

SERVICE BRANDING AND POSITIONING

Choosing a brand name for a consumer product or service is one of the most important decisions. A well-chosen brand name can provide a number of specific advantages to the organisation. These include suggesting product benefits, evoking feeling of trust, confidence, security and simplifying shopping. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as follows: 'A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.' Though branding has received considerable attention from marketers and academicians, the main focus has been on physical goods rather than services. However, services branding has started to receive considerable attention lately. The intangibility factor associated with services has led to the suggestion that branding and image creation may be even more critical for services. For a service brand to be effective it should possess distinctiveness, relevance and memorability.

Keeping in view the transition of Indian economy to one which is dominated by services, The Economic Times in its survey of India's most trusted brands has started including a separate category of service brands.

Top Service Brands of India 2003

Category →	Telecom	Airlines	Food services	hotel	Pvt.sector bank	Life insurance
Rank ↓						
1	Reliance	INDIAN AIRLINES	PIZZA HUT	TAJ	ICICI	LIC
2	BSNL	AIR SAHARA	MC DONALD	OBEROI	UTI	ICICI PRUDENTIAL
3	AIRTEL	JET AIRWAYS	CAFÉ COFFEE DAY	ITC	HDFC	HDFC STANDARD LIFE

Source: Brand Equity, The Economic Times, 17 Dec 2003

the top services in different service categories were as given in Table. below. It is important to learn that brand can be a major determining element in the purchase of services and a means of adding differentiation. Service managers should keep their focus on branding and differentiation in order to avoid the shift to commodity status where competition is primarily on price and terms. On the other hand, competition in speciality branded services is based on the other elements of the marketing mix including customer service, advertising, brand name etc.

Service Positioning

Positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the target market's mind. This requires the companies to examine their markets, determine the structure and nature of markets segments. The various steps in determining a positioning plan include:

- i) Define a market's segments
- ii) Decide which segment to target
- iii) Understand what the target consumers expect and value
- iv) Develop a service which caters to these needs
- v) Evaluate consumer perceptions of competing services
- vi) Select an image for the product matching the aspiration of the targeted consumers
- vii) Communicate with the determined customers and make the product suitable available.

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