

Strategies to Improve Services of Exhibition Organizers in Indian Exhibition Industry



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Abstract

We are required to serve the customers within the minimum time limit with best professionalism, processes, team etc. while giving convenience and comfort. This has become an important part of any business therefore service mix including people, process and physical evidence decisions are being modified for customer satisfaction and value improvement. The ways and skills of handling customers by service marketing managers are getting changed in the present era they are focusing upon team, internet, mobile commerce, social media, technology support, and other service strategies to win the heart of their target customers. The focus of the researcher is to study the changing service marketing practices including people, process and physical evidence decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry. The exhibition sector in India is still at its nascent stage and has a huge growth prospects nationally as well as internationally. Therefore the purpose of this study is to observe people decisions, process decisions and physical evidence decisions in Indian exhibition industry. This will help the Indian exhibition organizers to understand the service marketing strategies to serve their customers with the best of their ability and gaining competitive advantage. As a result of this, Indian exhibition organizers will be more informed to attract more number of exhibitors, visitors, and support agencies and at the end customers. The present study is qualitative and subjective and researcher has suggested various strategies to Indian exhibition organizers to improve the attendance of the show.

Keywords: Exhibition Industry, Tradeshow, Trade Fairs, Exhibitions, Service Mix, People Decisions, Process Decisions and Physical Evidence Decisions

Introduction

Exhibition Industry and Service Marketing Practices:

Service is defined as activities offered for sale that provides valuable benefits or satisfactions (Verma, 2012). A service is any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another which is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything (Bhattacharjee, 2006; Mohamde, Sagadevan & Saxena, 2009; Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Lovelock, Wirtz & Chatterjee, 2007). Services possess four inherent characteristics not found in goods: Intangibility, perish ability, inseparability and variability (Clow & Kurtz, 2008; Bhandari & Sharma, 2009).

Exhibition is a social service activity that delivers and exchanges information in accordance with the social needs (Xiaoming, 2012). (Gaur & Saggere, 2009; Karunakaran, 2009) defines Exhibitions as presentation of goods and services at a common location. Brieter & Milman (2006) describe Exhibitions and trade shows are synonymously used with the basic meaning of exhibiting the products and services.

Exhibition is a service circulation process used by several participants of exhibition having different objectives to be achieved. Indian exhibition organizers are trying their level best to serve these participants with the full of their satisfaction so that the show becomes a huge success and repetitive participation comes for business growth. It has been observed that there are several marketing practices which are being followed to provide Customer service culture, competitive benchmarking, complaint management by fulfilling their commitments at low prices. These service marketing practices which are being used in Indian exhibition industry are as follows:

1. Replacing people through technology
2. Interactive websites

3. Apps by Indian exhibition organizers
4. Feedback forms
5. Toll Free numbers
6. Free entry provisions
7. Training to all employees for consistency in behavior
8. Setting standards
9. Augmented level of services
10. Design of facility etc.

The focus of the researcher through this study is to provide people, process and physical evidence related decisions followed by service strategies for exhibition organizers in Indian exhibition industry. Therefore, researcher is trying to draw our attention on the service strategies being followed in exhibition industry. These strategies will not only improve the visitor's attending to attend the show but also gain competitive advantage to exhibition organizers, thereby achieving customer satisfaction and providing value to the customer in this competitive environment.

Review of Literature

The review of literature about Indian exhibition Industry reveals the interest in assessing the exhibitions – its service marketing objectives and service mix practices in exhibition industry.

