



Marketing of the Library-Information Services

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ABSTRACT

Today consumer of library services is in the center of the Library Marketing. The study examines the nature of the library services and the challenges that different aspects and elements meet nowadays – information intermediation, protection of intellectual property and personal data, depending on market conditions and rules of the game. The mission of the library is now highly modified and dynamic, because it combines the need for a high public reputation with the requirement to mobilize the creative talent and motivation of all employees. The library concept combines the mission, the conceptual idea, objectives, priorities, tasks, pathways, mechanisms and responsibilities for public long term.

Keywords: Public Sector, Library Marketing, Library Service, Financing, Consumer Benefit, Price Policy, Library Staff.

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I. Introduction

The contemporary society is an extremely complex phenomenon. The contemporary library is influenced more than ever during its thousand year history by the permanently changing environment. This is the reason for the thriving need for adequate reaction to these changes. Library nowadays is an institution which produces and offers specialized services to a big number of users and rules processes in full conformity with the marketing principles. The deployment of the services delivered by the contemporary library is based on the market economy and everything that happens or does not happen is regulated by the laws of the marketing.

II. Related Work

Philip Kotler, Pitter Draker, B. Shapiro are the first who apply the ideas of the marketing theory to the non-commercial organizations in the 70's of the XXth century (Kotler, 1991, 2000, 2002). Marketing is a specific social activity which goes beyond the frames of the traditional sale and purchase and occupies a space in the education, healthcare, social security and culture, in the services sector (Kotler and Andreasen, 2005). The Library Marketing is a dynamic system of economic activities where the library considers the real and the potential needs of the users; adapts to them and thus influences the search on the market, predisposes the readers for library

products and services. In parallel the library marketing is the part of the library management that influences in the most direct way the creation and the growth of library products and services and their adequate offer to the customers.

III. The Library Service

The success of any entity offering services on the market depends on the aspects of the respective Service. The customers receive benefits, favors and satisfaction of their needs from the services same as from the goods but they do not acquire any object (Blagoev, 1989).

The concept on the nature of the service in the non-material sector like culture and education is a complicated-one but of great importance for this large, all-embracing and wide layer of the social life. The contemporary dynamic conditions impose a higher attention to the marketing research of the services connected to the overall management and the management of the services themselves. In any definition of the notion *service* the substantial link is between the point of view consumer/client of the service with the point of view supplier/producer of the service. Every service has four levels: *consumer's benefit, service, service's offer and system of service's supply* (Breshkov and Botousharova, 1999).

The Consumer's Benefit

The notion *consumer's benefit* is of a particular importance because only through the idea of it the notion service could be determined. According the marketing, the consumer's point of view is the most important and the leading-one for the creation of any service that is offered. The real nature of the service can only be perceived by the consumer. In other words the "producer" of services is capable only to adjust its functioning and types of psychological favors that could offer to the consumer through its advertising but it is the consumer himself is who profits from the service to the extent of his current needs. In this connection it is important to make difference between the service's offer of the organization and the benefits that the consumer derives from the organization's offer. For example the consumer receives the service library-information service where in this service are included the search and retrieve of books, CD and periodicals owned by the library as well as online data-bases' search available on the territory/IP space of the library or internet resources relevant to the emerging needs of the user etc. Also to a certain degree in this case the consumer helps/participates in the production of his own service defining the parameters of the service in order to sort it out from the diverse range of the facilities offered.

The notion *consumer's benefit* consists in itself of functional, effective and psychological elements. It differs from the service itself and has some specific features. The service differs from the good as it cannot exist without a particular system of its delivery. Which is the reason why the construction and the operation of a delivery system as substantial element of the organization of any service is of such big importance. The notion *consumer's benefit* dictates what is necessary to be or not to be controlled as far as quality is concerned in the service's delivery system. In other words service and its delivery system are inseparable.

Among the important problems in service delivery stand several. Firstly, the offered services must obligatory be based on the needs and the benefits that the consumers/clients are looking for. In the same time they may not be aware of their requirements or the formulation of their requirements. Difficulties may occur from the consumers' lack of knowledge on what they could expect, from the underestimation of the supplier of the service, from their incapability to define their hidden needs. The "remedy" in this situation is one – a comprehensive discussion/investigation to a maximum extent with the information specialist/librarian about the needs, the expectations of the consumer.

