

# Everything is Marketing: An Analysis of Functional Relationships of Marketing and Libraries

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## ABSTRACT

The scope of marketing in libraries is unlimited but has not been fully explored. To understand it more precisely, the scope of marketing by way of its function needs to be understood. The functions of marketing include: Buying, selling, transporting, storing, standardisation and grading, financing, risk taking and market information functions. A relationship between marketing functions and library operations has been established. It is found that the scope of marketing is greater than envisaged in professional literature and most of the library functions can be covered in marketing gamut. Looking at library functions from marketing angle offers greater scope of library marketing

**Keywords:** Marketing, marketing functions, library operations

## 1. INTRODUCTION

While looking back, one sees that formal connotation of libraries and marketing started after Kotler propagated the idea of not-for-profit marketing<sup>1</sup>. But in recent literature, scope of marketing is much widened and characterised as: 'Marketing is marketing-everywhere<sup>2</sup>, which suggests strongly that marketing is universal in nature; 'Marketing is marketing-may be!<sup>3</sup>, irrespective of the product or market place; 'Marketing is everything<sup>4-5</sup>' indicates marketing is not a function it is a way of doing business. These approaches to marketing signify that marketing is essential not only for manufacturing units but also service sector to the extent that equally applicable to the social enterprises and governmental agencies. Such marketing approaches also indicate about the changing role of marketing from a limited view to a broader view and to the extent everything is marketing. The marketing functions which are universally accepted include: Buying, selling, transporting, storing, standardisation and grading, financing, risk taking and market information. While relating these functions with the functions of libraries, one can easily understand that libraries perform all such functions which are performed in marketing in other organisations.

Marketing, in case of libraries, is necessary for many reasons and some could be to: Offer benefits to users want, reduce barriers to use and access, persuade and inform the users about the services library offer, and carefully plan to satisfy users need exceedingly. It is rightly pointed out that 'Marketing is so basic that it cannot be considered a separate function within the library. Marketing is a central dimension of the entire

library. It is the entirety of the library's operations and services seen from a point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer's point of view<sup>6</sup>

## 2. AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENTS ON MARKETING

Marketing has developed and changed over the years. It must have been observed by students of library science while studying at library school that the term 'marketing' before 30 years from now was not quite prevalent; the professors were emphasising more on technical works and service part of the librarianship. It took some time to understand the value of 'profession' and being working in open and distance learning system my motivation was that: libraries are an important force that underpins lifelong learning, has tremendous scope to social cohesion, and is a catalyst for providing knowledge and information to all communities. But, such value has still not been established in the society. The role and value of both libraries and distance education needs to clearly be spelt out and understood in the communities, fund providers, stakeholders, and top management.

To begin with, in a national level conference of academic librarians, I made a presentation on 'Mobilising Resources for Academic Libraries', in 1996 wherein marketing of library services was an important issue. During the discussion there were clear division on the floor, some supported the idea of marketing for libraries whereas others opposed it. Even, those who supported had different opinion about its concept and application. Those who supported were also worried of the economic scenario changing in the country because of liberalisation

of the economic policies of the country just started in 1991 aiming at improving efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness, so that the economy might attain its full growth and integrate with the world economy. The people were worried about its outcome and in the initial process results started coming gloomy. But, they were hoping brighter scope through marketing. Many diverse opinion existed in regard marketing. Some equated marketing with the promotion whereas others considered marketing as wider concept; some supported pricing tag for information services; some of them were not sure of the what to include in marketing and what not and so on. Those who opposed levied many charges as: it would be an additional responsibility for librarians who were already over burdened; requiring additional finances while library budgets were being curtailed; libraries need not to market themselves because of its business connotations and which was against of free philosophy of librarianship. Library professionals hesitated to compare themselves to the corporate world and disliked the idea of 'selling and buying' which was the central focus of the exchange process in marketing context. They believed marketing unwarranted for libraries which were in service without much concern of money or profit or even use.

### 3. SCOPE OF MARKETING

Diverse opinion further enhanced the general interest in marketing; within a couple of years we could understand that marketing is ingredient to libraries and that led to bring another paper 'Marketing in libraries and information context: Myths and realities'<sup>7</sup>, in 1998. Further, the paper 'Broadening the concept of LIS marketing'<sup>8</sup> in 2006 covered many aspects which delimit the scope of marketing in library and information services.

We believe or not, marketing concept has its existence in libraries since the day our ancestors started thinking and offering a little services in facilitating use of libraries keeping in mind the convenience of users, beginning with choosing central location of library in the town/parental body, extended opening hours of use, user-library relations, mobile library services, and so on. On daily basis lot of marketing daily is done daily in routine works-some positive and/or some negative on account of unawareness or negligence of marketing even if it is existed. Over the years, we could understand that marketing of library services is not by accident but by instinct, i.e., by virtue of being libraries and information centre managers, they have for centuries exhibited their sensitivity, responsiveness, flexibility and freedom to the users in the varied activities of librarianship. Thereby marketing becomes a natural tendency which has been performed by the library and information professionals in some way or the other without recognising its existence or without any logical beginning or even when formal training in marketing did not existed.

A cluster of marketing and related subjects covered in the bibliographical literature clearly indicates the growing

and diverse range of marketing activities in libraries<sup>9</sup>. To understand more precisely, other reviews<sup>10-13</sup>. describe the areas covered in library and information marketing in different times which indicate the changing nature, terminologies, scope and of marketing over a period of time. It's necessary to understand the functions of marketing and relate them with the library operations and activities to bring qualitative change in the services offered by the library and information centres.

### 4. FUNCTIONS OF MARKETING

No doubt marketing to libraries is important and LIS marketing has become an area of education and research in the present day time. But, the understanding of functions of marketing in relation with the functions of librarianship may lead to better understanding to library marketing and once such understanding is developed one can play more vital marketing role in his/her library. The functions of marketing include buying, selling, transporting, storing, standardisation and grading, financing, risk taking and market information. These functions are demonstrated in Fig. 1.

The analysis of library's function in relation with the functions of marketing will enhance understanding about marketing.



Figure 1. Functions of marketing.

#### 4.1 Buying

When marketing is considered exchange process, it is necessary to ensure that the resources purchased/acquired are made available in sufficient in quantity to meet user demands as according to Baker<sup>14</sup>. Libraries trying to utilise their finance to acquire optimum, however no library can acquire everything that is published. So, vital decisions are made in selection and building of library collection. Thus, buying is the most important function of libraries. To be successful in their operations librarians must well understand the need of the user/user market and their use behaviour, also anticipate their needs, are needless to mention the primary function of marketing in any library. Many times libraries come into

Marketing function	Explanation	Library function
Buying	Acquiring goods/products/ raw material to meet customer demand	Acquisition
Selling	Offering goods/product to match customer demands	Dissemination/ Circulation
Transporting	Movement of goods from seller to buyer	Access
Storing	Holding goods until customer need	Preservation and Conservation
Standardisation and grading	Sorting product according to size, quality, weight, etc.	Organising
Financing	Arrangement of finances and credit for conduct of various marketing activities	Financing
Risk taking	Dealing with uncertainty of consumer purchases and market	Risk taking (to meet future demands)
Market information function	Gathering, organising and analysing consumer, market data and information	Statistics

agreement with other libraries or publishers or participate in network/consortia to acquire resources as and when required by users.

#### 4.2 Selling

It is a common perception that the library is one which is more concerned with preservation rather than use. But the success of the library depends on use. Circulation, reference service, services like selective information services, document delivery services and similar services exist to enhance use. These are some of the selling efforts on the part of the library to meet out information needs of the users. The need to offer customised information products, timely in the most convenient way is ever emphasised. To reach out to users, libraries employ various strategies directed towards their advertising, promotion, and efforts in an attempt to match the offers from the library and the need of users. There exist wikis, blogs, discussion list, RSS Feeds, to market through technology support services to the larger community are big marketing tools of modern times. Through various campaigns, advocacy and lobbying librarians attract the attention of the fund providers, advocates, policy planners, political leaders, government and general public. These efforts very much help not only to attract resources but also establish a good reputation of the profession and professionals.

#### 4.3 Transportation and Storage

Transportation and storage are the two other important marketing functions. Libraries are commonly considered as a place for archiving of records to transfer knowledge and experiences of one generation to another generation. Now libraries are not only preserving print documents but efforts are made to digitise old and new materials based on the assumption that future generations will make use of those resources whenever they are in need. Digitisation efforts offer longer life to the information and wider access opportunities to the user community through the participation in consortia, network, and other such arrangements opens up doors for across the place marketing. Mobile libraries and branch libraries are some examples of existence of distribution work in libraries. Electronic delivery of documents and information offers enormous potential for improved distribution.

Technology has changed the very concept of library; there are numerous interpretations to libraries: library without walls, automated library, electronic library, digital library, virtual library, hybrid library and so forth. All such concepts have come with the emergence and applicability of technology in libraries. With the vast experience of technology use in library, it's clear that technologies come and go; its full potentials must be explored through marketing because marketing follows technology and in absence of effective marketing it's sure that technology will fail.

#### 4.4 Standardisation and Organising

Standardisation, performance measurement and evaluation, are important in marketing as these help librarians to perform their functions in an improved ways. Benchmarking helps to achieve operational excellence resulting into more user oriented services and branding of products and services. The efforts leading organising of resources/information may be covered in operations such as classification, cataloguing, abstracting, indexing, record management, preparing bibliographies and bibliographical databases for information retrieval. Such organisational efforts have been based on the assumption of permanent or relatively permanent relationships among the several branches of knowledge to facilitate availability of the desired material on a particular branch of knowledge at one place for the convenience of users.

