

**Service Marketing: A practical approach**  
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**Lecture-27**  
**Design the Physical Evidence**

Hello there we continue with our lesson on services marketing with a practical approach,  
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[Lesson 27 Designing the Physical Evidence](#)

[What is Physical Evidence of Service Quality?](#)

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This lesson number 27 designing the physical evidence, we discuss what is physical evidence of service quality?. What are the roles played by physical environment, relationship between physical environment and the service consumer, and design and maintenance of physical facilities.

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## What is Physical Evidence of Service Quality?

**Servicescape:** It includes (i) facility exteriors like exterior design, signage, parking, landscape and the surrounding environment, and (ii) facility interiors like interior design, equipment, signage, layout and air quality and temperature.

**Other tangibles:** It includes business cards, stationery, billing statements, reports, employee dress, uniforms, brochures, web pages and the virtual servicescape.

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## Roles played by Physical Environment

1. Package
2. Facilitator
3. Socialiser
4. Differentiator

So, the roles played by physical environment, package, as a facilitator, socialiser, and differentiator.

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## Roles played by the Physical Evidence

The physical environment affects customers and employees, i.e. anybody who uses it. It can play various roles as discussed in the following sections:

1. Package: The physical evidence of a service plays a role similar to that of product packaging, it wraps the service and communicates its characteristics to the customer. A clean, safe servicescape conveys the image of a superior quality service to the customers and makes them feel proud of being associated with the service, i.e., it enhances the image benefits received by the customer.

2. Facilitator: A hindrance-free layout of the servicescape can enhance employee performance and customer satisfaction. Physical evidence like comfortable chairs in the seating area matches the requirements of customers thereby enhancing the perception of the quality of service in their minds.



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## Roles played by the Physical Evidence

3. Socialiser: The servicescape helps customers and employees socialize and interact with each other and among themselves as services are mainly delivered through interactions during the moments of truth. The physical evidence also sets the mood for the service, a cheerful mood at entertainment services, a professional mood around offices and calm, relaxing ambience in healthcare establishments.

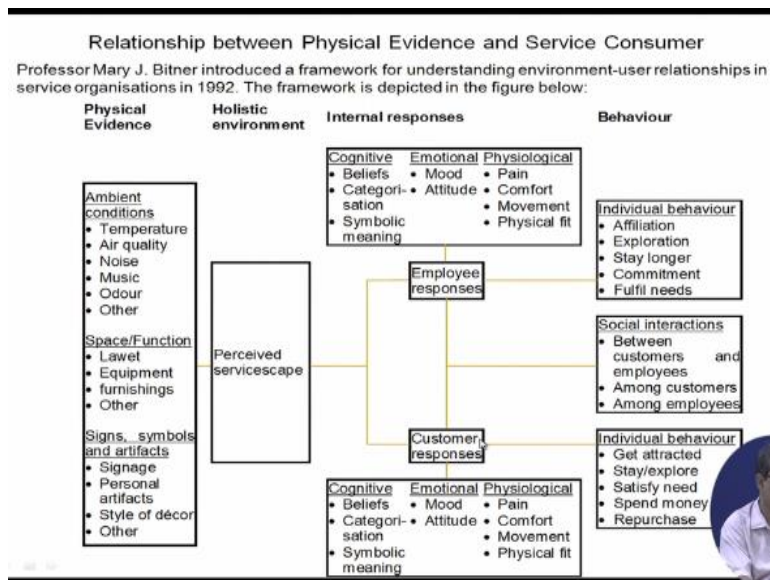
4. Differentiator: The physical evidence can help to differentiate and position a service for a particular segment of customers when designed according to their tastes and preferences including what they are willing to pay for. For instance, the physical evidence for a high-priced upper class area would be enhanced and differentiated from a low-priced lower class area in any service setting or among similar services.



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Then differentiator: The physical evidence can help to differentiate and position a service for a particular segment of customers when designed according to their tastes and preferences including what they are willing to pay for. For instance, the physical evidence for a high priced upper class area would be enhanced and differentiated from a low price lower class area in any service setting or among similar services.

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Relationship between physical evidence and service consumer. Professor Mary Bitner introduced a framework for understanding environment user relationships in service organizations in 1992. The framework is depicted below. So we have the physical evidence, we have the holistic evidence and the internal responses and the behaviour. So the physical evidence there are ambient conditions like temperature, air quality, noise, music, odour and others.

Space of function like equipment, furnishing, others. Signs, symbols, and artifacts like signage, personal artifacts, style of decor and others. And the holistic environment is the perceived servicescape. The servicescape perceived by the customer. Then we go to the internal responses which are cognitive, emotional or psychological. Cognitive means beliefs, categorisation, symbolic meaning. Emotional means mood and attitude. Physiological means pain, comfort, movement and physical fit.

