

The Service Delivery Standards of the BRAC Community Empowerment Programme (CEP)

An Internship Report for the
BRAC University Masters of Business Administration Programme

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1.0 Introduction

In 2016, BRAC was ranked the number one NGO in the world by NGO Advisor, for the second time in three years (NGO Advisor, 2016). BRAC's holistic brand of development covers everything from agriculture and food security to education, legal aid, climate change risk reduction, empowerment, livelihoods support and maternal and child health. Its success as a development service provider stems largely from its service delivery approach; a combination of grassroots level community engagement, and social mobilization. Its programme beneficiaries, are its customers, and they too play an important role in the service delivery process.

The Community Empowerment Programme (CEP), is one of BRAC's many development initiatives that works with rural poor communities at the grassroots level. CEP's focus is on promoting pro-poor local governance, building strong community institutions and increasing access to information with a specific focus on reducing violence against women and children. This is done using behaviour change communication aimed at their customers. The primary service being offered by CEP is information. The programme provides people with information on their rights as Bangladeshi citizens, and helps them in accessing these rights, and ultimately in improving their situation in society.

Like all BRAC programmes, CEP has field teams all across Bangladesh. The field staff deliver the services directly, through courtyard meetings and indirectly through other channels including popular theatre (Jatra) and radio. CEP uses different channels to engage with its customers, and also makes them a part of the service delivery process through 'Polli Shomaj' or village organizations that are created by the programme to represent the interests of the community. Its members include people from the village themselves.

Service employees play a critical role in the success or failure of a service brand. BRAC is no different. The CEP field teams are the primary source of service delivery in the communities BRAC works in. Delivering effective behaviour change communication requires building trust and rapport with the customers (the programme beneficiaries). The human element plays a significant role in CEP's service delivery process. A lot of the issues that CEP deals with including violence against women, sometimes present challenges for the programme. This might happen for example in particularly conservative areas of the country, where the programme might face resistance from the local community itself. These are the cases that can lead to service compromise, and in such cases, the role of the programme staff is very critical for proper service recovery.

This report has been prepared as part of the internship course of the Masters of Business Administration Programme at BRAC University. It will explore the service delivery standards of the BRAC Community Empowerment Programme. This involves an exploration of the methods by which CEP communicates with its customers, the dynamics of its service delivery process and how the service experience is shaping customer expectations and perceptions in the communities where BRAC works. The purpose of the report is to look at a social development programme through the lens of service marketing, and to deconstruct the service delivery process to its core elements. It should be noted that unlike a normal service business, CEP is a non-profit initiative, and its "profits" do not come in the form of money, but in the form of credibility among its stakeholders. Credibility allows it to attract/raise more funds, and also easily forge relationships with local communities.

As the subject matter being explored does not follow the traditional service marketing rules, there are certain limitations in the analysis, particularly in the case of numerically measuring customer expectations and perceptions. To address these limitations, the report has drawn data from CEP programme personnel and from existing research studies on the programme.

The BRAC Service Delivery Model

Although this report will focus on the service delivery standards of the BRAC Community Empowerment Programme, it is important to also understand the organization's overall service delivery model. In Bangladesh, BRAC operates on a large scale providing a variety of services related to health, education, human rights, empowerment and microfinance to name a few. Therefore when CEP operates in a certain area, it does not operate alone. Other BRAC programmes operate in the same area. Therefore CEP's beneficiaries/customers might receive other BRAC services alongside the programme. Each service is provided by the specific staff of a specific programme. This is important to note, as CEP is often one of the several services that are provided under the BRAC brand, and in some cases, the customer perception of an unrelated service, has the potential to influence the perception of CEP, as all services are associated with the BRAC name.

2.0 The GAPS Model of Service Quality

The GAPS model of service quality looks at the gap between the customers' expectation and perception of a service, as well as the gaps that exist on the service provider's side. These gaps indicate deficiencies in the service delivery standards. If these gaps are left unchecked, they can potentially lead to service compromise. This model was derived by Parasuraman, Zenithal and Berry in a 1985 article in the Journal of Marketing entitled, "A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research." The article identified certain 'gaps' where service providers failed to deliver the level of service that customers expect (A Parasuraman, 1985).

Gaps can come from both the customer's side and from the service provider's side. From the customer's side this relates to gaps between what they expect before taking a service, versus their perceptions after actually receiving the service. From the provider's side, the gap is in the form of what type of service they deliver, versus what type of service the customers expect to receive. This section will look at both customer and provider gaps in the context of CEP, and also look at how the programme addresses these gaps and maintains its service delivery standards.

I. Gap 1: Gap between customer expectation and management perception

The gap between consumer expectation and management perception arises when the management/service provider fails to correctly perceive what the customer wants or needs (Boundless Marketing, 2015). Suppose BRAC is running its Microfinance programme in an area with high rates of domestic violence against women, and it is teaching these women about financial independence. However, for these women this type of financial education service is not useful if they are not aware of their civil and legal rights. Programmes such as CEP would be used to communicate this information. Therefore the gap between customer expectation and management perception might arise due to the order in which BRAC services are provided to a particular community.

