

## Marketing Library Services to Users: Theoretical Perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

*Libraries, as non-profit organizations are involved in service operations and the services, are distinct products characterized by attributes, intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability and perishable character. Poor accessibility and underutilization of library services by users as observed and reported by various authors have pushed librarians to search for the causes and remedies to this problem. This gave rise to the need to market these services to users who now seek for information and services from other sources rather than the libraries. Marketing creates awareness of services provided for users. Marketing should be based on facts and evidence about the services and the users which the concept of theory stands for. The theory is an existing data which forms the bases of explanation or prediction for future events which can be tested to be proven false or not. So, the article provides a framework on the theoretical perspectives of marketing library services to users. The theories discussed are Dr. S. R. Ranganathan five laws of library science, social marketing theory by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman and marketing mix theory by Neil, H. Borden and Jerome McCarthy. The five laws of library science see the library users as kings whose interest, needs, wants and satisfaction is paramount while social marketing theory is solely based on discovering intervention to effect change in human behaviour. Then the marketing mix expresses all the ingredients librarians need to understand and search for as marketers to achieve a successful marketing program for services they provide. Applications of these theories in the marketing of library services to users are aimed at providing increased access and utilization of library services provided.*

**Keywords:** Marketing; Library Services; Users; Theory; Marketing Theory.

### Introduction

The origin of marketing can be found in the 1870s, but the development of formalized marketing of library services has a long history and they are non-profit organizations. Marketing according to Sinh (2013: 86) is the development of a long - term relationships between the customers and suppliers, to generate advantages for all those involved and to allow the co-creation of value rather than unilateral distribution. The development of marketing for libraries is also influenced by Philip Kotler's theories that promoted the concept of marketing for non-profit organization. Libraries as a non-profit organization are involved in service operations in the public areas; the services are distinct products characterized by attributes, intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perish character. Marketing is not a new concept in libraries, but it is as old as the

library's profession. According to Kokemuller (2019) marketing of products or services conducting customer research is needed in the promotion of products or services to targeted customers based on customer experiences and interest. Pride and Ferrell (2011) believe that marketing is the process of creating, distributing, promoting and pricing goods, services and ideas to facilitate satisfying exchange relationship and maintain favourable techniques with stakeholders in a dynamic environment.

Marketing of library and information services is vital for any professional librarian, to promote the image of the library and the community it tends to serve. The size, type and the location of the library do not matter. There is always a need to draw the attention of your community, staff, administration and students to the library and information services

available to them. Marketing of library services is an integrated way which librarians use in showcasing their services to their users. Libraries must be concerned not only with the needs of users and potential users but also with convincing and satisfying third parties for effort and resources that will be beneficial to the community of users. The internet has largely influenced the concept of library services delivery in a confined place but enhanced libraries without walls. This implies that library services can now be delivered and accessed anywhere, anytime, and to anyone who desires such with the aid of computers and internet connectivity. The innovations of computers and internet have necessitated the marketing of library services to users to create awareness and improve the accessibility of the services available to the users.

Marketing of services and products are based on certain theories. According to Walker, in Udo-Akang (2012:89) theory is made up of definitions, the domain of applicability; a set of the relationship of variables, and specific predictions or factual claims. This means that theories must describe and explain a certain phenomenon which can be subjected to further investigation.

According to Brennan, Wayne Binney, Aleti, and Nguyen (2014), a theory is based on hypotheses which are proposed explanation based on limited evidence or research questions that is the concepts and ideas that are to be tested and is backed by evidence. Therefore, a theory is based on facts. According to Maclaran, Saren, Goulding and Stevens (2009) believe that theory helps to widen our thoughts and suddenly change or tie our perspectives over a specific way of thinking. Marketing theory is the application of predictions and facts of marketing principles which are subjected to further investigation.

### **Marketing Theories and Their Applications to Marketing of Library Services to Users**

There are several marketing theories propounded by various authors. However, in this paper, the following theories will be discussed.

