

Direct Marketing

Direct Marketing is a marketing system that uses one or more advertising media to affect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location. Direct marketing is also known as “Direct Order Marketing”. Here the “measurable response” refers to customer’s direct order. Direct marketing has been extensively used by hotels, airlines, sports’ clubs, fans’ clubs, and internet companies. Direct marketers occasionally send birthday cards, information materials and such other benefits to their selected customers.

Benefits:

Direct marketing has several benefits; some of them are listed below:

1. Convenient and hassle-free shopping;
2. It saves time and introduces consumers to a larger selection of merchandise;
3. Marketer has more information about customer’s preferences;
4. Strong relationship with customers;
5. Direct marketer’s offers and strategies are less visible to competitors;
6. Certain communication barriers are overcome.

Major Channels of Direct Marketing:

Direct marketers can use a number of channels for reaching the prospects and customers. These are:

- 1. Face to Face Selling:** Face-to-face selling is the oldest and original form of direct marketing. Now the industrial and many consumer industries employ professional sales force to locate the prospects, develop them into customers and grow the business.
- 2. Direct Mail:** Direct mail marketing involves sending an offer, announcement, reminder, or other item to the prospect at a particular address. Now-a-days, usually high selective customers are sent direct mails. Some companies even send audio cassettes/CDs, video cassettes/CDs, floppies and USB memories to their customers. Direct mail has three forms:
 - a. Fax mail via fax machines,
 - b. Email via Internet,
 - c. Voice recordings/emails via telephone, mobile phones and internet.
- 3. Catalogue Marketing:** Catalogue marketing refers to the situation where companies mail one or more product catalogues to the selected addresses. Catalogues give brief description of the product’s features, quality and price, usually printed on papers or available on CDs, tapes and Internet. Catalogues take three forms:
 - a. Full-line merchandise catalogues,
 - b. Specialty consumer catalogues,
 - c. Business catalogues.
- 4. Other Media:** There are several other media involved in direct marketing, for example, newspaper, magazines, television, videotext, tele-text, etc. Now-a-days FM Radio Channels have also become a platform for direct marketing.

5. **Kiosk Marketing:** Some companies have even designed their own “customer-order-placing machines”, known as “KIOSK”, used to dispense actual products to customers at stores, airports and various other spots.
6. **Tele-Marketing:** Telemarketing refers to the use of telephones in marketing a product customers can process their orders through telephones and can record their preferences, suggestions and complaints. Telemarketing has become a major direct marketing tool. Companies advertise their products on television and receive orders on telephones. Telemarketing is cheaper and quicker in response.
7. **Online Marketing:** With the Internet revolution, buyers have gained more capabilities to receive information, initiate requests, design the offerings and use the software agents to search for offers from sellers. Therefore, a new kind of direct selling channel has been explored with the Internet revolution. Marketers have now their own websites featuring company’s history and prospects, product’s characteristics, services, order forms, and prices. Now the customer can choose a car, a mobile phone, home furnishings, clothes, food and various other consumer products at his home. Online marketing offers several advantages like:
 - a. Customer’s convenience,
 - b. Comparative information about company and its competitors,
 - c. Lower costs for marketer,
 - d. Strong relationship with customers,
 - e. Meaningful information about prospects,
 - f. Quicker adjustment to market conditions,
 - g. Lesser consumer’s hassles.
 Direct marketers can plan online marketing by adopting the following steps:
 - a. Electronic presence by creating online links, for e.g., www.toyota.com
 - b. Placing ads online, for e.g., ads on Yahoo, Google and Bing.
 - c. Participating in forums, newsgroups, blogs, bulletin boards and various web communities, for e.g., CNN, Express Tribune, Blog Spot, ZDNet, etc.
 - d. Using email and web casting, for e.g., daily emails from various companies, also notoriously known as “Junk Mails”.

Personal Selling:

Personal selling is a face-to-face interaction with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making presentations, answering questions and procuring orders. Personal selling is one of the common communication platform other being advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing.

Major Aspects of Personal Selling:

Following are the major aspects of personal selling:

1. Professionalism
2. Negotiation
3. Relationship Marketing

1. **Professionalism:** Personal selling is an ancient art of selling. Now companies spent millions of rupees to train their sales people in the art of selling. There are two approaches in training sales people:

- 2. Negotiation:** Personal selling is much more involved in negotiation. Two parties need to reach agreement on the price and other terms of sale. Sales person has to accept orders without hurting the profitability.
- 3. Relationship Marketing:** Besides sales and profit objectives, the marketer has also to seek strong customer relationship. Companies are now become more relationship marketing oriented rather than transaction marketing oriented. As the relationship marketing is properly implemented, the organization will begin to focus as much on managing its customers as on managing its products.

Major Steps in Personal Selling:

Following are the major steps in effective personal selling:

- 1.** Identifying and qualifying prospects,
- 2. Preapproach,** i.e., sales person, should study about company's prospects and decide about how to approach or reach the customers,
- 3. Approach,** i.e., sales person should know how to meet the buyers in a good and friendly environment,
- 4.** Presentation and demonstration of company's brand and product's features and benefits,
- 5.** Overcoming objections through psychological resistance and logical resistance,
- 6. Closing,** i.e., sales person should know how to close or end the speech,
- 7. Follow-up and maintenance,** i.e., delivery time, purchase terms and other matters.