II. GAP 2: Gap between management perception and customer experience specification

Customers have certain specific expectations regarding the service experience, and when management/service providers cannot identify and satisfy this customer experience specification, this gap may occur. Jatra or popular theatre is a communication channel used by CEP all across Bangladesh. However, in some conservative parts of the country, this type of performance faces opposition, particularly from community elders. In this scenario, the customers (the community) have a specific expectation of CEP's service that does not include activities such as 'jatra'. Including this in the service delivery mix might therefore lead to a gap between management perception and customer experience specification.

III. GAP 3: Gap between customer experience specification and delivery

This particular gap arises when the service delivered does not match the specific experience expected by the customer. BRAC is facing some challenges working with the indigenous or 'adibashi' communities in Northern Bangladesh. This has been due to various factors including a lack of local indigenous staff members whom the local communities will trust and work with. In this specific scenario, CEP and other BRAC programmes are not being able to provide the sort of service delivery experience that is expected from organization, thereby leading to a gap between customer experience specification and delivery.

IV. GAP 4: Gap between service delivery and communication

This gap arises when the delivered service fails to match what the service provider has communicated and promised to the customer. As mentioned before, CEP operates alongside several other BRAC programmes servicing different communities all across Bangladesh. For BRAC's beneficiaries or customers, there is often no distinction among the different BRAC services, as they are all associated with the BRAC brand. The different programmes all use their own communication material and channels to reach the customers, who in turn do not differentiate these communications as coming from different BRAC programmes, but rather associate it with BRAC as a whole. There might be a situation where staff of BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor Programme (TUP) goes to a community and talks to the poorest households about livestock rearing and offers to provide them with a cow as a livelihood option. This is part of TUP's specific service model, it is not offered by other BRAC programmes. However if this is not communicated clearly, customers might start expecting livestock from all BRAC programmes including CEP. This can then lead to a gap between service delivery and communication.

3.0 Consumer Behaviour in Service Quality

Understanding consumer behaviour is crucial for service providers, as it dictates how consumers make decisions and choices about what service to consume. A customer's 'purchase' decision involves a logical sequence of behaviours including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives and purchase (Valarie A. Zeithmal, 2011). CEP's beneficiaries or customers also go through a similar process as other consumers when deciding on what service to consume. These are discussed below.

Need Recognition: This is the first step of the 'purchase' process where the customer identifies a certain need they have, and starts thinking about a service that can fulfil this need. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is perhaps the most common means of dissecting and understanding consumer needs. It

includes physiological needs, safety and security needs, social needs, ego needs and self-actualization needs. These are also relevant in the context of a social service programme like CEP.

- *Psychological Needs:* This refers to basic biological needs such as food, water and shelter. This is not directly addressed by CEP, but rather by BRAC as a whole, in terms of its overall poverty alleviation programmes.
- *Safety and Security Needs:* This is the need for shelter, protection and security. CEP through its work on violence against women, attempts to fulfil this need. It attempts to offer a means of protection especially for women who are victims of violence.
- *Social Needs:* This includes the need for affection, friendship and acceptance. CEP leverages the power of social networks and social mobilization in its service delivery. Through grassroots organizations like Polli Shomaj, and other similar community based organizations, it allows its customers to be part of a bigger social structure, and to gain greater acceptability in their communities. For women who have been victims of violence, CEP acts as a friendly presence, offering a means of relief and eventually empowerment.
- *Ego Needs:* These needs are associated with feelings of prestige, success, accomplishment and self-esteem. In the case of CEP, these needs are addressed through their work on women's' empowerment. CEP trains and encourages women to be leaders and change agents in their own communities. There have been several instances where ordinary women who participate in CEP programmes went on to become union parishad Members in their locality (Dr. Tofail Ahmed, 2016)
- *Self-actualization Needs:* These needs are satisfied through self-fulfillment and enriching experiences. CEP aims to empower people, especially the rural poor and women to take charge of their own development and the development of their communities. It empowers its customers into becoming better citizens, and in doing so helps them achieve a sense of self-fulfillment.

Information Search: The second step in the 'purchase' process. After identifying their need, customers start looking for information on how to fulfil this need. Customers search for information, since having knowledge about a service can help give them a general idea of what to expect before trying out the actual service itself. Customers seek information from both personal sources such as friends and family as well as non-personal sources such as newspapers, magazines and other public media and information sources. In the case of CEP, it appears that most of the information tends to come from personal sources. In its forty plus years of operations, BRAC has built up a strong brand identity in Bangladesh, especially in the rural parts of the country. In these areas, where communities are usually very tight-knit, word-of-mouth recommendations are an important form of communication and advertising. CEP provides its services at the grassroots level, and as mentioned before, makes use of the power of social networks and relationships to deliver its services. Customers who come to CEP's courtyard sessions, and later enjoy its services, usually do so due to positive word-of-mouth recommendations from their friends, families or neighbours.

Evaluation of Service Alternatives: When deciding on a service to purchase, customers will use the information they have found to seek out possible alternatives. In the areas where BRAC works, there are often other NGOs present, and engaged in similar type of work. However, it should be noted BRAC's service delivery mechanism and philosophy are different from other organizations, as is the

scale at which BRAC offers its services. Service alternatives do exist in terms of services such as Microfinance, however, in the case of services such as CEP, the concept of service alternatives is perhaps not fully applicable.

Service Purchase: The final step of the process culminates in the customer purchasing and consuming the service. In this context it is probably more appropriate to use the term 'consume' instead of 'purchase'. Customers consume CEP's services by going to its courtyard sessions, interacting with programme staff and most importantly, using the information learned from the programme to work together as a community in developing their own locality with cooperation from the local government bodies.

Post Purchase Evaluation: This relates to how the customer feels after experiencing the actual service. A favourable experience will likely lead to the customer continuing with this service and also recommending it to their close ones. Conversely an unfavourable experience can have the opposite effect. Both scenarios have been observed in case of CEP. There have been cases where the programme has made a difference in the lives of its customers, helping empower them and also bringing about community led development. At the same time, there have also been instances of women who faced further violence at home after taking part in CEP's initiatives. The experience has not been uniform for everyone, and while it has been largely positive, it is important to identify and address the unfavourable post service experiences like the one just mentioned. If left unchecked this can potentially end up having negative consequences for CEP and present undesirable challenges in its work.

4.0 Customer Expectations of Services

Customers have certain expectations or pre-conceived beliefs and ideas about both products and services, before experiencing them first hand. These expectations guide their purchase decision and act as the standard against which the actual service experience is measured. If service providers clearly understand what customers want, they can shape customer expectations and deliver a service that is in line with these expectations. This can create a favourable service experience for the customer and in turn help generate positive recommendations to other customers. Managing customer expectations is also something that programmes like CEP, and BRAC in general have to work on. This means focusing on particular areas, as discussed below.

i) Sources of desired service expectation

Personal Needs: Personal needs are related to conditions that are essential for the customer's physical or psychological well-being. The customers of CEP and BRAC in general come from relatively economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and as such their personal needs are connected to social assistance and poverty alleviation. They expect that BRAC (and by extension programmes like CEP) will offer them services related to these needs.

Lasting Service Intensifiers: Lasting service intensifiers refer to the stable service factors that allow the customer to have a higher understanding of the service (Liu, et al., 2000). One of the most important of these factors is the derived service expectations. This refers to a situation where a customer's expectations are driven by another person or group of people (Valarie A Zeithmal, 2011). Programmes like CEP use Polli Shomaj and other community based organizations as part of their service delivery. It does not work with people on an individual basis, but rather works with communities as a whole.

Its customers are always part of a larger group or collective, and as such their service expectations can be influenced by group dynamics and the expectations and experiences of fellow community members who take services from CEP.

ii) Sources of adequate service expectation

Temporary service intensifier: These are short term factors and situations in which the customer realizes the need for a certain service. One of the most common pieces of communication given by CEP to its customers is on how to access services such as getting national identification cards from the local government office. Therefore in situations where customers have to access services at their local government office, there will be a need for CEP's services

Perceived alternatives: This refers to alternative service providers the customer can choose from. The type of service that CEP offers does not have any clearly defined alternatives. As CEP's main service is information, its alternatives might for example be conservative community leaders/elites and their followers who do not agree with the messages being spread by CEP. In this case customers have a choice of whose information and message they choose to accept.

Customer's self-perceived service role: Customers have a perception of how much they can influence the level of service they receive. In the case of CEP, the customer is an essential part of the service delivery process, as the programme makes use of social networks and community based organizations. The customers therefore have a fair idea of how their actions influence CEP's service.

Situational factors: Sometimes, a service can be compromised or fail due to situational factors that are beyond the service provider's control. One component of CEP's Strengthening Local Governance project involves providing knowledge to local government representatives such as Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen and Members on their official duties, mandates and responsibilities. While this initiative helps ensure that these officials are aware of their official duties, CEP cannot ensure that the government will increase funding for all Union Parishads, and make it possible for the Chairmen and Members to carry out all their duties. CEP's customers expect the Union Parishad to be underfunded and thus unable to fully serve them, and they understand that this is beyond CEP's control

Predicted Service: This is the level of service the customers believe they are most likely to receive. Due to BRAC's heavy presence and reputation in rural Bangladesh, its customers have a fair idea of the type of service they will most likely get. This applies to CEP also. CEP's service delivery process is also participative in nature, and the experience of past and current customers can heavily influence the expectations of future customers.

iii) Services encounter expectations versus overall service expectations

A service encounter occurs when the customer consumes a service that is provided by the service provider. The one time experience of this interaction can shape the customer's expectations regarding the overall service. New and potential customers who attend CEP's courtyard sessions, interact directly with service staff and experience first-hand how the service is delivered. This encounter shapes their expectation regarding the services of CEP and also creates certain expectations regarding BRAC as a whole.

iv) Sources of both desired and predicted services expectations

All customers have a desired level of service they wish to receive. At the same time they also have certain expectations, and form an idea of what the type of service they will actually get. These expectations are influenced by four factors.

Explicit service promise: The personal and non-personal proclamations about the service made by the organization to its customers. Personal statements come directly from the service staff, while non-personal statements come via other channels such as print ads, posters and other media. In the case of CEP, the statements are largely personal and come directly from the field staff through their constant interaction with the customers.

Implicit service promise: These refer to service cues or tangible qualities associated with a service that create a certain type of expectation in the customer's mind. In the case of BRAC, and its programmes like CEP, this tangible quality is physical presence. BRAC has a network of field offices spread out all over Bangladesh. The BRAC sign is something people across Bangladesh are quite familiar with. This tangible presence and reach creates certain expectations in the minds of the customers.

Word of mouth: This is the most common factor in the context of CEP. The service as mentioned before is community oriented, and makes use of social networks. This in itself leads to word of mouth recommendations, which can be particularly effective in tight knit rural communities.

Past experiences: CEP's customers are usually also customers of BRAC's other programmes such as the BRAC Education Programme, the Health Nutrition and Population Programme etc. BRAC's service delivery model is designed in a way, where multiple programmes operate in an area, leading to a variety of services for its customers. A customer may choose to take or choose not to take CEP's services, based on their past experience with BRAC's services.

5.0 Customer Perception of Service

Customers have expectations before experiencing a service. Customer perceptions are formed after experiencing the service. How an individual customer perceives or interprets a service is influenced by their own needs, expectations and biases. For service organizations, customer perception is important, as it determines whether or not the customer will return for the service and more importantly what this customer will say about the service to others. The customer's perception can affect the expectations of potential future customers. In order to understand and influence customer perception, service organizations have to focus on the five dimensions of service quality; reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles.

Reliability: The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. BRAC's reputation and achievements are a testament to its reliability as a service provider. This extends to services such as CEP

Responsiveness: The willingness to help custom and provide prompt service. As a BRAC programme, CEP's service is offered to people who are in need of help. The organization's staff form close relationships with the communities they work in, and are available to offer prompt service when needed.

Assurance: The ability of the service organization and its staff to inspire confidence and trust in the customer. Here again, BRAC's success and credibility in rural communities appears to indicate that it offers its customers a good degree of assurance.

Empathy: Treating customers as individuals. Addressing violence against women is one of CEP's service components. The customers are women and girls who have been victims of violence, Serving and helping them requires a good deal of empathy and understanding.

Tangibles: A service organization's physical facilities, equipment, personnel and written materials. BRAC's significant physical presence across Bangladesh has been mentioned before. Its personnel deliver services directly to the customers, and its communications material (informative posters and leaflets) are publicly displayed and distributed in the areas where it operates.

6.0 Listening to Customers through Research

The BRAC Research and Evaluation Division performs research work, evaluations and impact assessments on BRAC's various programmes including CEP. The research findings help provide insight to the programme management on the effectiveness of their services, ways of improving the service and service delivery, and the thoughts and perceptions of its customers. While this is not like the traditional market or customer research that service organizations do, they do help programmes like CEP in designing their services and constantly improving and innovating on them. This particular report has drawn on a lot of secondary data from CEP's research reports.

One limitation of this report has been the lack of any quantitative data and analysis. This is because the normal customer satisfaction surveys that analyze customers' expectations and perceptions would not yield appropriate responses if administered to CEP's customers. Conducting this type of quantitative research would have required a lot of time, as well as ethical approval, both of which were challenging to manage. This report therefore draws information from four primary sources; research reports on CEP, informal conversations with programme staff, my own personal experiences and observations from the field, and finally a book recently published by BRAC, called 'Driving Development-A Story of BRAC's Evolution and Effectiveness.' The data and information provided in this report is purely qualitative in nature. This felt appropriate, as the service delivered by CEP; behaviour change communication through rights based information, itself produces outcomes that are more effectively expressed through narratives rather than numbers.

7.0 Building Customer Relationships

The human aspect of service marketing and delivery, makes it important for a service organization to build and maintain strong relationships with its customers. This is where the concept of relationship marketing comes in. Relationship marketing is about building long-term relationships with customers. Service providers are not interested in a one off transaction, but rather want to create loyalty in their customers and benefit from repeat business as well as new business through positive recommendations. Relationship marketing makes this possible by helping a service organization constantly improve the way it does business, so that it can maximize the value of its relationship with its customers.