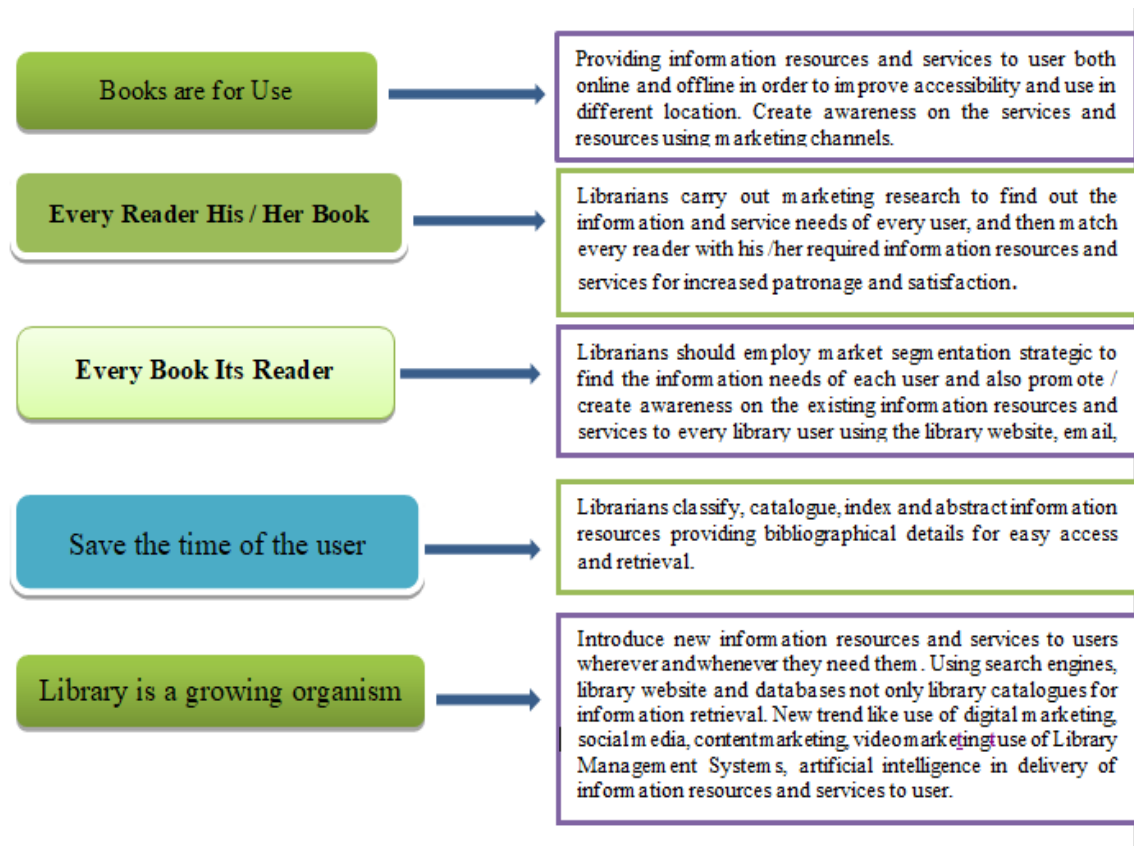
- Five Laws of Library Science by Dr S. R. Ranganathan(1931)

- Social Marketing Theory by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman (1970)
- Marketing Mix Theory by Neil, H. Borden and Jerome McCarthy (1964)

### **The Five Laws of Library Science by Dr S. R. Ranganathan (1931)**

The “Ranganathan’s famous Five Laws of Library science” was published in 1931. These five laws can relatively be adopted in marketing theory, these laws see the readers as kings whose interest, needs, want and satisfaction is paramount. Likewise, marketing sees the consumers as kings whose needs and desires must be sort in the organization. To apply the Ranganathan’s Famous five laws of library science in the marketing of library services, libraries must adopt the marketing tools such as communications, welcoming environment, and advertising through the various channels of marketing which include the use of library websites, library tours, leaflets, brochures, posters, newsletters, electronic mails and social media. Marketing creates awareness of such services to present and potential users for improved accessibility and usage.

The first law is “**books are for use**” which implies that librarians should ensure that library patrons’ use the materials selected and acquired for them. The law implies that libraries are not bookshops for storing books, but the library is all about acquiring, processing and ensuring users have access to the books either electronically or manually. Bhatt (2011) emphasized that presentation of information and knowledge is as important as access to information and knowledge. The implication of this first law in the marketing of library services emphasised on maximum access and use of library services provided through creation of awareness on the available information resources and services using various marketing channels. The channels to be used include word of mouth, library orientation, giveaways, Learning Management Systems, library websites and social media. Information resources should be organized for easy accessibility to every user that needs such information.



**Figure: Ranganathan Five Laws of Library Science and Implications on Marketing Library services to users**

The second law **“Every reader his or her book”** implies that libraries should carry out marketing research to understand the information needs of the users and match their needs with the required services to ensure access and optimal utilisation of the services. The needs of their users can be ascertained through conducting marketing research before the acquisition of resources and provision of services. This will help in matching the user’s needs to resources and services and position the information resources and services for use by any information seeking user.

The third law is **“Every book its reader”** advocates for easy access to library services and resources by the library patrons irrespective of their type. This can be achieved through the promotion of these services and resources to the desired users by library staff. The implication of the third law in marketing library services implies that the library management should use Market Segmentation tools to find out the information needs of each user of the library and group

users for efficient service delivery. The use of market segmentation in library is aimed at using interactive marketing strategy to find out the attitudinal, geographic, behavioural, and demographic and lifestyle information of library users. The market segmentation will enable the librarian to discover the information needs of the library users and respond immediately to it thereby providing every book to its reader. This should be promotion campaign on the available information resources and services to create awareness on the library services for improved accessibility by users. The users can only seek information more when they know that such information or service exists.

The fourth law **“Save the time of the reader”**. Time management is the key to success in every life endeavours; libraries must plan their services to ensure good management of users’ time. Such services like cataloguing, indexing, abstracting and bibliographies services are aimed at saving the time of the users in accessing information they needed from the

library. Above all, the adoption of information technology in library services is aimed at saving the time of the users. The implication of the law in the marketing of library services is to ensure quality services to the user at the required time. Also, the librarians should teach the users the tools and apps that they can use to save their time when accessing library services.

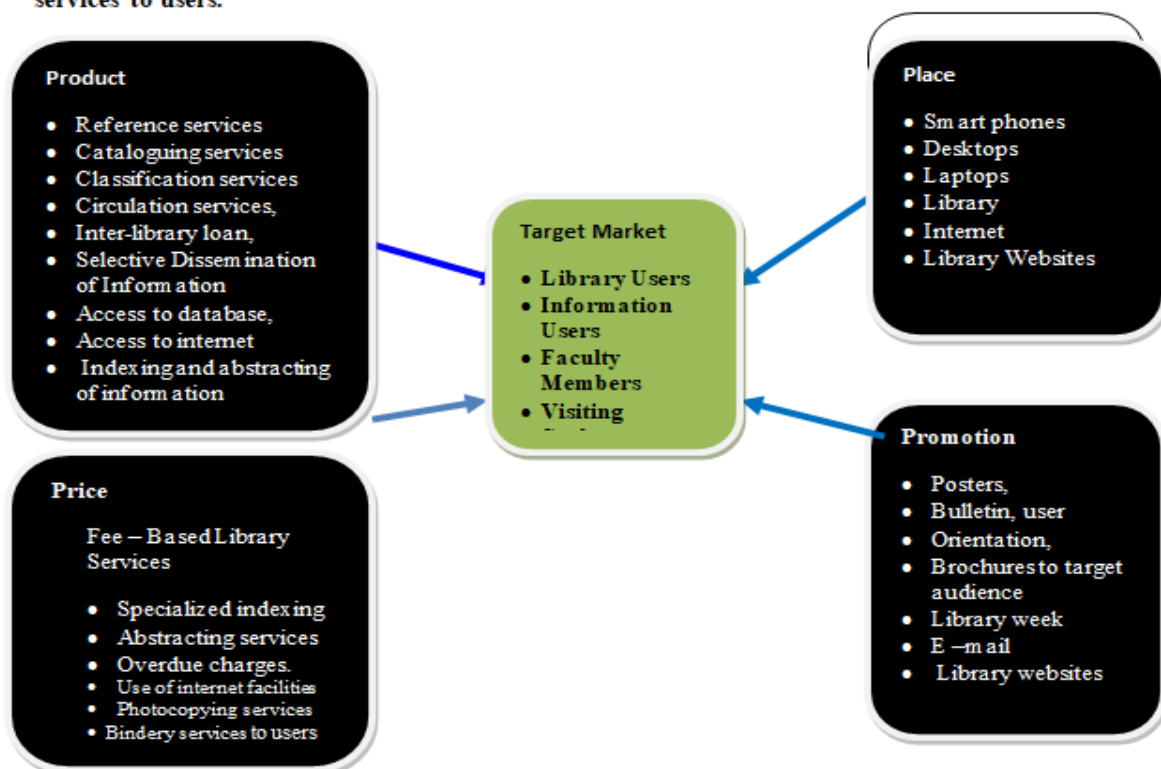
The fifth law of Ranganathan states that “**Library is a growing organism**”. In this century of global information explosion, information is generated every second and librarian is faced with serious challenges in managing the information and providing them in different format for easy accessibility. According to Pekoll (2019) emphasis that libraries change the services, communities, collections based on the current trend. This is in line with the argument of Ranganathan that library as a growing organism must grow in their physical resources, online resources, staff

and patron or user. This implies that the librarian should follow the new trend in marketing of services and products to maintain and attract new customers. What are the new trends in marketing? These include the use of artificial intelligence, conversational marketing, content marketing, use of social media, Chabot, personalized email content, video marketing for the marketing of information resources and services to users.

**Marketing Mix Theory by Neil, H. Borden and Jerome McCarthy (1964)**

The Marketing Mix theory which was propounded by Neil H. Borden in 1950s had 12 elements which include product planning, pricing, branding, channels of distribution, personal selling, advertising, facts finding and analysis, promotion, displays, packaging, servicing, and physical handling. McCarthy, E.J 1964 later grouped these ingredients into four categories that are today known as the 4Ps of marketing comprising of Products, Price, Place and Promotions (Pamela 2014).

**The Implication of 4Ps Model of Marketing Mix by Neil, H. Borden (1964) in Library services to users.**



These four elements Marketing Mix by Neil, H. Borden (1964) as introduced by McCarthy are

- **The product:** This includes clear identification of services being offered and the features of the services and its benefit to customers. Marketable products could be services, ideas and physical goods. In the library, the products include all types of information sources and services provided in the library for the users based on their needs. Such services include reference services, cataloguing and classification services, circulation services, inter-library loan, selective dissemination of information, access to the database, access to the internet, indexing and abstracting of information e.t.c
- **Pricing:** This is used in determining the actual cost of the services being delivered. In the library, people are repulsive to pay for services rendered to them. Although in academic libraries students are required to pay library fees and some libraries are now introducing fee-based library services in order to generate fund for the management of the library. Pricing can also include the cost of time spent in acquiring the goods and services rendered in the library. In support of pricing in the marketing of library service Ifijeh (2011) opined that library is not profit-oriented but the reality of today's world in terms of cost of acquisition and services makes it inevitable that the library may have to charge users for services rendered. The services to charge include selective dissemination of information, use of internet facilities, specialized indexing and abstracting services and overdue charges.
- **Place:** This refers to the place where the patron receives the services. In the era of ICTs and the availability of internet, credit cards and smartphones, patrons can access library services and resources from any place without

visiting the physical library. Librarians should know how to reach the students with the services they provide to guarantee the accessibility of the services by these users. The library should embrace the hybrid model in order to reach their patron wherever they may be. Given this, Ravichandran and Babu in Bamigbola (2013) said that the library should extend their services area to where customers can easily access its information services.

- **Promotion:** This includes marketing strategy such as advertising which the library uses in promoting its resources and services. Such strategies include the use of posters, bulletin, user orientation, library week and brochures to the target audience all these help the library in promoting its services to the target group. According to Bamigbola(2013) promotion of the library information services has moved to a higher level because of information technological innovation which has necessitated the use of email, library websites and social networking tools in promoting library services to users.