Second, the benefits that are researched by the consumers may change in time based on a good or bad experience they had when receiving the service or more probably while an improvement happened due to the use and the application of the received service. Becoming acquainted with the materials he was given the consumer receives better knowledge on the topic and this naturally leads to higher requirements for his consumer's needs. Knowledge is sea and therefore for the reader the intermediary in the search of the direction to the relevant

information – the information specialist in the institution offering the service – the library, is of prime importance.

Third, there are practical problems while the service providers do the evaluation and the criteria definition based on which the consumer will make his conclusions about the importance of the researched benefits from the services. Besides, it is needed very often to evaluate the compromises that the consumers are ready to do regarding elements of the offered services. There might exist substantial differences in the needs of consumers of information on one and same topic depending on their status in society, education, age, gender, psychological behavior, moral and interest. It is very important to construct the service/search considering these factors. It is highly inappropriate to find information on a subject for a teacher or a consumer dealing with management from popular scientific, entertainment and unreliable sources. Visa verse it is same highly inappropriate to offer information on the same subject from academic publications to a child or to a consumer with a lower education who shows interest on the subject based on "general culture" point of view. From the point of view of the psychological factor it is of particular importance to deliver the search/service depending on the profile of the client. If he is in a hurry and is temporary present on the respective place or is pressed by other important tasks, it is highly inappropriate to make him wait for the service/search to be prepared. The optimum solution would be that the search/service would be delivered to him by e-mail or by courier. In this connection the contemporary innovative forms of service via different medias bring higher the quality of the services in the libraries. Regarding the concessions that the consumer/client is ready to do – implementation of serious marketing skills and techniques are required. Otherwise the image of the institution providing the services may suffer in the long run.

The definition and the management of the notion *consumer's benefit* are of extreme importance for all the decisions on the creation and the offer of the type and the form of the service. Constant goal of the institution is to identify at any moment what benefits the consumers are looking for – benefits that are very important for the marketing of the service but in the same time are difficult to be determined. When offering professional service like the usual bibliographic-information searches and deliveries, the consumers should not be left with the feeling of uncertainty when the delivered information is found that they might not have any benefit from it.

The Service Formula

The notion service includes in itself also the definition of the common benefits that the institution offers as services based on the researched by the consumer benefits. There are at least two levels of this notion. *The common* notion for service regarding the *main service* that is offered – library-information service. There is also a *specific* concept for service – in our case – service provided from online data-bases, service for blind disabled users, electronic document supply, preparation of a search on specific local heritage subjects etc, etc.

In the scientific literature the notion *service formula* exists including the *process* – the ways and the means via which the service is produced, distributed and used; the definition of the *market segment* (niche) and the definition of the relationship *librarian-consumer* which must be organized on a network; the *image of the service*, which must facilitate the free communication between the supplier/library and its potential consumers.

On the other hand, the notion for *service* determines the *offer* as a package of services offered to the consumer plus the importance of the same package for the consumer. This understanding about the service is important because it gives the opportunity to the manager to understand the subtle *indirect intangible aspects* of the service, particularly important in the field of the library-information services that influence the decision of the consumer to use the respective service in this particular institution. In the same time, the manager/director receives the opportunity to build up a complete package of services and to be in a position to emphasize on the important elements in it.

The process of the creation of the service is of primary importance. The consumer interacts with the labor force (librarians, providing the service/search), with the equipment (technologically delivered) and with the physical environment (comfortable, friendly, cozy space). The delivery system must be constructed in such a way that it would demonstrate the recognition of the presence of the consumer.

