

4.5 The seven Ps of the marketing mix

Physical evidence

Physical evidence is the final element of the marketing mix, related to services. Physical evidence refers to all the elements that the customer sees, smells, hears and touches when interacting with a business. These sensory experiences can change customers' perceptions of the service. For example, imagine going to a cinema where the staff look scruffy, the theatre floor is covered with litter and the toilets are not clean. Even though these things have nothing to do with the quality of the film you are watching, they are likely to affect your experience.



Figure 1. Physical evidence refers to the sensory experience of a customer, for example in a theatre or cinema.

Credit: John Eder, Getty Images

On the other hand, positive physical evidence can be a unique selling point. Hotels will attempt to provide comfortable, clean rooms and common spaces in their services. Restaurants also pay a lot of attention to physical evidence, as well as to the quality of their food. Businesses that provide medical services will design their spaces to convey

the impression of professionalism and cleanliness. Your school has also spent time and money on creating a positive learning environment for you. The physical spaces of these businesses are just as important as the other qualities of their services.



Figure 2. Hotels pay much attention to physical evidence in their services.

Credit: 4FR, Getty Images

Concept

Sustainability

Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Environmental sustainability is also an important part of physical evidence and has resulted in changes to physical evidence.

In the past, for example, hotels would change the towels in their bathrooms every day. These days, however, many hotels suggest reusing towels in order to reduce the consumption of clean water. Additionally, some hotels now use soap and shampoo dispensers that are refillable, rather than providing miniature bottles that create excessive plastic waste. Customers appreciate these changes to physical evidence that improve sustainability.

Physical evidence can also be an important motivational factor for employees (Subtopic 2.4 (/study/app/y12-business-management-a-hl-may-2024/sid-351-cid-174702/book/the-big-picture-id-39054)), or at least in preventing employee dissatisfaction. Good physical conditions – such as a clean and tidy office – are likely to help workers do their job better and make them feel more positive about the business.

Activity

Learner profile: Inquirers

Approaches to learning: Research skills (information literacy); Thinking skills (transfer)

1. Apple store design

Read this article, describing how Apple has used people, processes and physical evidence (<https://www.computerworld.com/article/3619029/6-lessons-apple-retail-taught-the-industry-in-2001.html>) to satisfy customers and increase sales. As you read, make note of at least one marketing strategy for each: people, processes and physical evidence. When you are finished, discuss the points with a partner or with your class.

2. Your school

Explain how your school uses people, processes and physical evidence to market its services. Discuss with the class. You may only have personal experience with people and physical evidence, so you may want to invite the person in charge of school admissions to discuss processes.

Exam tip

Remember that the marketing mix for a service is more complex than the marketing mix of a good. In addition to product, price, promotion and place, for a service you also need to consider people, processes and physical evidence.