The marketing mix model sees the target market which sees the library user as the king on which the product, price, place and promotion must depend on. The product, price, place and promotion are aimed at satisfying the needs of the target market (library Users). The library should identify the services, features of the services, cost of the services rendered and quick access to the services available to all students irrespective of their location and time. This theory postulates that in marketing library services, activities should be centred towards the library users. In this paper, marketing mix theory emphasis on treating library users as customers and forming systems that will help in identify the needs of the students and provide services that will be accessed by the users round the clock irrespective of their locations. Gronroos in Sinh (2013) emphasized that the use of marketing mix has made the planning and execution of marketing practices very easy because it has separated marketing activities away from other activities going on

an organization and has placed the duty to be carried out by a specialist. When these elements of the marketing mix are used in an organization it will certainly change the image, services and product of the organisation. Some authors criticised the marketing mix that it does not consider customer's behavioural change as emphasised by social marketing theory.

### **The Implication of Social Marketing Theory by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman (1970)**

The social marketing theory was propounded by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman in 1970 to connote the designing, implementation and controlling of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas that involve the considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research. Lee and Kotler (2011) state that social marketers' objective is to influence behaviour in an individual. A change in behaviour towards reading might be accepting a new behaviour like reading for leisure not just for examination or rejecting a potentially undesirable behaviour like mutilating of information resource in the library. Also, current behaviour on the use of the library can be modified by increasing physical and online use of the library database for quality information content.

Social marketing as observed by Levit and Cismaru (2020) is aimed at discovering interventions to effect behaviour which are resistant to change through using better tools to achieve the desired change. The theory is based on answering three basic questions as outlined by Hastings, Brown, and Anker (2010: P.349). These questions are

1. How does the target group feel about a particular behaviour?
2. What are the social and contextual factors which can influence this positioning?
3. What are you offering that might change their behaviour?

Based on the above questions raised, librarians should apply such questions to find out the attitude of users towards the library services provided which will form bases for the

marketing activities. Social marketing as stated by Costache in Popescu and Corbos (2010) focuses on identifying the user's needs and on the quality of service provided. According to Weinreich (2006), Kotler and Gerald Zaltman created the field of social marketing to influence behavioural change in consumers, their peers and society. Social marketing uses the "marketing mix" which is product, price, place and promotion.

The features of social marketing include insights, exchange and competition. These features can be applied in the marketing of information resources and services in libraries.

The "**insight**" segment of the social marketing triangle refers to the need to move beyond traditional activities of librarianship such as acquisition, cataloguing, and circulation of information sources to users to looking more closely to why library users behave as they do. What users think about the library and their services, feel and believe is important as well as where they find alternative information.

The "**exchange**" segment means that library users will be trading off short – term and long-term benefits of using the library services to any possible behavioural change.

The concept of "**competition**" in social marketing refers to all the different factors that can affect the willingness of library users to adopt the desired behaviour. Blair (2010) refers to the external competition as those promoting negative behaviour and those promoting other positive messages to the same audience. The internal competition includes the power of pleasure, enjoyment, risk-taking, habit and addition that can affect a person's behaviour.

This theory postulates that in marketing library services, activities should be centred towards the library users. For this study, social marketing theory emphasis on treating library users as customers and forming systems that will help in identifying and satisfying their information needs through improved accessibility of library services. The social marketing theory holds that the organizational task is to determine the needs, wants and interest of the target audience and provide library services that will influence or bring about behavioural change that will benefit the

customers and the society at large. The behavioural changes can only be achieved when all these steps are employed in implementing social marketing in the marketing of library services to users. The following are the eight social marketing theory principles or components which can change the behaviour of library users

**1. Understanding the social marketing concept:**

This involves knowing or identifying your target audience, identifying the behaviour that needs to be changed, the barriers to change and how to reduce the barriers. Its implication in the marketing of library services is that the librarians must identify the target audience to serve and change their habits towards the utilization of the library services especially when access and utilization level is low. Even when the access and utilization rate is high there is a need to maintain the tempo because libraries are not the only institutions that provide such services. Librarians should find out why there was underutilization of the library services and resources, and then find ways to remove or curb the problems that are driving the users away from the library services.

**2. Listen to those whose behaviours matter:**

Who are those that their behaviour matter? They are library users. In the provision of library resources and services, librarians should listen to the library users to find out their needs and preferences. In listening to the library users will help librarians to determine whether to develop any service or acquire any information resources in the library. Librarians should conduct market research using readers request files, the formation of selection committee including faculty members and subject specialist can be used to determine the information needs of the users. The reactions of the library users should be checked at every stage to find out if they are accessing and utilising the provided resources and services. This

can be checked through recording keeping of how many users accessed and used such services and resources and how often if possible, reasons for their use and level of satisfaction. In this way, you can use such information you gathered from listening to these users to market library services and resources to users to improve on users' access to services and resources.