The elements of the service are the components of one common offer. They are the *specific package* of tangible and non-tangible elements of the offer. Some difficulties are observed in this respect: when taking decision for the determination of the complex of elements which the offer consists of, as well as when as a matter of fact some of the service elements are not procured by the service provider. An example is the provided links to online open sources that in a specific moment could require a paid access or a bankruptcy might have occurred to the supplier, or the translation facilities to a language for specific users is ceased or there is a breakdown in the system of the internet provider etc. Therefore the notion *service's offer* consists of *tangible and non-tangible elements* some of which are manageable and some others – not, by the provider of the service. The management and the marketing during the realization of the service to a great degree concern the management of the tangible and non-tangible elements of the offer in order to guarantee the observation of the declared standards (regulations). Presence at work of the employees, functioning of the reading rooms, relevance of the catalogs, correct arrangement of the materials for free access, smooth working of the computers are manageable elements of the service. However some elements of the service are hard to be managed. The management of the institution may secure good specialists but may not manage well the kind attitude of the employees to the consumers, their readiness to do the necessary efforts for the realization of the offered service, to give everything they can to those who need it. Nevertheless the manager must try to preview similar non-manageable elements so that the overall climate of the institution to contribute to the

increase of the value of the offer not to its decrease. For example the reference specialist is usually very professional but due to characteristics of his nature is not so good in his contacts with the people therefore it is advisable that he would work together in a team with another employee who could be the intermediary, the PR of the institution and the service simultaneously or a preference could be given to the interactive channels of communication with the client/consumer. Undoubtedly the management of the institution offering services and working with diverse contingent of people should take care of the active internal PR, the training of the staff in corporate loyalty and social commitment for the image of the institution.

The package of the offered services usually contains physical articles/documents; sensual favors – service with the precise information, psychological favors or indirect services – comfort, attention, understanding, correctness, sense of uniqueness and esteem.

The management of the tangible elements is usually easier. It is of prime importance for the institution. Material and non-material aspects rule the service and more a service has non-material aspects, more it needs material proof for its quality. It is necessary to create permanently metaphors, standards of prestige in order to gain the interest of the consumer for the opportunities which the library services offer. In order to keep the consumers it is necessary to remind them constantly and to show using PR and advertising, presentations, guides and other what they receive. Of course this approach has its dangers, as it may emphasize on the physical rather than on the non-material proofs, being essential for the quality of the service and thus to overexpose the idea of the consumer about the expected benefits. This is a specific example that proves how complicated PR is and how difficult it is for manager not to feel like an elephant in a china shop regarding the management of the services offered to meet the consumers' needs.

Services with high level of complexity like library-information searches are hard to be managed from the point of view of the "seller" (as they include quality control professional staff and staff knowledge of the potential of the service, its execution on a complex level aiming to make it simple for use by the consumer). These services are difficult to be understood by the consumers if their specific characteristics and capabilities for adoption by target groups are not carefully considered.

The quality of the service is on the first place when defining the service itself (Pashos, 2001). It influences the volume of the demand of this service and the people themselves who are looking for it. It will influence the competitive position of the institution in the respective field as well.

The quality is a subtle concept in the context of the service. It represents and overall measurement of values likes: accuracy, relevance, reliability, objectivity etc. During the realization of service the evaluation of their delivery can be very subjective (Woodsworth and Kostagiolas, 2012). The standardization and the quality support of the services in fields like information supply is very difficult, especially where libraries are concerned and where the personalized contact between consumer

and information provider is on a subjective level. The institution may present to the society a very high level of quality and in the same time there could be a problem with the coordination between the direct participants in the service in the reading rooms, in the information halls, the media centers, the library loan desks. This is a serious and hard task of the manager. Ultimately the standards for quality are determined by the consumer. What matters are his personal senses for the quality he received and not the senses of the provider/librarian? Therefore the goal is to find the ways that would allow the understanding about which other elements of the service influence its evaluation by the consumer and how they vary depending on circumstances and on the consumer himself. The feedback tools of the PR and the research of the social opinion need to be fully implemented in the investigations.

“The reader is always right” (unless he doesn’t break the rules), he is in the center of the service and his criteria about the quality are the defining-ones. On the other hand the quality of the service fully depends on the qualities of the employees and the quality of their operation during the delivery of the service. The professional literacy and commitment of the librarians, delivering library-information services determine their quality. There is a sufficient number of investigations in the field of marketing showing that the way the employees perceive and deliver their work in the field of the services may grow up/grow down the reputation and the success of the institution. Moreover, now, when the new economy, based on knowledge and total quality management in all fields of life is on focus.

The competition, the change in the consumers’ behavior, the technological progress, imposed the new requirements of the clients and many other factors after 1950 impose the implementation of a new approach of Total Management of the Quality. The purposes of this approach are to bring on a higher level the efficiency and the competitiveness of the products at any operation separately and totally based on the quality criteria for meeting the requirements of the consumer. Under quality we understand not only the technical indicators (strength, materials) of a certain product but also its potential to satisfy the needs of the consumer – the accuracy, the low price, the fast result, the quality support etc. In the attempt to formulate the concept, different definitions were given: “Quality is what meets and even over meets the expectations of the client”; “the usage of the product in conformity with its destination”; “quality is any activity (therefore not only product) of the company which is aimed at the satisfaction of the needs of the client”; “quality is a way of management of the organization that influences any activity and any process”; “it means survival”; “quality is a level up to which a product or a service satisfy the technical prescriptions and requirements of the client”. These definitions make clear that the traditional definition about *quality* referring only the product is not sufficient. The contemporary definition brings the notion closer to the understanding of the consumer about the quality and the value which it represents for him. Nowadays the quality of the service is a sum of two elements: *technical characteristics and service*. From the point of view of the consumer the

quality means: reliable service (quality of the service); meet of his needs by the product (technical quality); reasonable spending of his money/his time (quality return on investment); high level of service and respectful behavior (quality of the relationship).

The idea about the quantity and the volume of the service secured to the consumer is related to the quality of the service. Quantity same as quality is hard to be measured and managed because it is hard to find out the elements of the service from the point of view of the two participating parties. The major indicators of such analysis are three: *volume* of the essential service, delivered by the full service information supply; *time/moment* of the service/search; *flow/consistency* of services delivered in the full service. In this way the information specialist based on the quality values of kindness, sensitivity, capability to listen and to conduct the discussion, delivers a service at the needed quality level regarding the non-tangible elements of the service. Although it is possible that it might happen so that he could lack factors as quality of the attention or period of time needed for the concentration on the problem.

Service Supply

In the marketing of the services the processes of execution and of delivery of the service cannot be separated. A specific sign of this system is the role of the consumer in the process of production. The key elements in it are the *staff and the material proofs* of the service. The first element includes the whole staff of the institution. The competences and the skills, the knowledge and the attitude of the staff may have a dramatic influence on the levels of satisfaction from the consumption of the service by the clients. The influence comes not only from the direct providers of the service and but also from those who are in direct contact with the consumer. They may have perfectly achieved their work but the consumer may remain non-satisfied, for example because the delivered information is not comprehensive or is wrong as a result of the interference of other employee who had worked on it on a previous stage of the service. The consumer can never admire the mislead to which also external factors may contribute, such as internet providers, online/offline data-bases’ providers, book distributors, subscription agencies, mail and courier service providers etc. The staff and its qualities are of enormous importance for the institutions as libraries and information centers to the extent that the internal marketing and the PR should play an important role in order to secure the attitude of the whole staff for the consumer as “god”. Ultimately nobody in the institution could have work if he is not present.

Another group of people of vital importance are the different targets of the consumers – from the past, recent, temporary, potential, keen etc. Apart from playing role in the production of the service and influencing the whole process, they also interact with each other. The experience of the consumer based on the quality of the services delivered by a specific library and even by a specific department is heavily influenced by them and will influence other real or potential consumers. Moreover,

from the point of view of the library the profile of its consumers influences the image and the services developed and maintained by the library. Every library needs well known trusted "clients" – with good name, reputation and even taste for lobbying for the institution. Rumors, especially good rumors could have a big power for the image of the institution and it is a responsibility of every employee to be a 24 hour PR of his institution. As a result the other consumers with their knowledge, skills, relations, behavior, and appearance, even roles which they consciously or unconsciously accept to play influence the service itself and its market of distribution. There is no way if a library has hearted employees, ready to help precisely and with accuracy that the library would not become famous and attractive in its area.

The service is a complicated phenomenon. It consists of elements that need to be taken into account by the managers of the institutions offering informational, educational, entertaining etc. services. The successful management requires a delicate integration of these elements with the expectations and the senses of the consumers of the service.

From the point of view of the library marketing the service represents an exchange of values rather than an exchange of money and products in its traditional meaning. However there is always a price. The library products are offered to the consumer at a certain price, no matter how this price is paid. It is obvious that the market of the library-information products consists of different segments that reflect; classify the requests of different targets of consumers. The targeting is possible based on the consideration of the services that the library delivers. This is the way to attract potential clients. The marketing efforts are not thrown occasionally but are concentrated towards the profiles of the determined targets.

Price Policy

The pricing of the library products and services is one of the most complicated and important tasks of the library management. There are many historical reasons for this. The nature of the libraries has a strong democratic and social-oriented mission which the principles of universality, of equal and free access are carefully observed. On the other hand the services have price and somebody must pay it. The budget, the donations, the supplementary funding are the basis on which the price of the library service is formed. However these financial means are almost all the time in geometric regression relatively to the new services and the new library acquisitions. This is the main reason why paid services in libraries exist. The process of determination of the costs of the services in state and municipal entities is very complicated. Of first priority is to analyze and evaluate the value of the different processes in the library – cost of service per reader, cost of an average search etc., in order to optimize the expenses and the financial resources of the library.

The price policy of the cultural institutions is to determine the prices of the paid services. It includes the relative cost and eventual profit of the service. The price

is extremely sensitive on the demand and the life circle of the service/product. Obstacles of the type of institutional pressure may exist. The organization or the municipality, owner of the library, may declare veto on the prices of the services taking into consideration social or other reasons which make impossible the market regulation of the pricing based on the supply and the demand. Usually a small but secured income is received from the payment of the readers' cards and copying and printing services. Often this income is not enough to cover the expenses for the technical supply for the equipment used for these services. It is very difficult to calculate the expenses and the value of a range of services in the library which are typically non-material and where the professional staff is the main *expenses/value*-forming element. Theoretically the direct costs for production and delivery of the service are: labor, materials, raw materials, equipment, energy, machines, premises, technology, and information. It is hard to measure the time spent for the run of a specific and work consuming search. When new services are introduced they are often in contradiction with the job description of the employees from whom in most of the cases are required higher professional qualities and higher remuneration accordingly are attributed and finally as a result the value of the service increases. It is also increased by the extra costs for telephones, new computers and equipment, office supplies, vouchers for paid information, post taxes for the inter-library loan, premises' reconstruction etc.

The life cycle of the library-information service determines the decisions of the specialists for the introduction of new services, for the change of the existing-ones or for the cancellation of old products and services. The offer of the services: printing and saving develops faster and replaces the copying on paper of library materials which becomes more expensive for the consumer. By definition the pricing is determined by the potential of the consumers to use paid services but also other factors influence it – pricing of competitive institutions, or the rule of "pricing after the leader", potential for keeping monopole prices in connection with the offer of expensive and exclusive services, inflation etc.

The marketing analysis of the *process of production* of the service is very important. In many aspects it looks like the process in the industrial production. Industrial and non-productive operations must be taken into account as they all define the productivity and influence the economic indicators for the evaluation of the activities of the institution which is always part of a bigger organization that is looking for receiving dividends. It is required to consider the technology of the production process, the quantity of the operations that it includes, the logical sequence, the opportunities for optimization via elimination, unification and combination, the lack/surplus of resources, the duration and the time efficiency of the execution, the inclusion of the consumer in the process, the information which can be acquired by him, the types of information streams, necessary for the process, the opportunities for the introduction of new technologies, the relative costs for the process, the feed-back for the determination of the satisfaction of the consumer and last

but not least – the opportunities for the sale of the service (for example the bibliographic search) to other interested consumers/institutions.

Leading principle in pricing of the library-information services is not the profit but it is the *justified affordable price* for the consumers instead. The balance between the universality, the equal access and the financial approach to the consumer is obligatory for the marketing policy of the cultural institution.