Relationship marketing mainly involves the improvement of internal operations. Inadequate or poor customer service is the primary reason many customers choose to stop doing business with a service provider. Satisfying the customer's service needs is therefore paramount to a service organization's long term success and sustainability. In this regard, there are six main factors for all service organizations to consider.

i) Build trust commitment with customers

Gaining the customer's trust is essential in building strong long term relationships. If the customer trusts the service provider they are more likely to remain loyal and to recommend the service to others. As outsiders working with close knit rural communities, CEP has to gain the trust and acceptance of these communities before they can effectively work there.

ii) Customer Satisfaction

Satisfied customers are also loyal customers who will spread positive messages about the organization to others. In the case of CEP, this can be seen, in the strong word of mouth recommendations it receives from its customers.

iii) Attract New Customers

Service organizations will be able to attract new customers with the help of their loyal and satisfied customers. This is directly related to the two aforementioned factors in the case of CEP.

iv) Promise Fulfilment

Promise fulfilment is considered to be of utmost importance in the context of relationship marketing. It is one of the key factors in determining the continuation or termination of a relationship. Delivering on promises is important for both the customer and the service provider. As a service provider, CEP promises to help improve the life of its customers through knowledge/behaviour change communication, and this is a process it delivers on. Similarly, CEP's customers make a promise to transform their knowledge into positive action. Only when both parties deliver on the promise, does the programme function as it should.

v) Consistency

For a service organization, consistency means always delivering on its promises, which, as already mentioned is important for building and maintaining long term relationships with customers. BRAC has been operating in Bangladesh for over 40 years, and it has managed to survive and thrive as a service organization for all this time, due to the consistent nature of its service delivery.

vi) Conflict Handling

For customers, conflict handling is an indication of trust and perceived relationship quality. It is an important step in building customer loyalty. Sometimes CEP faces challenges while working in particularly conservative areas. In order to avoid this type of conflict, CEP always has dialogues with local community elders, and other influential people, so they can provide their service in the area, free from conflict and resistance.

8.0 Service Recovery

Service compromise and recovery is a major challenge for all service providers. It is very important that the service providers emphasize on service recovery over providing flawless service,

because it is impossible to fully satisfy all customers all the time. Service compromise is a reality of the service industry and can happen anytime, sometimes due to inadequacies from the service providers themselves, and sometimes due to other external factors and circumstances. In this regard therefore, it is essential to focus on the measures which should be taken to compensate the customer when the service is compromised.

Service recovery includes all the steps and measures that must be taken to win back a dissatisfied customer when service has been compromised. Proper service recovery is very critical for the service providers because insufficient recovery effort can lead to lost customers and lost business. Additionally dissatisfied customers are more likely to talk negatively about the service provider, and this can potentially lead to even more reduced business

In the context of BRAC and CEP, service compromise is different from normal service organizations. One commonly observed situation of service compromise for CEP, has been resistance from the local community regarding jatra or popular theatre, a communication channel used by CEP. In certain conservative areas of the country, there have been instances where community elders have forbidden popular theatre shows. In this type of situation, CEP experiences a sort of service compromise and must engage in service recovery. This involves the following steps.

i) Apologize

In any situation of service compromise, the first and foremost duty of any service provider is to apologize. In the case of CEP also, the first step that the field staff carries out, is apologize to the community elders for offending their religious sensitivities

ii) Review

Another vital part of the recovery stage is to review the actual problem which is bothering the customers. Before solving the problem it is essential to understand the problem properly first. In the jatra situation, CEP staff understand that the community elders are offended by the show due to their conservative views. In this situation CEP staff usually stop the show, and then sit with the community elders, engaging in dialogue with them and explaining the situation to them.

iii) Fix the problem and then follow up

After learning about the problem the responsible person must take necessary steps to resolve the situation. This must be done promptly, in order to avoid customer dissatisfaction from escalating. Once the problem is taken care of, the service provider should follow up with the customer to evaluate whether he/she is satisfied with the solution. This action helps the service provider display concern and appreciation towards the customer, and can lead to customer satisfaction. Here too CEP, follows up with the community elders, and invites them to attend its courtyard sessions. This type of service recovery and follow up, usually leads to better relations with the community and its elders. It has been seen that CEP is later able to do its popular theatre shows in the area with the support of the previously dissatisfied community elders.

