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Service Design as an Effective Tool for Paint Applicators**Dr. Mrudula Trivedi***

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Abstract

Since the inception of economic activities, services took its unique place in the economy. The tertiary sector precisely involves services delivered. Service means any experience delivered by a specific trader or manufacturer in exchange for some value. Services are intangible, inseparable, perishable and always involves an element of variability. Therefore its marketing involves unique challenges. One of the best answers to bring consistency in service, maintaining uniformity and making intangible dimensions tangible, is by creating a service design. Service design would help to overcome the underlying challenges and act as strategic tool for service marketers. The main purpose behind writing this paper is to understand consumer requirements, their perspective about paint services, how it should be delivered, key areas of concern in paint services etc. and on the above basis developing an understanding about service design and customer experience so that it results into customer satisfaction and customers themselves become brand advocates.

Keywords: Service, Service Design, Challenges in Paint Application, Service Design steps in paint services Service Brand Image

Introduction

Since the inception of economic activities, service also took its unique place in the economy. Traditionally while classifying economic activities we talk about primary sector, secondary and tertiary sector. The tertiary sector precisely involves services delivered. But what exactly service stands for. Here, an attempt is made to understand the term service. Service means any experience delivered by a specific trader or manufacturer in exchange for some value. Here it is important to note that service can be experienced but can not be stored and seen

with naked eyes. Therefore its marketing involves unique challenges. Services are intangible, inseparable and always involves an element of variability. In a competitive era where every service provider is keen to grow the business, its very interesting to understand how growth of services is possible and can we have any strategic solutions to the challenging variables involved in services.

One of the best answers to bring consistency in service, maintaining uniformity and making intangible tangible is by creating a service design. Service design would help to

overcome the underlying challenges and act as strategic tool for service marketers.

Service Design

Service design means creating a process chain in such a way which delivers value to the customer without any compromises with its quality standards. Service design is all about taking a service and making it meet the user's and customer's needs for that service. It can be used to improve an existing service or to create a new service from scratch.¹ (The Principles of Service Design Thinking - Building Better Services) Service Design as a concept and practicing the same in the market are relatively new for organizations but in India now we are slowly moving upwards in terms of using services and enjoying better life style.

Service Blueprint is important in service design as it includes tangible dimensions of services, intangible dimensions of services, service benefits to be delivered and how to reach effectively to potential buyers. According to G.Lynn Shostack , key concepts of service blueprints include:

- **Touch points.** The tangible elements of a service, including everything that customers see, hear, touch, taste, and smell.
- **Line of Visibility.** Separates the “front stage” (visible to the customer) and

“back stage” (tools, processes, infrastructure).

- **Customer Journey.** The experiences people have as they engage and interact with a service (or set of services) over time. (Ubiquitous Service Design)²

Services are not tangible. It is something which delivers experiences to the customers. However, such experiences are perceived differently by customers. So, to be perceived positively and in similar fashion is a challenge for marketers. That makes a strong case for designing a service for positive customer experience and same should be used as branding strategy. As stated by Skard, Nysveen and Pedersen, 2011, in relation to companies, this means that Customer experience management, experience marketing and experience design are concepts that have emerged as a consequence to the idea of creating great customer experiences.³

Furthermore, creative inputs along with utility of service need to be incorporated in service design. Newness for the sake of bringing it is not desirable. It must have utility for the customer. Therefore, what is utility to customer should be the focal point in the core of service design. Service design must aim at delivering customer experiences which are positive, worth remembering and must generate customer satisfaction. So, we

can conclude that managing positive customer experiences is the upcoming area in services marketing. Service marketer must incorporate components which leads to strong positive experiences. Poor service experience will ultimately damage the organisation's image in the long run.

At this juncture it is important to find out how customer will perceive a particular service component. So, perception of customer plays significant role here. Today organizations must prioritise most significant service experiences which are required and in demand by the customers. As stated by Boston Consultant Group, 2006, customer experience is understood and put on the agenda by many companies but they do not know how to proceed on to improve the service experience.⁴ Failure to deliver positive service experience is dangerous for the organizations today.

It is said in marketing that satisfied customer will talk and share his positive experience and story with two or three customers, but unsatisfied customer will talk and share his or her bad experience with atleast ten or twelve people. Hence, managing and taking positive as well as negative experience is one of the most challenging tasks before marketers. With emergence and popular usage of social media platforms such as Facebook & Twitter, its interesting to find out customer feedback

on social media. Customers have direct access to this huge platform. So, they can easily share their experiences which are seriously considered by consumers at large though they may be strangers to person who shared information.

The main purpose behind writing this paper is to understand consumer requirements, their perspective about paint services, how it should be delivered, key areas of concern in paint services etc. and on the above basis developing an understanding about service design and customer experience so that it results into customer satisfaction and customers themselves become brand advocates.

Literature Review:

Its important to understand how design and services have emerged over the years and helped marketers in applying service design for effective branding. Service design has tremendous potential to create a huge brand identity and loyal customer base. It can be adopted in small businesses, large organizations, government institutes or public utility service providers.