A research was conducted on Attendees' needs and service priorities in a large convention center and result indicated that service marketing mix including people, process and physical evidence related decisions were (Brieter & Milmen, 2006) on the top priorities for attendees regarding the convention center's facility services. Chen & Mo. (2012) in his research on attendees' perspective on the service quality of an exhibition organizer: A case study of tourism exhibition concluded that the service quality of exhibition organizers has a positive impact on attendee's overall satisfaction. It was also found that improving the perception of the exhibition visitor regarding service mix of exhibition organizer positively affect trade show effectiveness which further influence purchase intention of visitors (Gottlieb, Brown & Drennan, 2011). Munuera & Ruiz (1999) described that exhibition organizers offered services and they contributed to the development of service marketing mix i.e. people, process and physical evidence activities in exhibition industry. Friedman (2002) under his study for ten steps for a successful trade show has mentioned one of the step for your people as your representatives in delivering service mix so chose them well and brief them beforehand regarding your objectives. Ling Yee (2006) pointed out that exhibition attendance was very important and people, process and physical evidence would motivate the visitors to attend the show.

A research was also conducted (Kumar & Kumar, 2015) to understand about the marketing mix model including product, price, place and promotion and how it helped exhibition managers to improve the exhibition attendance. The result explained that it was good to apply marketing mix in Indian exhibition industry and the author also suggested in their scope of future research that a service mix related research (Kumar & Kumar, 2014) instead of consumer

marketing mix would also help the exhibition industry as it belong to service sector. Therefore, researcher has gone further to understand what kind of decision was required for exhibition managers to make it a success for the show. It was also found that (Evers & Knight, 2008) good services would ensure better relationship through professional people, processes and physical evidence decisions in exhibitions on a global scale. Therefore, service mix would help in generating long term relationship for the growth of Indian exhibition industry. (Kazmi & Batra, 2009) Exhibition services helped in showcasing products and services for different players involved in several sectors, therefore these services has to be professional enough to give value to the participants of the show. Fenich (2008) described about services involved in exhibition industry such as educational programs, entertainment programs, seminars, children programs and special programs. Due to the nature of services involved it is very important that we should have expert people, efficient processes and enough physical evidence to be to attract maximum number of visitors to attend the show. This would lead to the success of the show and gain repetitive clientele for exhibition organizers. Therefore, based upon the above literature review, it seemed quiet feasible to researcher to conduct a study as regards to Strategies to improve services of exhibition organizers in Indian exhibition industry.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research was to determine **strategies to improve services of exhibition organizers: A study of Indian Exhibition Industry** along with other objectives which are mentioned below:

1. To determine the people related decisions in Indian exhibition industry
2. To determine the process related decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry
3. To determine the physical evidence related decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry

The above objectives have been achieved based upon the study of available literature, interview with industry expert to understand the service marketing practices followed in Indian exhibition industry, which was a combination of people, process and physical evidence decisions, which are mentioned as below:

People Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

People were very important part of any business (Verma, 2012) that was used into service delivery as compared to product as people seemed to be the product of the organization. They were the one who were responsible to create rapport with their customer and generate repeat business from them in the near future. Therefore it was important for exhibition managers to get right sets of people and ensure to train them in such a way that it ultimately leads to customer satisfaction. The various people related decisions that would help (Bhattacharjee, 2006; Mohamde, Sagadevan & Saxena, 2009; Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Lovelock, Wirtz &

Chatterjee, 2007) any exhibition related organization as per the researcher in service sector includes:

1. Planning to hire the right set of people through internal and external sources
2. Once they are hired the next task is to train them on the characteristics of the customer with the purpose of achieving customer satisfaction
3. They should be paid the best compensation which may be fixed as well as variable in nature depending upon the performance of the employee
4. They should also be motivated enough through several Motivational techniques
5. They should integrated their activities since exhibition industry is all about team work not an individualized job
6. Exhibition managers should also research about the job description, skills and attitude needed for the particular job
7. They should also provide workshops to their team members on emotions management since exhibition industry demands overnight stay to complete the projects
8. The people or employee should be made happy at any cost, therefore taking feedback and handling their complaints as early as possible would make them satisfied. In services, a happy employee can only make a happy customer

