

Book Review: Services Marketing- People, Technology, Strategy by Jochen Wirtz, Christopher Lovelock and Jayantha Chatterjee, (ISBN: 9781944659004, 2018, Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd, 817 pages, Paperback)

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The services sector, in both the local and global economies, plays a vital role in determining the growth of any economies. It accounts for more than 68% of the Gross Domestic Productions (GDP) in developed countries, while in Sri Lanka, is also recorded as more than 55% (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2019). This significant growth in the service sector demands for a comprehensive understanding of the same to determine the future of any economies. Further, due to inherent characteristics of the services, it requires a unique set of strategies in heading towards success. If a book provides a detailed understanding on services backed by theoretical foundations and related practical applications, it is none other than the famous book written by Jochen Wirtz, Christopher Lovelock and Jayantha Chatterjee, titled ‘Services Marketing- People, Technology and Strategy’.

Authors have clearly mentioned the objectives of the book as to “provide an appreciation and understanding of the unique challenges inherent in “marketing, management, and delivery of service excellence at a profit” as well as “developing and understanding of state-of-the-art service marketing and management thinking while promoting the service-oriented mind-set”. In my opinion, they have completely achieved those aims, by delivering the book in a manner that any reader, even in the non-marketing discipline, can understand the importance of adhering to such a mind-set while acting as a typical service customer or a service provider.

The book comprises six main parts. Every chapter in the book weighs in on the ‘organizational framework’ illustrating contents of each chapter and line of arguments. They have incorporated new topics and worthy discussions such as ‘applications of technology’, recent examples and research findings, 5 WS model in service marketing communication, service-oriented culture and mega restructurings via many other chapters.

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This book is not only for marketing undergraduates or master's level students, it is also beneficial for anyone who is willing to study services marketing such as academics or researchers since it is rooted in a strong management base and solid academic research. The chapters are organized in an integrative perspective; thus, the reader will go through a nice flow with no interruptions. The text is very clear, focused and readable. Therefore, if a reader is not very fluent in English, they can still gain a comprehensive understanding of the book's content properly. Each chapter provides learning objectives, an overview and a chapter summary. Thus, the reader can ensure that he/she understands the chapter well.

Part One; 'Understanding Service Products, Consumers and Markets,' provides a foundation to study services marketing from a very basic level. The first chapter, 'Creating value in the service economy' starts by convincing the reader of the importance of services in any economy and explains the powerful forces that transform service markets, categorizing the services based on the process perspective and the application of an extended marketing mix in services. While the second chapter is elaborating how to understand the service customer during the prepurchase, service encounter and post purchase stages, the third chapter explains how to position the services in competitive markets.

Part Two of the book synthesizes the applications of marketing mix (4Ps) to services. In Chapter Four, authors explain how to create service products using the 'flower of service' concept while emphasizing the use of branding strategies in services to enhance brand equity. In Service Distribution, authors provide a clear understanding on using both the physical and electronic channels in services. As Chapter Six elaborates, either the cost based, value-based or competition based, the pricing strategy of services should maximize the efforts of a company's revenue management while ensuring fairness and ethical concerns. Similarly, service marketing communications that promote tangible cues to communication quality also should be methodical in such a way that it could overcome the problems of intangibility by crafting effective service communication messages.

In Part Three of the book, authors provide insights on how to manage customer interfaces. The additional marketing mix elements in the extended marketing mix (process, physical evidence, people) are discussed respectively in chapters eight, ten and eleven. As such, when developing a service blueprint, identifying the fail-points (bottlenecks) and then designing a fail-proof service process becomes significant. If the service process results in any issues, necessary steps are to be taken to redesign the process taking customer participation into account. The significance of service environment in customer service encounters is well explained in the book with underlining theories such as the Servicescape Model. Apart from those, authors explain the need for balancing demand and supply since it is truly hard in services when compared to products due to its inherent characteristics.

Proving the importance in managing customer relationships is prominent in service excellence, the authors dedicate Part Four of the book to 'developing customer relationships.' Chapter twelve of this section elaborates on the theoretical and practical backgrounds of customer loyalty expounding the 'wheel of loyalty' as a reliable foundation for building loyalty. It provides an understanding on Customer Relationship

Management (CRM) and how to implement CRM correctly in order to achieve customer loyalty since customer retention is seen as imperative when compared with trying to attract new customers. The focus given towards customer complaint handling and service recovery is depicted in chapter thirteen while elaborating on effective service recoveries and customer responses for such actions. Further, blending with practical issues, the chapter ends by explaining how to discourage abuse and opportunistic consumer behaviours.

Part Five of the book, 'striving for service excellence' comprises with two chapters that shares knowledge on improving service quality and productivity and how to build world class service organizations. It distinguishes 'soft' and 'hard' measures of service quality and clearly explains systemic approaches such as 'Total Quality Management,' ISO, Six Sigma, Malcolm-Baldrige and EFQM approaches in improving productivity and quality. The final part is devoted to ensuring the practical essence of the book by providing more than twenty highly practical case studies related to the service marketing discipline.

As a life-long learner of Marketing, particularly Service Marketing, I appreciate the devoted contribution of authors; Jochen Wirtz, Christopher Lovelock and Jayantha Chatterjee towards the academic culture. Though the origin of the book does not belong to Sri Lanka, many Sri Lankan academics pursuing higher education in management or/and marketing disciplines use this book to teach their tertiary level students, since this book is very precise in presenting the concepts, theories and practices with familiar examples to the Sri Lankan context too.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest.