



THE MARKETING ENVIRONMENT OF LIBRARIES IN BULGARIA

Svetlana Lakova

“St. Cyril and St. Methodius“ University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgarian

Abstract: The report examines surrounding environment of libraries in Bulgaria. Possibilities for better management through coordination of the elements of the marketing mix are considered. The goal is to reveal the possibilities of applying the holistic approach in the preparation of a marketing program and strategy. The subject of the development is the management of library services.

Keywords: Marketing surroundings, marketing mix, Coordination, Library services

INTRODUCTION

The public library is place where you can most often gain knowledge, information, education at any time and at any age. Library legislation in Bulgaria dates back to the first years after the Liberation. The mission of libraries is to serve to public interests in all areas of knowledge. They need an active society support for their mission implementation. Unfortunately, today libraries are in an unenviable position as if they are left to survive. The financial collapse they meet is questioning their survival. And so, it is even more necessary to turn back and see the attitude of the first lawmakers to the book and the library.

The first normative document, which has begun the library legislation in our country, dates back to 1878. The Sofia governor, Alabin, wrote a draft statute for the opening of a public library. In 1879 Prince Dondukov-Korsakov issued a Decree for this library creation. On June 5, 1879, the constitutional National Assembly in Tarnovo decided that Sofia Public Library would be called Sofia People’s Library. Thus, the National Library of the Principality of Bulgaria has been created. The same year a regional book depository was organized in Plovdiv. On this base, in 1882 the Eastern Rumelia National Library was established by law.

In legal terms, the concept “public libraries” was introduced in 2009. A special Public Libraries Act was adopted. According to Art.2 of it these libraries are “educational, information and cultural institutes of national and local importance that collect, process, organize, store and provide for public books, other works and information, including the literary cultural heritage.”

The Global Information Society requires a new vision for libraries to promote the services they offer. Survival today is related to the design of sustainable development and management strategies. Successful implementation of the strategic goals and mission of libraries is tied to daily marketing research and plans.

Marketing is a philosophy for better consumer’s orientation, a set of decision-making and decision-applying methods, a collection of techniques for information gathering and utilization. Its main goal is to sell what is not visible to the eye. It is counting on the client’s experience, on the personal, subjective experience in relation to the given service.

We accept the marketing basic idea that “our priority is the users’ needs “. We can also extend the scope of library services through interaction with the education system, lifelong learning, etc.

This study examines libraries environment in Bulgaria. There are also analyzed opportunities for better management through the coordination of marketing mix’ elements. The aim is to reveal the application of the holistic approach in the preparation of a marketing program and strategy. The subject of the report is the management of library services.

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Libraries environment includes all the active forces and conditions operating beyond the boundaries of the institution and affecting both its elements and their totality – the system. Their interaction implies variability of development conditions. Some constraints may arise and affect the organization’s life cycle. Unexpected, drastic changes are also possible. There is a need for periodic analysis and scanning of library marketing environment. The collected data from the monitoring survey will help to develop an effective marketing strategy for the library.

MACROECONOMIC FACTORS

Libraries environment is determined by external factors: legal; regulatory; technological; economic and competitive forces; social and political forces. At the heart of the marketing mix is the most important element – the user (the reader).

Fig. 1. Library marketing environment

Macro environment	Microenvironment
<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Users</i>
<i>Economical</i>	<i>Competitors</i>
<i>Natural</i>	<i>Providers</i>
<i>Scientific and technical</i>	<i>Social communities</i>
<i>Normative</i>	<i>Media partners</i>
<i>Political</i>	<i>Company culture</i>
<i>Socio-cultural</i>	<i>Library strategy and mission</i>

MICROENVIRONMENT FACTORS

Demographic factors – are subject to analysis by marketers. Information is scanned for users of the library and information services offered; the population size of the region, age structure, ethnic and religious, migration processes and trends; trends in the level of education of the population using the services offered. Consumers’ needs are monitored. Research results have the greatest impact on the institution’s management strategy.

Economic factors – have a significant share of the impact of the planned public library policy. They have an impact on libraries’ activities. On the one hand the implementation of library’s management program, mission and strategy are linked to the provided state subsidy. On the other hand, they depend on the purchasing power of the users.

Natural factors – the reasonable use of limited natural resources leads to the need for further education and formation of an ecological culture; the available environmental information functioning, based on public or child libraries.

Scientific and technical factors – are the basis of library emergence, bibliographical and information production and marketing opportunities. The main ones are the trends in science and technology development, libraries innovation potential and their close competitors, state involvement in scientific and technical research, etc. To a certain extent, there is a direct relationship with the science and technology progress. If libraries use the latest science and technology achievements, it would have a consistently positive impact on the business.

Normative factors – they are expressed in normative legislation application for such kind of organization – public library; implementation of the Public Libraries Act, normative acts and regulations of the Ministry of Culture, Law on the State Budget, Public Finance Law, etc.

Political factors – expressed in the chosen policy of the particular ruling party in relation to culture and education in the country. Hence, the policy regarding the share of GDP envisaged for this sector development. The direct reflection of the political factors is the size of the state subsidy and indirect one - sufficient financial resources available.

Socio-cultural factors – the cultural values of the particular geographic region, culture, customs, morals and values are indisputably reflected here. There are formed needs of users specific to the regions. These factors could also include the influence of external cultural needs of emigrants, students, foreign citizens with permanent residence, etc.

FACTORS OF MICROENVIRONMENT

Internal factor – to determine library microenvironment are: consumers, competitors, suppliers, social communities, media partners, library company culture.

Consumers – as factors of the microenvironment, directly influence the formation of the main public library activity; the mission of libraries is to provide the needs of information, knowledge, reading, and learning.

Competitors – are an internal factor. These can be perceived as institutions providing similar activity. These are libraries to community centers/ “chitalishte” libraries/, private libraries, information centers, educational centers, etc. The differences between them in terms of the place of the activity, the amount of library resources, community services enable libraries to implement flexible methods for the implementation of its activities.

Suppliers – are all external contractors linked to the library. They provide the means and conditions for library existence and library mission realization; they supply or maintain electricity, means for communication, water, internet, books, printed materials, tools for printing, writing and software.

Social Communities – an assembly of individuals united by similar living conditions, which have the same interests, professional qualities, values, and are aware of their social identity. The union of people is connected with their close interaction with each other, the overall activity; increase the similarity of interests, their culture. It is formed on the basis of common ideas about the purpose of the library. In an organization, there are formal and informal groups.

Engaging them in the mission of the organization is the guarantor of successful management.

Media partners – may be external organizations, institutions, individuals, volunteers, etc. Their role consists in communicating among the libraries and the public for the services offered the possibilities of use, right of access and advertising. Such representatives include: radio, printed publications, television, electronic media, volunteers in library campaigns, etc.

Corporate culture – Library’s most important strategic goals achievement requires mobilization of the efforts of all the staff on the basis of common values and norms. The principles are laid down in the organization’s development strategy. Set of traditions, values, procedures, concepts, endorsed by the library development strategy contribute to the realization of the mission of the institution.

LIBRARY STRATEGY AND MISSION

The basic Baker’s idea for marketing application in the library is that, according to the specific situation and the wanted results, the library must define its main activity orientation, namely: the orientation towards production; product orientation; the orientation towards the sale; marketing orientation; orientation towards social-ethical marketing.

Marketing mix elements are: product, placement, price and promotion.

Their most popular name is the “Four P” /product, place, price, promotion/. The ability of management to effectively combine them, through a holistic approach, will give sustainability and stability to the public library. The chosen marketing strategy will provide an opportunity for successful implementation of the institution’s mission.



Fig. 2. Marketing mix

Product – product policy. Taking into account the library services as a product, we consider that it refers to the differentiation of the possible information services used by the citizens and the measures and policies taken for their realization. According to the Public Libraries Act, basic and specialized library services are provided. Main library services are:

1. The use of library collections in and outside the library;
2. The provision of verbal bibliographic and factual information;
3. Access to own traditional and electronic databases and Internet access for educational, social and scientific purposes.

