware of the increasing importance of open innovation. Not all good ideas are developed within the own company, and not all ideas should necessarily be further developed within the own firm's boundaries. The table below further illustrates this:

Closed innovation principles	Open innovation principles	
The smart people in the field work for us.	Not all the smart people in the field work for us. We need to work with smart people inside and outside the company	
To profit from R&D, we must discover it, develop it, and ship it ourselves.	External R&D can create significant value: internal R&D is needed to claim some portion of that value.	
If we discover it ourselves, we will get it to the market first	We don't have to originate the research to profit from it.	
The company that gets an innovation to the market first will win.	Building a better business model is better than getting to the market first.	
If we create the most and the best ideas in the industry, we will win.	If we make the best use of internal and external ideas, we will win.	
We should control our IP, so that our competitors don't profit from our ideas.	We should profit from others' use of our IP, and we should buy others' IP whenever it advances our business model.	

This means that within the company a shift should take place in the way people look at the company and its environment. Involving other parties when developing new products and technologies can be of great added value. Think for instance about cooperation with other firms in your sector, suppliers, universities, and of course end-users.

The business model plays a crucial role in this is. After all, how and when external knowledge is required and used is to a large extent determined by the companies' business model which describes how value can be created from innovations and which elements have to be sourced internally or externally.

CONCLUSIONS

The statistical data shows the growth in service sector over last fifty years and dominated the world economy. The understanding about services is not so matured and still at nascent stage. It is required to research and understand the services and service sector, so that the various opportunities can be exploited by designing and developing services. New services can be design and existing services can be developed further.

The characteristics of services which differentiate from physical products are major concern for service organizations. All these service characteristics are creating many challenges for service providers in service design and its creation. Hence it's very important to understand all those service characteristics before designing services. The services organizations can develop standards to standardized the services and assure consistency in service offerings.

The service organizations must find out the perceived quality dimensions as mentioned in RATER model produced by Zeithaml (1990) to design and develop the services. Also the organizations must find out all quality related gaps as proposed by *Parasuraman*; it will be helpful to design and develop services as per customer requirements.

After knowing the various service characteristics, quality dimensions, customer requirements and gaps service organizations can establish their own standards to design and develop various services. Service blueprints is one such tool which is helpful to design and develop services by considering all service characteristics, quality dimensions, customer requirements and gaps.

The market is always full of competition all players fights for maximum share in the market. This increasing competition turns the water bloody called Red oceans. Blue oceans denote all the industries not in existence today—the unknown market space, untainted by competition. Services organization can follow the Blue oceans strategies by creating completely new market by designing completely new services. Also the companies can develop new market into the exiting competitive market with service innovation. The organizations can use optimum mix of open and closed innovation to design and develop various services to create Blue oceans for themselves.

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