

Course type: PG

Course: MBA

Title of Attachment: Service Communication Mix (part-2)

Name of Teacher: Nalin Kishore, Visiting teacher, MBA

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## Service Communication Mix (part-2)

Service marketers have a wide variety of communication tools at their disposal as shown in a figure in part-1 of lesson on this topic. We are going to discuss some of the principal tools hereunder:

### **Messages transmitted through traditional marketing channels**

**Advertising** : A wide variety of advertising media is available, including broadcast (TV and radio), print (magazines and newspapers), movie theatre and many types of outdoor media (posters, billboards, electronic message boards, exterior of buses and trains etc). Some media are more focussed than others, targeting specific geographic area or audience with a particular interest. Advertising messages delivered through mass media are often reinforced by direct marketing tools such as mailing, telemarketing or email.

Being the most dominant form of communication in consumer marketing, advertising often is the first point of contact between service marketers and their customers to build awareness, inform, persuade and remind. It plays a vital role in providing factual information about services and educating customers about its features and capabilities.

Despite being the most dominant form of communication in consumer marketing, the effectiveness of advertising is highly controversial. Its effect on sales is found to be uncertain. People are generally getting tired of omnipresent and highly intrusive ads of all forms. It is getting more and more difficult to attract attention of the target customers on extremely cluttered mass media. Larger or longer ads is no sure solution. Creativity is the key.

**Public Relations** : Public relations (PR) involves efforts to stimulate positive interest in an organization and its products by sending out news releases, holding press conferences, staging special events, and sponsoring news worthy activities undertaken by third parties. A basic element in PR strategy is the preparation and distribution of press releases, including photos or videos that feature that feature stories about the company, its products and its employees.

Other widely used PR techniques include recognition and reward programs, obtaining testimonial from public figures, community involvement and support, sponsorship of high-profile events and activities like Olympics and World Cups in different games. Moreover, unusual creative activities do draw a lot of public attention and, therefore, are effective PR measures.

**Direct Marketing**: This category includes such communication tools as mailing, emails and text messaging. These channels offer the opportunity to send personalized messages to highly targeted micro segments. Direct strategies will most likely succeed when marketers possess a detailed database of information about customers and prospects.

**Sales Promotion**: It is a way of market communication attached to an incentive. Sales promotion usually relate to a time period, price or customer group - sometimes all three. Typically, the objective is to accelerate purchasing decisions or motivate customers to use a specific service sooner, in greater volume with each purchase, or more frequently. Sales promotion for service firms may take such forms as samples, coupons and other discounts, gifts, and competition with prizes. Used in these forms, sales promotion add value, provide a competitive edge, boost sales during lean season, speed the introduction and acceptance of new services, and generally get customers to act faster than usual.

**Personal Selling**: Interpersonal encounters to educate customers and promote the sale of a particular brand or product is referred to as personal selling. Many firms, especially marketing B2B services, maintain a dedicated sales force or employ agents and distributors to undertake personal selling efforts on their behalf.

Personal selling may be used as a means of relationship marketing to old customers. But face-to-face selling to new prospects is expensive. A lower-cost alternative is telemarketing, involving telephone to reach prospective customers. But this mode of market communication is often annoying to the customers and, therefore, proves counterproductive for marketers.

**Trade Shows**: In the business-to-business market place, trade shows are a popular form of publicity that also includes important personal selling opportunities. Service vendors provide physical evidence in the form of exhibits, samples, demonstrations and brochures to educate and impress the potential customers. This is very productive promotional tool because it provides an opportunity when a good number of prospective buyers come to the buyers, rather than the other way around. It is a much less costly communication tool than classical personal selling.

