

4.5 The seven Ps of the marketing mix

People

People are an additional element of the marketing mix related to service businesses or to the service part of other businesses, such as after-sales service.

Successful customer-oriented businesses are able to build long-term relationships with their clients. People are at the heart of these relationships. All contact between the employees of a business and customers can support or damage a brand. A business's recruitment and selection process can help to ensure good customer relationships are maintained.



Figure 1. People: A central marketing mix element of businesses that provide services.

Credit: Jupiterimages, Getty Images

The importance of cultural differences in customer service

Customer service, and relationships between staff and customers, depend heavily on the cultures involved. The way one person interprets behaviour in others is determined by their values, assumptions and cultural traditions. This is not just limited to language

differences – such as the use of slang or metaphor – but includes differences in manners and how readily customers voice concerns or disapproval.

There are stark differences in the way that people express emotions. For instance, some cultures are more direct in their communications while others are more tentative or polite. This can make communications challenging for customer service providers. Staff will need proper training to deal with angry customers, for example.

There are other cultural differences relating to customer service (<https://www.userlike.com/en/blog/cultural-diversity-customer-service>), expectations and relationships between people. These include:

- the importance of small talk
- the need for special treatment for longer established customers
- the need for direct communication
- the importance of hierarchy and respect for positions of authority
- punctuality and timeliness
- the importance of rules and systems

It is important to recognise that, in order to provide good customer service, customers should be treated as unique. This means that it is important for businesses to recognise that each customer is special and has their own personality, preferences and culture. However, this is not always easy for a business to achieve and, as a consequence, a more global perspective is often taken in regard to customer services.

A key aspect of good customer service is to select good staff and make sure that they receive induction training that prepares them for negotiating complex interactions with customers. The recruitment and selection process is explored in detail in Subtopic 2.1 ([/study/app/y12-business-management-a-hl-may-2024/sid-351-cid-174702/book/the-big-picture-id-39053](https://study/app/y12-business-management-a-hl-may-2024/sid-351-cid-174702/book/the-big-picture-id-39053)). Attention should also be given to continuing professional development (CPD), where employees see themselves as lifelong learners.

Activity

Learner profile: Inquirer

Approaches to learning: Research skills (information literacy)

Be a journalist! Choose one of the options below and write a paragraph with your conclusions.

Option A

Carry out a discrete observation at a business that you frequent. Identify some elements of culture in customer service that you can observe, and practise recording information.

Remember that observation is a form of primary research ([Subtopic 4.4 \(/study/app/y12-business-management-a-hl-may-2024/sid-351-cid-174702/book/the-big-picture-id-38995\)](#)) and can be used in your internal assessment (IA).

Option B

Interview a family member to find out about a time that they experienced particularly good customer service and when they had a particularly poor experience. It is important to choose a way to record the information as a way of practising interview techniques for your IA.

Remember that in [Subtopic 1.1 \(/study/app/y12-business-management-a-hl-may-2024/sid-351-cid-174702/book/the-big-picture-id-36497\)](#), you were introduced to [a toolkit for primary research strategies \(https://sites.google.com/uwcmaastricht.nl/youth-mayors-curriculum/toolkit\)](#), including observation and interview.