9.0 New Service Development and Design

i) Developing a new service

The intangible nature of services means that designing a new service is much more complicated than designing a new product. There are several steps and procedures to follow in developing a new service. These are discussed below in the context of CEP.

a) Major/radical innovation - A completely new service that the company has not offered before. Recently, CEP introduced a new training called 'Tothobondhu' as part of its Strengthening Local Governance (SLG) initiative. These are people from the local community who are trained on the Government of Bangladesh's Right to Information (RTI) Act. When people from the community need information on something, such as the type of medicines available at the local government clinic, they approach the Tothobondhu, who prepares and submits an RTI application to the clinic. The clinic is then bound by law to share the required information.

b) Start up business - Introducing a service in a new geographical area. A few years ago BRAC introduced a service called the Integrated Development Programme (IDP) in the haor areas of Kishoreganj and Sylhet. The IDP is essentially a combination of different BRAC programmes (including CEP) that are delivered by a single team,

c) New services for currently served market- Introducing new services for current consumers or current existing market. This occurred when CEP introduced its own radio station, Radio Pollikontho in Moulvibazar in 2008.

d) Service line extension - Extending present service line; introducing various services related with same product/services. As part of its Strengthening Local Governance initiative, CEP started training community volunteers to work with the local government institutions and act as a bridge between the community and these institutions

e) Service improvement - Improvement of current service which can be expressed in numbers/digit. As part of its Strengthening Local Governance initiative, CEP aims to help organize annual Open Budget Meetings in the unions it works in, where at least 40% of the attendees are women.

f) Style change - Change some aspect of the service delivery or of the overall organization. In 2006, BRAC changed its logo to the current pink design.

ii) New service development process

New service development process can be applied on any types of new service. Steps that followed in developing new service are divided into two sections-

a) Front end planning

Business strategy development or review - A concept note (or what is referred to as a 'Board Memo' in the private sector) outlining the new service is prepared by CEP and presented to the BRAC Programme Coordinating Committee (PCC).

New service strategy development - A special working group is formed consisting of CEP staff as well as staff from support departments including Human Resources and Finance.

Idea generation - New ideas are generated regarding the programme/service components.

Concept development - A proposal is developed outlining the various components of the service as well as its expected outcomes and goals.

Business Analysis - A feasibility study is done, usually with the help of the BRAC Research and Evaluation Division. This is usually called a 'baseline study'.

b) Implementation

Service development and testing/market testing - In the context of BRAC/CEP, these two steps are combined. The service is introduced at a small scale in select areas where it is most needed.

Commercialization - The service is launched and offered on a large scale to target customers. In the context of CEP this cannot really be called commercialization, but may be referred to simply as 'implementation'

Post introduction evaluation - After the service is introduced an active for about a year, CEP runs an evaluation to see how well it is performing, what the customers think of it, and how it can be improved. This is usually done through operational or process evaluation research.

10.0 Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a communications strategy used by service providers, which integrates all relevant media and communications channels to establish a uniform message in the mind of the customer, within a specific time period. The three most important components of an IMC are:

Message - one consistent message that the service provider is trying to communicate to the customers

Media - the channels and outlets through which the message is to be communicated/delivered to the customer

Time - the time period over which this communications will last.

A successful IMC integrates all three elements to communicate a clear consistent message that is intended to establish the service provider as a viable option in the minds of the customers. Nowadays, customers are bombarded with a wide variety of communication from different sources. Service providers have to consider the following factors when designing an IMC that will help them stand out

i) *Communications and Service Marketing Triangle*

The Service Marketing Triangle is a marketing model that outlines three key categories of marketing and communication; internal marketing, external marketing and interactive marketing. These three stages represent the process by which an organization creates, develops and delivers on its message, or "promise" to its customers. CEP promises to educate its customers and help empower them through knowledge. This promise is the message it wants to send to its customers. In order to do so, it must execute the three elements of the service marketing triangle.