Process Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

Process meant the stages from start to finish for the delivery of a service. It was very important to create some paper work (Clow & Kurtz, 2008; Bhandari & Sharma, 2009) that suggests the steps to everyone so that there was no confusion to all parties involved in service encounter. The process should provide time limit by which service would be delivered for the ease of the customers. The hall plan, 2D, 3D drawings really helped in Indian exhibition industry to plan and understand the service process for all the persons involved in the coordination of installation and dismantling of the booth. The various process related decisions that would help (Bhattacharjee, 2006; Mohamde, Sagadevan & Saxena, 2009; Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Lovelock, Wirtz & Chatterjee, 2007) any exhibition related organization as per the researcher in service sector includes:

1. Indian exhibition organizers should not go verbal at any stage to avoid confusion therefore they are supposed the developed the form at each stage of the exhibition.
2. Indian exhibition organizers should reduce the level of customer involvement as in exhibition industry usually other service providers liaison on behalf of the customer, therefore they should plan in such a way that anyone carrying the authorized document should be provided with the service instead of only customer.
3. Apart from regular employees Indian exhibition organizers should also use contractual manpower to reduce cost. This contractual manpower will be disappeared after the closure of the exhibition.
4. Indian exhibition organizers should create show based apps to reduce the involvement of paper

work and deal directly with their target market. These apps would really help the industry for authenticated activities and ease of movement at all stages.

5. Apart from this they should also use several drawings to discuss and confirm the requirements of their segment.

Physical Evidence Decisions Followed in Indian Exhibition Industry

Physical evidence means tangible proof in service industry for intangible aspects (Clow & Kurtz, 2008; Bhandari & Sharma, 2009) which helped in gaining customer confidence and reduced his risk of having services from a particular service provider. The various physical evidence related decisions that would help (Bhattacharjee, 2006; Mohamde, Sagadevan & Saxena, 2009; Bateson & Hoffman, 2011; Lovelock, Wirtz & Chatterjee, 2007) any exhibition related organization as per the researcher in service sector includes:

1. The design should be customer and environment friendly that would provide ease of movement, installation and dismantling.
2. The pricing should serve various segment as per the qualities provided to respective segment.
3. The place needs to be clean with basic services provided such as water, sanitation, internet etc.
4. The primary and secondary packaging should be designed in such as fashion that it helps in reducing the damages for the exhibits utilized during pre during and post the exhibition.
5. The people, their dress, behavior, skills and attitude should be relationship oriented and there should be any time related barriers. The people should be available 24 x 7 x 365 with smile while delivering the services to the participants of the show to gain repeat participation in future.
6. There should be state of the art facilities available to the participants of the show in terms of internet, wifi, cloud, data access, entry, exit and equipments.
7. The communication material used such as catalogue, kits, bags etc. should be of high quality.
8. The exhibition managers should maximize the utilization of directional signage to provide ease to the commuter. This would help them to reach the venue with ease.
9. The interior and exterior used for the exhibition should be environment friendly and cost effective.
10. The exhibition manager should provide ranking of the show, rating given in the past and any other feedback to provide confidence to the public that exhibition would not be a waste of time. Visitors of the show would get value from the show and learn for their personal and professional growth.

Research Methodology

The present study is subjective and qualitative in nature and based upon secondary data. The main source of information is review and analysis of the published data which is collected from various sources such as magazines, newspapers, books, articles, dissertations, websites and research papers from different journals. The interview with industry

expert as a method is used; to collect, interpret the related information and providing strategies for further growth.

Scope and Relevance of the Study

Scope of the study

The present study entitled "Strategies to improve services of exhibition organizers: A study of Indian exhibition industry" for customer satisfaction is very important looking at the fast changing scenario. The study has covered the service marketing practices including people, process and physical evidence practices involved in Exhibition Industry.

