

Unique Characteristics of Services

Services have a number of distinct characteristics (see list below) that create a unique set of marketing challenges for services marketers.

Your task in this exercise is to review the following statements to identify its particular distinguishing service characteristic.

1. "I'm so disappointed with the restaurant last night. We went there for the first time a few weeks ago and it was fantastic, but last night the food was overcooked, and the service was very slow."
2. "The plane back home was only half full – that's a lot of lost income – they should work harder to fill those seats"
3. "I offer a one hour free consultation first – for us both to see if I'm the right lawyer for you."
4. "I want my hair cut long on one side, short on the other, and I want it to be colored purple."
5. "Our (bank) customers, who have less than \$50 in their accounts, really aren't worth having!"
6. "It's so hard to choose an accountant, it is so difficult to know what you're really going to get"
7. "I'm never going back to that shop – all the staff are either rude or lazy."

Student Discussion Questions

1. Connect each of the above statements with a service characteristic (using the following list).
 - Services are harder to evaluate (before and after purchase)
 - Services are more variable
 - Services are more perishable
 - Services can be more customized
 - Services are sold before production
 - Services can be unprofitable
 - Services are people reliant
2. Why is it important that service marketers understand these characteristics? How does it affect their marketing activities?
3. How does the extended marketing mix (the 7Ps) relate to the above list of characteristics?
4. Which do you think is harder to market; goods or services?