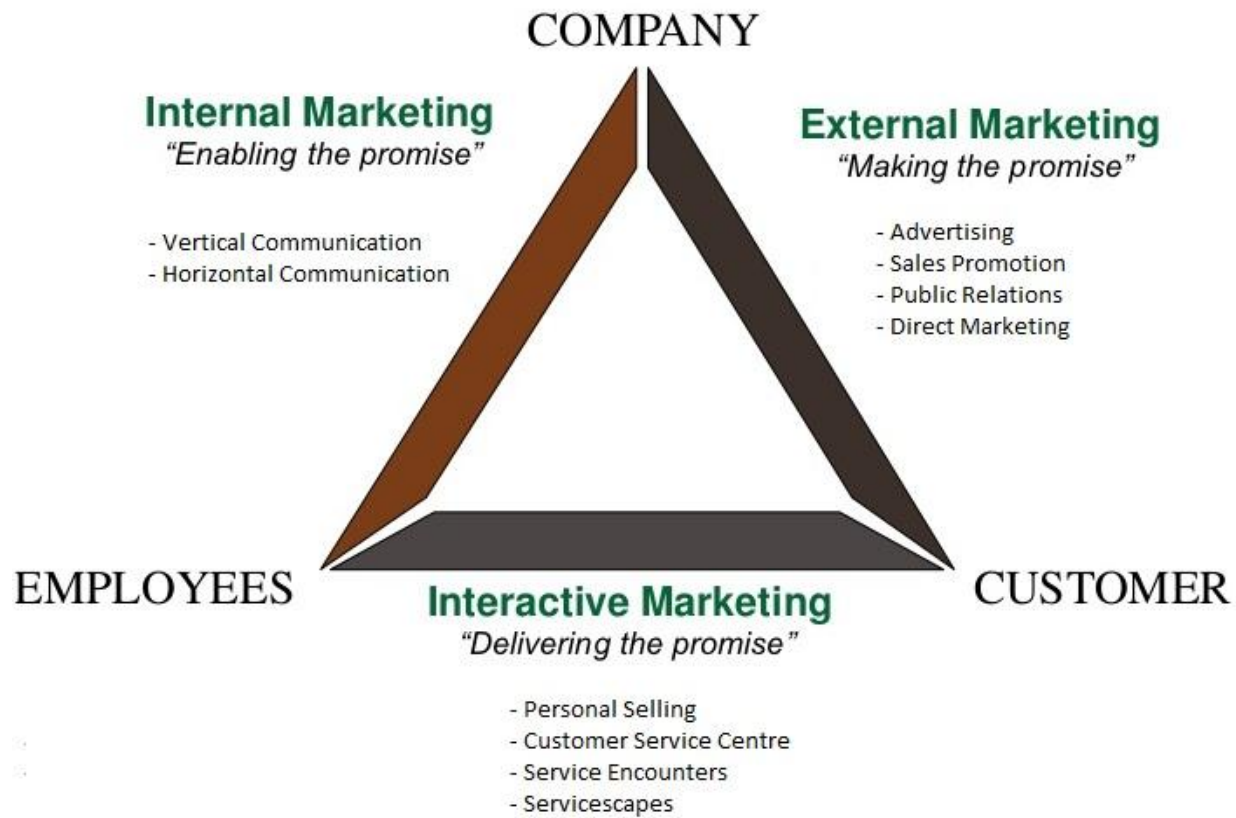


Figure 1: Service Marketing Triangle

a) Internal Marketing

This involves communicating the message internally to the organization's employees. Before an organization communicates a message to its customers it must ensure that its employees have been oriented accordingly, and that they have agreed to 'buy in' to this message/concept themselves. Good internal marketing allows an organization to bring all its employees on to the same page, so that collectively they can deliver on their promise to the customer. Through internal marketing, a company is able to "enable the promise." This is essential for CEP, because their service is delivered directly by the programme staff. In order to successfully deliver behaviour change communication to the customers, CEP employees have to first believe in the message themselves.

b) External Marketing

This includes the marketing and communications activities targeted towards the end user; the organization's customers. This is where the organization delivers its one consistent message that makes a promise to the customer and tries to grab their attention, so they too 'buy in' to what the organization is offering. External marketing allows an organization to "set the promise." CEP's external marketing is done through its courtyard sessions. These allow CEP to easily communicate their message to the customers in a simple interactive, and participatory way.

c) Interactive Marketing

This is the communications stage where the customer has an actual interaction with a representative of the organization. This encounter allows the organization company to finally "deliver the promise" to the customer, and so it is quite a critical component of the marketing and communication process. For CEP again this includes customer interaction with field staff. It also includes the use of jatra or popular theatre to spread the programme messages. The jatra is also customized for each area CEP works in, and delivered using the local dialect to maximize the impact of the messages being delivered.

ii) *Service Communication Challenge: The Communication GAP*

This is a gap that is created when the service provider fails to perform or deliver to the customer's expected standards. The communication gap arises from a discrepancy between what was communicated to the customer about a service and the actual service that the customer receives. The communications gap presents a major challenge for any organization running an IMC. It can arise from the following key factors:

a) Inadequate management of service promise

As mentioned before, when a service provider communicates with the customer, it makes a promise to deliver. When it cannot fulfil this promise, it loses the trust of the customer.

b) Inadequate management of customer expectations

Customers form certain expectations based on the communication they receive from service providers. However, when the customer's service experience does not match their expectations, the service provider can expect customer perception to shift unfavourably.

c) Inadequate customer education

Service providers have to educate their customers appropriately on how to access and enjoy their services. Lack of education can lead to a negative service experience for the customer, for which they will blame the service provider.

d) Inadequate internal marketing communication

If a service provider expects its employees to provide the best service, it must ensure that they have been properly oriented with its messages, and have bought in to the service philosophy. Inadequate internal marketing can lead to service compromise and lost business.

iii) *Designing an effective Integrated Marketing Communications campaign*

Designing an effective Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) campaign, means overcoming the key challenges discussed above.

a) Managing Service Promise

In order to deliver on its service promise, a service provider must focus on building a strong brand identity, and coordinating all external communications.

b) Managing Customer Expectations

The 'promise' made by the service provider creates expectations from the customers. When customers go to a CEP courtyard session, they expect to be given a chance to voice their opinions and to be treated with respect.

