

Services Marketing and Management by Audrey Gilmore. 2003. New Delhi: Response Books, 215 (paper back).

One of the benefits of globalization is the near-simultaneous publication of a new title in both the markets of the Western world and those in South Asia. As a result, titles, like the current one under review, which are significant additions to the knowledge market in Management, become accessible to the Indian target readers almost on “real time”. Sage, the original publisher, brought out this title in 2003, in London, and its Indian paperback arm “Response” launched the special priced Indian edition in the same year. This is a great service to the vast knowledge hungry market of this country.

This elaborate preamble on the publishing history of the book is done simply to show how a value-added service made possible by technology and fuelled by growing consumer demand is helping a tangible called a “book” to find bigger markets quickly. This is one of the implicit themes, amongst many others, that this excellent exposition of service marketing and management deals with.

Audery Gilmore’s book offers a compact, yet a thorough mapping, of the service marketing conceptual terrain. In the initial chapters, Gilmore traces the evolution of the field through earlier research on service classifications, characteristics, and differences from the tangible goods. Gilmore cogently brings out how researchers, dating back from W. J. Regan (July 1963-The Service Revolution, *Journal of Marketing*, 27, July), kept posing significant questions on the nature of service marketing to help its evolution. Starting off from the general marketing concept of customer orientation and integrated marketing, initial researchers like Regan, Judd, Shostack and others started marking out the points of departure between the physical good and the primarily

intangible service. Gilmore portrays this dynamic admirably in a highly readable fashion. Early research identified the necessary characteristics and dimensions of the service offering which required more specific conceptual tools and measurement techniques. Services are a complex category with a high degree of heterogeneity. Thus, there is a need for an overarching services marketing concept to tie the different types of services together.

Gilmore summarizes the emergence of the “service” dominant marketing-mix including additional factors like people management, process management and physical evidence for such an overarching framework. Variety and complexity of services also call for contextual insights, which can be provided by meaningful classification. Gilmore provides a twin set of such a classification of services (page-5) which is innovative and actionable.

The author discusses, in fair detail, the service quality issue-including its dimensions and measurement. Using the well known ‘gap’ model, he shows how Parasuraman et.al. developed the “servequal” instrument for measuring service quality. Later the development of “serveperf” is also discussed. Gilmore readily acknowledges the overwhelming influence that “servequal” has exercised over the service marketing literature since the mid-eighties of the last century. It is an instrument which has kept on being used in all varieties of service situations, sometimes even raising doubts about its contextual relevance.

General marketing theory and practice have been marked by the twin processes of mass marketing, standardization, ubiquitous availability and high voltage promotion and advertising (FMCG context) on one hand, and the ever-increasing search for precision and targeting to meet the exact need of an individual customer (B-to-B, complex durables context). Gilmore brings out

the parallel development of the twin processes in the context of service marketing. He talks about Fast Moving Customer Service (FMCS-a la McDonald's) and brings out the contextual tools for both mass marketing and precision marketing of service offerings.

The book devotes two chapters to discuss two service contexts of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to show the differences in marketing and management that need to be practiced in these two contexts. In describing the service delivery process, Gilmore brings out the importance of people-management issues including internal marketing as well as service design (blueprint) issues.

Finally, the author closes with a future scenario chapter in which the influence of a ubiquitous internet environment on the service-customer relationship has been speculated. What would be the optimum combination of high-touch in the service delivery process could become a crucial question in the days to come.

To sum up, Audrey Gilmore has done a neat job of covering a wide array of service marketing and service management related concepts and frameworks in a compact volume of 215 pages. Each chapter of the book provides a useful list of references and discussion questions. It goes to the credit of the author that he has succeeded in making the technically intricate research conclusions reader-friendly. If one has to prescribe a "positioning" slot for this book, this reviewer would label it as a "subject matter summary based on research done in this field". This sounds like a mouthful and is a bit awkward but it, perhaps, best describes this book. It is not a conventional text book. It is also not an original research tome. It is a lucid exposition of the advances in knowledge achieved so far in this domain. We remain indebted to Gilmore for making available difficult concepts in a reader-friendly manner. The lucid language style, a strength of this book, is becoming so much rarer in the "management" book market dominated by North American writers. This book should find

wide use as a companion book to a formal text in a Service Marketing or service Management course at the MBA level.

Sudas Roy

Marketing Group

IIM Calcutta

Understanding the Consumer by Isabelle Szmigin. 2003. New Delhi: Response Books. 202pages + vi, Rupees 280.00 (paperback)

Historically, the study of consumer behavior has evolved from an early emphasis on rational choice (micro economics and classical decision theory), to a focus on apparently irrational buying needs (some motivational research), to the use of logical flow models of bounded rationality. Most recently, however, researchers have begun to question some of these foundations. The emergent thinking wants us to believe that people as consumers no longer purchase, consume and use things for functional, utilitarian purposes but rather for how they speak to us, what they say about us to our fellow men and women and how they make us feel about ourselves. Amidst all this, marketing practice has progressively become more concerned with the development and maintenance of mutually satisfying long-term relationships with customers. If the 1950s was the era of mass marketing, and the 1970s, the era of market segmentation, then the 1990s represent the genesis of personalized marketing and customer relationship marketing in which knowledge about individual customers is used to guide highly focused marketing strategies. The proliferation of information and communication technologies have led to the emergence of new empowered and knowledgeable consumers, who are aggressive in their desire to know more and to communicate more. As information percolates freely to a new age consumer, the diffusion of innovation has also taken a new

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