**3. Conducting a social marketing campaign:**

This entails designing a marketing plan, channels to be employed to reach out to the desired audience, implementing and evaluating the program to see if it has changed any behavioural pattern. The implication of conducting a social marketing campaign to the marketing of library services involves the librarians drawing marketing plan for the library. The marketing plan should include the services to be marketed, personnel for marketing; the users that need the services and where to locate them. These factors determine the channels to be used in carrying out marketing campaign.

**4. Promoting awareness and interest through communication:**

This involves promoting awareness and interest using understandable message, considering your choice of language and words to be used to avoid confusion in transmitting the message that will bring a behaviour change. If your message is offensive or does not reach the targeted audience, there may be no change in behaviour. This shows that social marketing theory has not been employed. In applying promotion of awareness and interest through communication in the marketing of library services, the librarians should use words and languages that their users understand very well in informing or creating awareness on available library services and resources to the desired users. Use the communication channels users are familiar with to convey the message so



that desired change in their behaviour towards the library services will be achieved. For example, marketing of library services to users online where the users do not have access to computers and the internet will not bring a behavioural change. If these library services are marketed using posters, giveaways like key holders, T-shirts, mugs with an inscription of the services on them, these will create awareness and interest on the users to decide whether to use the services or not.

5. **Segmenting the market to reach the target population:** Segmenting the market means grouping the target population according to the problems common to each group. Grouping the target population according to their different problems will make it easy for you to effect changes and identify when changes are achieved. Segmenting the market to reach the target population in the marketing of library services to users implies that library users should be grouped according to their information needs and research interest for easy provision, access and utilisation of library services. Therefore, library embarks on selective dissemination of information services to satisfy the information needs of an interest group or an individual.
6. **Promoting behaviour change using rewards:** When people are asked to change any behaviour they tend to find out what it will cost them, what to gain or benefit or lose in changing such behaviour. In the marketing of library services to users social marketing theory, the library users should be made to understand that when they use the library services regularly they will improve on their academic performances, master lifelong learning, acquire skills to improve on their daily life endeavours, know their culture, history and how to preserve their cultural heritage. These services

provided should be free, whenever there are fee-based services it should be what the users can afford without grumbling.

7. **Supporting and sustenance of the changed behaviour:** There is one thing to have a behaviour changed but it is another to ensure that the person does not go back to the former behaviour. To ensure this, there is the need to provide skills, information and environment that will support and maintain the changed behaviour. In library services utilization, the librarians should ensure that the library environment is conducive for learning, that the services provided match with the new trend in information services and retrieval systems. New services and resources should be acquired and made available to these users to attract them to the library.
8. **Monitoring and adjusting the social marketing campaign progress:** These entails observing the progress made in the social marketing campaign and making adjustment where need be using any new trend that will convey the message to the target audience to retain the changed behaviour. In the marketing of library services, the librarians are expected to evaluate the statistical records kept in the library on the rate and extent of accessibility and usage of the available library services by users. The librarian should communicate with the users using new technological devices, provide current information services and resources which can be accessed and used anywhere and anytime by users. All these can help in maintain change in behaviour of low patronage to increased utilization and information satisfaction of users.

## Conclusion

In the marketing of library services irrespective of the theory to be applied, the libraries must have a well-planned marketing activity for the



library community. This should be based on mastering the information needs of the users centered on their portfolio analyses using current information technology. This will enhance improved accessibility and utilization of resources and services that may be provided for them. Continuous buying or using of the product or services by a customer signifies satisfaction and loyalty to that product or service. It is an essential achievement in any marketing activities. So to achieve a long-lasting customer's satisfaction is vital in applying marketing theory to the marketing of library services to users. Also library staff should be trained and retrained to manage the services and resources as they evolve. This can be achieved by keeping abreast with technological development as they evolved. It requires also to upgrade of the library systems for the delivery of library services to users.

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