c) Improving Customer Education

In order to deliver and maintain a high level of service quality, service providers must ensure that their customers are properly educated on the service and its features, and on the role they themselves have to play. CEP's service involves educating their customers, it is the main part of their service delivery model.

d) Managing Internal Communication

Horizontal and vertical information and cooperation within an organization must be well coordinated so that all programme/service staff have the same understanding. CEP, and other BRAC programmes regularly hold coordination meetings among themselves to ensure this. Additionally the feedback from field research, allows the programme staff to form a common understanding regarding their work.

iv) *Developing Integrated Marketing Communications Campaign for the BRAC Community Empowerment Programme*

As a social development service provider, CEP does not follow the traditional IMC model that most service organizations use. The IMC used by CEP at any time is dependent on what type of programme they are running. If they are running a local governance themed programme with Union Parishads for example, The IMC's message will be completely governance focused. The elements of such an IMC would include the following.

Message: The message will be completely governance focused. CEP promotes the practice of participative local governance, where the local people become part of the governance process by cooperating and working with their local elected representatives (such as union parishad Members and Chairmen). They might run a simple message called "Amar union parishad", to instil a sense of ownership regarding local government among the community people.

Media: CEP's choice of media will include

a) Posters/information boards: These are put up in the local Union Parishad building, and contain the core message of the programme, along with elaborate information related to this message. Information boards may also be put up in the local Union Parishad office detailing how people can participate in the governance system.

b) Jatra: CEP makes extensive use of jatra or popular theatre to convey its messages. The jatra, which is performed in the local dialect, incorporates elements of the local culture and traditions, and delivers the message of participative governance in a simple manner, that the target audience can easily understand and relate to

c) Courtyard meetings: The CEP staff interact directly with the customers and act as their primary source of information. They elaborate on the concept of participative governance, and explain this in detail to the customers, also educating them on their expected roles and responsibilities.

d) Miking/Public announcements: Participative local governance means that local citizens are expected to take part in events such as Ward Shavas (a monthly meeting where community members and Union Parishad officials interact and discuss/resolve local issues). Prior to this meeting, CEP makes several public announcements encouraging people to attend, and once again stressing on the importance of participating in the local government system.

e) Polli Shomaj/Community Based Organizations: CEP forms community based organizations with its customers. These groups actively work in spreading the service message in their own communities.

Time: CEP runs its IMC with all the above elements extensively during the first year of its operations in an area. The schedule might look something like this:

Month	Type of Media
January	Courtyard meetings
February	Courtyard meetings, Jatra, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
March	Courtyard meetings, Public Announcements, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
April	Courtyard meetings, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
May	Courtyard meetings, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
June	Courtyard meetings, Public Announcements, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
July	Courtyard meetings, Jatra, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
August	Courtyard meetings, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
September	Courtyard meetings, Public Announcements, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
October	Courtyard meetings, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
November	Courtyard meetings, Jatra, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards
December	Courtyard meetings, Public Announcements, Polli Shomaj, Posters/Information Boards

Table 1: CEP's Integrated Marketing Campaign

11.0 The Way Forward

Customer loyalty is a critical factor influencing the long term survival, success and sustainability of a service organization. BRAC has been in the service business for over 40 years. As a service delivery arm of this organization, CEP enjoys the benefits that come from being associated with the BRAC brand. The chief of these benefits is the credibility and acceptability it enjoys in the rural communities where BRAC operates. BRAC is now in the process of changing its service delivery model, and adapting a cost recovery strategy, where it will start charging for its services. It is unclear how this will apply to services such as CEP. What is important to consider and remember is the nature of the services provided by CEP and the effect they have on customers. CEP's services involve educating people about their rights and empowering them through knowledge. It seeks to create sustainable communities that can take charge of their own development and well-being. This is a core service philosophy that cannot change. Programmes like CEP work on transforming lives on an individual and community level, and this is something they cannot compromise on moving forward.

12.0 Conclusion

This internship report involved an exploration of a social development service through the lens of service marketing. BRAC is one of the biggest service providers in the country. However, the service it delivers is not a normal paid service, but rather a social service meant to benefit the poor, marginalized and the powerless. This report has taken BRAC's Community Empowerment Programme and attempted to deconstruct its services and explore it using the established theories of service marketing. In preparing this report I have tried to relate CEP's work with the established theories as best as possible, and have found that although CEP offers a free social service, it still follows the rules of service marketing and service delivery standards.

Information is the primary service offered by CEP. Some might say this has become irrelevant in today's age of technology and easily accessible information. However, CEP's customers have not fully benefitted from this technological change. They are the poor and powerless members of society, most in need of a helping hand and a second chance. These are the things CEP ultimately offers through its services. As Bangladesh moves forward as a middle income country, it is important to ensure that its poorest, most vulnerable citizens are not left behind. This is why services like CEP are still important. It is also equally important to analyze the nature of these services, so that they can grow, evolve and adapt to a changing socioeconomic landscape, and continue to deliver a high level of service to those who need it most.

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