#### 4.5 Risk Taking

Risk taking is imminent to serve users better: As managing libraries are managing businesses, then there are considerable risks involved in managing them efficiently. 'The library is a growing organism' demands many thoughtful planning on future requirements. Even every new initiative is a risky proposition. One must be ready to take risks if the new initiatives are to make things better for the users.

#### 4.6 Financing

Financing is important for all organisational activities. It is needed for staff to be employed, technology to be applied, buildings to be erected, equipment to be bought, and services to be provided. If an organisation cannot acquire adequate finance, or does not use its finance

effectively and efficiently, it will fail to meet its objectives. Finances, which were formerly taken for granted for all kind of libraries, are now questioned. Traditionally the main responsibility of financing libraries was placed with the central, state, or local government (in case of academic and public libraries) and parent organisations (in case of institutional libraries). Increasing importance of self funding/self-management requires the role of the government only to allocate budgets and subsequent audit to ensure that public money has been spent properly. The process of financial analysis, planning, and control is important for acquisition and effective use of information resources and services, meet the manpower requirement, technology acquired, and above all to be remain in the business of information acquisition and use. If a library cannot acquire adequate finance, or does not use its finance effectively and efficiently, it will fail to meet its objective.

#### 4.7 Market Study

Library conducts research in the form of user studies. But, traditionally extensive surveys reveal nothing about the individual user's need or service that may be offered. Most of the time individual user remains invisible in such studies. Even after such efforts, many of the books in the libraries are never used or their use is very low. In spite of such efforts many a time responsibility of no-use or lower use is put on the users rather improving acquisition process or employing personal efforts. This non-use or under-utilisation has emerged as a consequence of poor marketing approach and lack of know-how in the library. It is essentially about market research.

### 5. RECENT FUNCTIONS OF MARKETING AND LIBRARIES

Traditionally, libraries are concerned with four basic functions, namely, acquisition, organisation, retrieval, and dissemination. But, the flow of information has become faster than ever and transferring and access to the information has become much easier. It adds two more important functions to marketing and libraries as well, namely, sharing of information and publishing of information.

Commercial organisations, generally, oppose for sharing their marketing knowledge because they don't want to share the stories of their success. But, in modern business, getting information about competitors has become easier and information can be found from various ways, may be from reports and publications, employees or even from the customers. Customers interact more frequently and freely these days and they express opinions over the happiness and unhappiness of the products they have experienced. They can influence the buying decisions taken by the newer customers, as newer technologies support such propositions.

But, libraries are open organisations and may be willing to share what and how they do to meet out the

needs of the information users. There are numerous examples of Web 2.0 and social networking sites to reach to the users and engage the users in the service delivery process by way of sharing and participating in such activities. If good information is shared there are pretty good chances of linking library's posts and website by others. It is attracting to see that public libraries of National Library Singapore take four ways to interact with the users, namely just ask, just browse, just check and just share. The library offers opportunities to its users to share their information about by way of uploading photos, stories, etc. In this way users are involved in library activities by sharing opportunities.

Like sharing, publishing has become necessary for the library professionals. They are now creator of website and are responsible for designing and publishing on websites. In order to be successful in marketing and libraries, both marketers and librarians must think more like publishers than like traditional marketers or librarians. Because one of the core elements of modern marketing strategy is creation of content which they must constantly be creating much like a publisher. Therefore, it makes complete sense that marketers and librarians could learn a lot from understanding how a publisher thinks. In its 2015 Open Programme, IFLA's Section on Acquisitions and Collection Development Section explored the topic of "Libraries as Publishers". Whether through supporting author research and content creation, publishing both printed and online content, disseminating and curating publications, or promoting best practices by educating content creators about both Open Access and copyright, libraries have become increasingly involved in the publishing process.

### 6. CONCLUSIONS

There has always been a debate as to whether concepts derived from the business world can readily be transferred to public service institutions like universities, hospital, and libraries. It is a common argument that libraries and such institutions are funded differently, have different objectives and face a different external environment, however, such impression is not based on sound principles. Look at Ranganathan's philosophy, one can see that he matched the function of a library with that of a store, used shop analogy for libraries, referred work of librarians as that of canvassing agent, users as customers, and above all librarianship as salesmanship. Ranganathan advocated for such business connotations favourably even when the marketing was not transplanted to not-profit-organisations. Even, functional analysis of marketing and libraries proves that marketing is integrated in libraries. When one dwells deep into such relationship, he/she understands that 'everything is marketing'.

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