Another important element of the offer of services is their physical introduction which helps the creation of “environment” and “atmosphere”. They support the consumer in the process of developing their senses and the evaluation of the utility of the service. Often the physical proofs for the image and the atmosphere of the offered service are neglected element of the marketing which is a bad practice of the institutions delivering services to a big number of people. There is very few information on the topic: influence of the material reminders to the consumer in the service marketing theory. However we can often receive evidences about the powerful influence of this factor. It is often intuitively managed by directors and the employees of the institution. The environment always embraces the consumer. It is multilayer and has an impact on the senses of the consumer. The environment gives the consumer a lot of information which may predetermine his attitude and his expectations. It develops mainly due to the roles of the participants in it – consumer and staff. The environment finally has esthetic, social and psychological qualities. Therefore one should not underestimate such factors like the elements of the so-called “*visual commerce*” - design, hygiene, aromas in the premises, sound, furniture which challenges to be touched, and provokes the feeling for solidarity, security and comfort. As Kotler says, such an environment may become a competitive tool especially when it is consciously created. Such a space may provoke the choice for it by the consumer no matter whether there are paid services.

The Staff in the Field of the Services

The role of the *staff* in the field of the services is of extreme importance – it is the most important-one. The employees are the face of the institution. Its activities and reputation may lose significance if the employees are not motivated and create an uncomfortable and even hostile atmosphere. People determine everything. This is very important for the librarians who are in direct contact with the consumers, the so-called “*contact staff*” – at the library loan desk and in the information halls. The requirements for their recruiting are high: serious experience in the process of consumers’ needs definition, good professional and psychological training for creating a climate of confidence, of high culture that would generate apart from the essential service, supplementary services (it also participates in the creation of comfort and confidence), flawless appearance, friendly cheerful attitude. All this may not happen if the manager does not select a *motivated and qualified staff* that must be regularly trained for better performing and conducting the technology of the service marketing. Also, very important

are the written standards, personalized according the competences of every employee, as well as the research of the social opinion, the feed-back from the consumers, and last but not least the definition of adequate differentiate remuneration of the employees and awards for the creative individual delivery of the service related to the real participation in the process of its production. The *personal example* of the manager is not only stimulating and motivating; it also represents a multi-functional main engine for the institution that delivers services. The manager who distributes the tasks and introduces the employee, follows his development, solves conflict situations and assists everybody.

IV. Conclusion

The contemporary library is well prepared to deliver maximum full access to information to a large number of consumers demanding the commitment of the information specialist to meet their radically growing needs for modern, efficient and relevant services. The library marketing considers the social values of the libraries being cultural, educational and information center and improves their performance with the tools of the marketing thus creating the perfect basis for the new economy of knowledge and quality.

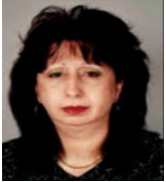
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She has held positions: Director of the University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2009 at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; She was the founder and the first Head of Department "Library management" in 2011 within SULSIT; Dean of the Faculty of Library Science and Cultural Heritage at SULSIT, Bulgaria – from 2011 onwards.

Her fields of interest: organization and management of libraries (management and marketing), studies of the Bulgarian Revival (historical, sociological and political science studies), Revival culture, linguistics, Bulgarian language and literature, library laws and regulations of the cultural institutes, application of information and communication technology in libraries, advanced information services, interlibrary cooperation, information literacy, interlibrary coordination; strategies for infrastructure development of the information society.

Prof. Yankova was a member of the Bulgarian Union of Scientists; member of the Board of Library Affairs at the Ministry of Culture; expert in advising bodies groups within the Ministry of Education, the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation, UNESCO and the World Bank; member of the Editorial Board of the journal "Education and Career", Deputy Chief Editor of the Journal of Information Science and Library Studies and others. She is the Chairman of the Bulgarian Association of University Libraries. Her Scientific Awards include amongst others: 1997 – Diploma of Honor from the Ministry of Culture for her contribution to the development and promotion of Bulgarian culture; 1998 – Sign of Honor "St. Kliment Ohridski" – First Degree; 2006 – Golden Badge Expert BG, awarded by the "National Convention of the Experts" and "Academic Leaders with Contribution to the Development of the Country".