Relevance of the Study

As a researcher, it has been observed that very little work has been done to study the Strategies to improve services of exhibition organizers: A study of Indian exhibition industry and as a result it has been comparatively less explored and requires further extension of work in terms of understanding the people, process and physical evidence decisions practiced in Indian exhibition industry. This study would prove to be a helping hand for the exhibition organizers, associations, councils, co organizers, and service marketing managers to understand service strategies for building relationship with the customers

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations were mostly related data collection methodologies as researcher has only used secondary resources instead of taking primary resources. There was a cost attached to tools and equipment required to conduct research which was a challenge for the researcher. There was a lot of scope to research on different topics in the same domain to improve the success of exhibitions, which includes:

1. Role of commercial agencies as service providers in Indian exhibition industry
2. Modern service strategies followed in Indian exhibition Industry
3. Advertising as services and its impact in Indian exhibition Industry
4. Customer satisfaction towards the services provided by the exhibition organizers in Indian exhibition industry

Suggested Strategies for Indian Exhibition Organizers

Based on the above mentioned objectives of service mix followed in exhibition industry including people, process and physical evidence decisions, the researcher has suggested several practices for show organizers of Indian exhibition industry. Therefore, these suggestions need to be dealt properly to ensure the success of the show. These major suggestions as per the researcher to improve customer satisfaction are mentioned, as below:

1. Exhibition managers should maximize the use of Technology for providing communication to the participants of the show
2. Exhibition managers should use intelligent applications to record, analyze and distribute data for further marketing
3. They should maximize the utilization of CCTV camera so that data gets recorded and footage can be accessed as per the requirement of the people. This would also provide confidence to

those who feel insecure at any point of time during the exhibition

4. The exhibition managers should maximize the use of electronic tools instead of going physical everywhere. This would reduce the cost for them and also help in reducing the pollutions due to less commute.
5. The exhibition managers should also design sound policies to keep their internal staff satisfied through best in the industry compensation. They should also provide incentives for the genuine efforts of their staff members.
6. It has also been observed that registration consumes a lot of time to gain the entry in the exhibition premises. Therefore, exhibition managers should do this online in advance and with the help of smart tickets or cards people should be able to get entry with ease.
7. Exhibition should managers should also make necessary arrangements to handle onsite complaints of the participants of the show. There should be dedicated team allocated for this purpose. Apart from this they should also place complaint boxes or feedback drop boxes at several places so that these issues can be resolved in future.
8. The exhibition managers should design sound Exit policy for those who wish to withdraw their participation due to the dissatisfaction raised at any point of time. This marketing philosophy of returning the balance amount in case of dissatisfaction would help in gaining positive word of mouth.
9. The staff members should trained in cross functional areas as well not just in their basic job description. As Exhibition industry demand lots of cross departmental activities like marketing, HR, finance and operations. Therefore the staff used should multi disciplinary in nature to reduce the cost and provide professionalism among participants.
10. The onsite orders should be handled with ease, however they can charge a premium for the same. As it is very difficult to serve the customer onspot during the show. Therefore premium charges would restrict the participant to raise any unnecessary onsite orders.
11. The billing should be online by a different team instead of raising physical bills during the show. This would reduce the utilization of paper work and also help in creating data for further analysis while making a forecast for next year.
12. The loyalty points should be given to those who are extending their loyalty in terms of repeat participation.

Conclusion

Indian exhibition industry comes under service sector which was usually based on people, process and physical evidence. Therefore, these three elements need to be strong enough to provide a healthy service strategy and achieve customer satisfaction. Thus, understanding of service marketing practices including people, process and physical evidence decisions was very important for the entire

service industry including exhibitions because it ultimately affects the participants of exhibition industry. Thus, the researcher has chosen to provide service marketing practices followed by Indian exhibition organizers and provided people, process, physical evidence and service oriented strategies to ensure success for the exhibition organizers as well entire exhibition industry. Therefore the researcher has made an attempt to study apart from primary objective mentioned above along with several sub objectives such as: (1) To determine the people related decisions in Indian exhibition industry (2) To determine the process related decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry (3) To determine the physical evidence related decisions in Indian Exhibition Industry followed by strategies to improve the services of exhibition organizers to achieve customer satisfaction and value in the longer run.

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