Specialized library services are:

1. Providing written bibliographical information;
2. Providing retrospective bibliographic searches;
3. Delivery of library documents from the country and abroad;
4. Access to external network resources and databases;
5. Copying of library documents;
6. Publishing of publications.

Price – pricing policy. Represents what the company offers as a price line, discounts, reductions, payments, lending. Psychology of the price.

As public institution financed by the state budget, public libraries apply the normative requirements. With regard to the price, the Law on Public Libraries provides in Art 51 (2) that main library services are free of charge; library collections, which contain cultural values, shall be granted in accordance with the requirements of the Cultural Heritage Act. We have the opportunity to determine the price and influence on the development of the paid activities in the specialized services. The pricing policy is formed according to an internal company document – strategy, rules, etc. The amount of the fees for providing specialized library services under par. 1, item 1–5 shall be determined by a tariff of the Council of Ministers, respectively by an act of the municipal council, with the proceeds remaining in the respective public library. The public nature of libraries does not allow free pricing of services, such as products and services in the commodity market. With this tool, though limited, it can be influenced in defining the marketing strategy and policy of the institution to achieve sustainable governance.

Placement – distribution policy. The company's distribution policy includes the organization and management of distribution channels; determination of market coverage, distribution of stocks by warehouse bases, localization of goods, logistics. Here we have to understand the most optimal reach for the readers of the library products and the materials from the library collection. The main issues in defining the distribution policy are related to: How should a library organize its interior to maximize the distribution effect? What are the possible ways for the fastest and most effective delivery of products, information materials, etc. to readers?

Promotion – advertising and promotion policy. It is also known as the communication activity of the company. Includes all actions representing the merits of the company and the product, convincing the target users to buy the products and to be customers. There is a communication complex that includes advertising, sales promotion, personal sales, public relations. The purpose of the promotion is to inform the target market about library resources and the benefits that can be gained from them. The decision to use the library collections will be realized with the full conviction that the benefits outweigh the cost of the proposed services. For the creation of the communication complex, it is necessary to analyze the target market of users of library services, the expectations of the market, the message of the library to the readers, the use of specific techniques to attract readers, periods of increased advertising, analysis of the results of the promotion of activities and the effects on visits, on the borrowing library documents, as well as the economic efficiency.

Marketing mix is the most commonly used concept in marketing. The elements are a marketing tactic that supports the implementation of the chosen strategy by coordinating the "Four P". The successful coordination of the processes is obtained by using a holistic approach.

Stages, arranged in an algorithm:

Holistic Approach

1. Studying the needs and requirements of library services users.
2. Consideration of possible risks in the application of a new type of service, taking into account the influence of macro and microenvironment for the library.

3. Offering of the new service to the customers.
4. Presentation of the new service/ event to the public.
5. Introduction, adoption of the new service in the current activity.
6. Analysis and evaluation of the new service application effectiveness.

The holistic approach is a periodically recurring mechanism of processes. The results from each one of them can confirm or reject a management decision.

CONCLUSION

Libraries in Bulgaria adopt marketing methods to different degrees in their activities. Thus, it is necessary to analyze and evaluate periodically the effects resulting from activities implementation and update them according to the adopted marketing program. It is essential to realize both the unity and holism of the marketing mix elements. It is the way to maximize consumer's satisfaction and optimize the cost of library use. Coordination between marketing elements shall help define library strategy and mission. The holistic approach is an algorithm of basic processes, through which periodical information is provided. This way the coordination of management is going to be improved.

A good marketing program and strategy shall also affect the sustainable financial position achievement of this public institution. Marketing application to libraries is going to turn them into a flexible and modern information organization that is attractive to a wider range of users and service consumers.

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Contacts:

Svetlana Lakova, Assist. Prof. Dr
“St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo
Faculty of Economics
1 Arch. G. Kozarov Str., 5005 Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgarian
E-mail: swnen4eva@abv.bg