Several authors have shaped in service design literature through their work. The practice of service design dates back to a 1982 article by G. Lynn Shostack entitled How to Design Service: In this landmark paper, Shostack explores the relationships between products,

services, people, and their environments. And, she explains the need for service blueprints that map both the potential (optimal) service and the actual (imperfect) rendering. (Ubiquitous Service Design)⁵

Service design is, in contrast to service development, described as a human-centred approach and an outside-in perspective. (Bringing Service Design)⁶

Paint Services Industry in India is witnessing growth but challenges too. Research is carried out with reference to service design in general but not with special reference to paint service providers. Here an attempt is made to create a service design for small paint service contractors who can grow by adopting the design model.

Service Design for Paint Applicators

With a view to bring effectiveness in Paint services, following service design is suggested.

- 1) Sight Visit and Assessment of Service requirement
- 2) Presentation and Communication
- 3) Handling Customer queries and Closing the Service Order
- 4) Time estimation of Service Delivery and Budget Estimates
- 5) Execution Strategy Formulation and Implementation
- 6) Taking Customer Feedback and Improve Continuously

Sight Visit and Assessing Service Requirements:

Sight visit and assessing service requirements are first important step in service design for paint application. Before paint is applied, walls should be thoroughly checked for water leakage issue in house or commercial property, condition of walls and essential treatment required, which type of paint would be most suitable etc. need to be understood at this stage. Mostly in this service, customer may not have detailed knowledge about paint. Further, aesthetic appeal plays important role but only few can visualize how paint would look on wall once applied. For better results, good condition of wall has to be created so that smooth wall surface can be made. Hence, technical analysis of the sight and its assessment is most important.

Presentaion and Communication

It is observed that lack of technical knowledge and preconceived notions build certain impressions about paint. So, potential buyer needs to be communicated technically correct information. It is recommended that customized presentation should be done so that customer can be convinced and persuaded easily. Paint being expensive product and its application is also expensive, customer's high involvement leads to complex buying behaviour. Here, consumer will inquire about paint application services

offered by large companies as well as applicators from unorganized sector. Videos, technical literature and service process are important to make presentation interesting, informative and leads customer to buy the service. In India, water leakage issues in houses and offices are common. So, how it will be treated and durability of paint will play role at this stage. Technical knowledge of nature of paint is crucial factor to explain the customer which type of paint is most suitable on particular wall.

Handling Customer Queries and Closing the Service Order

Once the technical presentation is done before the potential buyer, it is important to observe his/her attitudes. Assessment of customer attitudes in terms of willingness to spend on your paint services need to be done. If assessment is positive then, follow that potential buyer and ask for any further information is required or not. Also offer them timely service promise and incentives so that prompt order booking is possible.

Preparing Service Sheet and Finalising the Contract

At this stage, final service sheet for execution will be prepared. Customer's requirements will be recorded in service sheet. At this stage minute observations and detail discussions are done to avoid any ambiguity. Further, visuals will play important role so

that customers do not develop any dissonance at this stage. Once, service sheet is ready for final execution, take approval of customer and also invite them for sight visit when paint application is under process etc as per their convenience.

Execution and Monitoring

Since, execution is the most important step for bringing positive result and is a weapon to generate customer satisfaction, utmost care should be taken. Execution strategy begins with sample wall preparation. Sample wall will give exact idea about how the wall would look after paint. After taking confirmation from client, work order should be executed. During this work in progress, motivating applicators plays crucial role as variability has to be controlled and minimized. Monitoring this work is an inseparable exercise so that there is no scope for deviation from original work order and future damages can be minimized.

Taking Customer Feedback and Improve Continuously

As a service marketer, one has to deliver best in class services so that customer satisfaction is achieved. However, to bring excellency in services and customer delight knowing customer feedback is important. At times, experience at service sight may be very different than earlier one and it may give genuine feedback which may have very good

value addition for business. Feedback helps to continuously improve service quality and service experience. Learning organizations must make customers as important stake holders not only for profit maximization but for customer delight and better customer experience.

Conclusion

Services are unique and posing challenges in terms of variability, intangibility, perishability and it cannot be separated from a person who delivers it. With reference to paint application services, careful study says that its complex to decide who should be the service agency as customer does not understand technical nature and important dimensions of paint. Further, when agency is not known customer dissonance is likely to happen. One wrong decision of customer proves costly and hence perceived financial

risk is very high in case of paint services. To bring professionalism and to build image of paint service provider, service design would play crucial role. In this paper, Service Process Design is suggested, and if its implanted with customer focus, it will definitely help to serve customer better. At the same time paint applicators get an opportunity to build image of their services. Positive service brand image would also generate new customers and fetch profits for the firm. Presently in India, still major business is coming from paint applicators who are working independently and who do not have idea of how to work effectively with the help of service process design. This work would help them to grow their business strategically and customer satisfaction can also be maximized.

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