And those are the employee responses and the customer responses are belief, categorisation, symbolic meaning, mood, attitude, pain, comfort, movement and physical fit. These are the customer responses. So the employee responses go on into employee behaviour that is affiliation, exploration, stay longer, commitment and fulfil needs and customer responses lead to individual behaviour like get attracted, stay explore, satisfy needs, spend money, and repurchase.

And then there are social interactions between customers and employees. Among customers and among employees. So this is how a framework or physical evidence and the responses and behaviour of employees and customers that has been depicted in this figure.

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The objective of our service business is to attract customers and ensure that they are able to satisfy their needs while enjoying the service experience. They would like to spend their money if they perceive that they have received net benefit from our company. If they are satisfied with the service, they would repurchase our services and refer our services to others.

Our employees would mainly serve the customer. It is important that they feel comfortable at our servicescape. This would help them feel like staying till they complete their duty and do additional innovation for the benefit of the customers and our organisation in the long term.

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In order that the above desirable behaviour can take place effectively and efficiently, it is important that they receive the right cues from the environment that can elicit the right internal responses within customers and employees. The responses would be of three types, cognitive, emotional and physiological. The right environment would give them desirable cues. For instance, a clean and organized office would convey a sense of efficiency to customers and employees alike. High quality, working equipment would give assurance to customers that their problems would be flawlessly satisfied at the service outlet. Similarly, the availability of efficient working equipment gives service providers the opportunity for doing a good job of their service. The physical evidence, like presence and placement of chairs gives meaning to the space and indicates the category or segment of customers who are likely to receive the service in those surroundings. These are the cognitive responses of the physical evidence of service.

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Lighting, music, décor, air temperature and freshness make up the ambience of the servicescape which is aided by sparkling surroundings and equipment. This gives a positive mood and attitude to customers and service providers. On the other hand, a poorly-lit, damp servicescape quickly conveys a negative attitude of the service provider and elicits negative emotional response from the customers.

Above cognitions and emotions give rise to physiological responses like pain or comfort. The placement of physical facilities gives them direction for movement and rest. On the whole, customers and employees feel fit and comfortable at the service facility. These responses give employees an opportunity to provide flawless service to customers that they can be proud of. Similarly, customers are able to negotiate their way in the service facility and have their needs satisfied in the enabling atmosphere.

Hence, it is clear that the appropriate physical evidence, consistent with the service concept and the brand image, elicits positive cognitions, emotions and physiological responses from customers and service providers. This enables the production and consumption of services thereby leading to fulfilment of customers' and organisations' goals.



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## Design and Maintenance of Physical Facilities

We have understood by now that physical evidence is an important aspect of our service, which cannot be ignored. Accordingly, we have to employ architects, interior designers and merchandise designers to design physical features that are consistent with our service concept and conveys the value, form and function, outcome and the nature of experience that customers are to receive from the servicescape. More importantly, they must match the preferences of our customers, yet provide slightly more than what our customer segment would have ordinarily expected from the facility. You may have noted how various elements of the physical evidence of Jet Airways are blue in colour while those are red in colour for Kingfisher Airlines. These elements are consistent with the logo and masthead and reflect the value and nature of experience that each airline has promised to deliver. The physical evidence should have elements of surprise, joy, interest and captivation inbuilt in them, in order to be perceived to be slightly beyond the expectations of the customers and delight them.

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## Design and Maintenance of Physical Facilities

Elements of the physical evidence, particularly the servicescape, are costly and cannot be redone again and again without making large outlays. Hence it has to be executed correctly the first time itself.

Every bit of the physical environment that is likely to affect employees, customers and visitors must be identified in the service blueprint. Alternative designs for these facilities must be evaluated and the right one must be executed with care. The opinion of customer representative, service personnel, service managers, stockholders, collaborators and visitors must be taken and a consensus arrived at while selecting an appropriate design.

This procedure will also help the service providers and their collaborators to get involved and invest interest and time in the development of the facility while feeling a sense of ownership for the same. Care must be taken to involve as many of the above people as possible in decisions related to the smallest details of the servicescape, so that the very best is obtained without requirements for later replacement and rework.

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## Design and Maintenance of Physical Facilities

Once the service is in operation, much attention must be given to the maintenance of the facility in order to keep it spick and span and in working order.

All unused, non-working and damaged objects should be removed without delay and replaced with new components.

We must remember that visitors to our facility will quickly get used to the physical evidence in our service facility. In order to maintain their interest in the company and to give them a feel of a renewing firm, the servicescape should be modernised and updated beyond the expectations of customers.

It is a challenge to implement what customers could be suggesting later on, before they can expect it. This can keep our customers interested in our organisation and patronise the same. Interesting elements of the servicescape can become a matter of special attraction and customers would speak about it to others while intentionally or unintentionally promoting the firm and its services to them.

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