Chapter : Five

Consumer's Care and Effectivity
CONSUMER’S CARE AND EFFECTIVITY

The information technology has shifted the role of a library from storehouse to gateway and reduced the whole world into a ‘global village’ providing opportunities for interconnections of databases and networks at national and international level, which has greatly influenced the consumers, Effectivity. With the advent of information technology countries are moving from industrial society to information society. The challenge of coping with the changes in social, technological, economical and political environments has forced the LICs to change their time-honoured old practices to satisfy the complex and ever-increasing information demands of their consumers. Hence, with emerging information technologies and virtual realities, we have reasons to ponder serious thought on the issue of consumer-focused approaches in the wake of accessibility of information services.

Information Technology and Internet are the latest techniques among the computer user now-days. Meaning of Information Technology is continually broadening its scope and spawning new specialized topics. That is one reason why it is fuzzy term, meaning different think to different people. There is no doubt, however, that it embraces large and ever increasing range of topics which we all the library and information
professionals, find it hard to keep up with. Hypertext, Teletext, Videotext, Relational Databases, Decision support System, Internet, digitization, Electronic Content Creation, Website creation and maintenance, Value added date services – the list of things we, the Library & Information professionals ought to be up-to-date with just keeps on growing. Many trends have been identified within IT. The rapid development of the technology itself, convergence and integration, the rise of the new concepts such as Electronic Document Management or Information Resource Management, the extension of the role of library, information and documentation professionals with in the organization are some of them.

Computers are changing the way we communicate and how we think about intellectual property and the ownership of information. It is forcing us to re-examine about information, libraries and librarianship. Many traditional library science schools are developed. Unless we could specialize in computer and communication technology application in library and information services the computer scientists or electronics and communication people who are prepared to do some specialization in library and information science will take up the responsibility for library and information system management.
5.1 Concept of Consumer’s

Till recently consumers care was considered as a synonym to after sale service. But in the recent past it has grown in dimension and today got the status of a marketing tool to assure operational efficiency and consumers satisfaction by ensuring that products and services reach the consumers on the right time in right quantities and specifications.

The consumers care an be defined can ‘meeting agreed consumers requirements fully.’ It is not just aim to meet the material needs of customers but goes beyond it to satisfy his psychological needs as well. Hence, it includes all activities involved in making it easy for consumers to reach the right parties within an organization to obtain services, answer and re-solution of problems. In other words it is process of taking care of consumers in a qualitative way.

As marketing tool consumer care programme should aim at consumer’s maintenance, consumer’s retention and new consumers development. It helps an organization like library to develop reputation that induces consumers to be more committed towards the university. The committed users may recommend such library to prospective or consumers-based.
So, using the satisfied consumers as a media, the organization can reduce the material and human resources needed for promotional activities.

5.1.1 Consumers

There have been a great number of user studies during the last many decades. The number of reviews and bibliographies on user needs, user studies and information seeking behaviour is growing steadily as this art of information science is of great interest to researchers.

When information on users studies are analyzed, different aspects emerge such as: the discipline, literature use, library collection use, information seeking behaviour, information needs, wants, demands, requirements and scientific communication. Each aspect of these can be studied in different ways with different methods. The common factor among these types of study is the ‘consumer’ who is the core of this information system and his satisfaction is ultimate goal of the system analysts and designers.

‘Consumers’ are individuals; a statistical average value can be very misleading. Nevertheless, in designing information systems we must classify groups of consumers. These ‘types of consumers’ is a set of particular information needs and not a group of class of people.
Individual can belong to several types of users. Noting that a definition of term ‘User’ is often neglected, Kuntz, Rittel and Schwuchow distinguish four categories:

- **The ‘Potential User’:** he is one who needs the information, which is to be provided by the specific services of an information facility.

- **The ‘Expected User’:** someone who is know to have the intent of using certain information services.

- **The ‘Actual User’:** one who has actually used an information service, regardless of whether or not any advantage was derived from it.

- **The ‘Beneficiary’:** someone who derives measurable advantage from information services.

### 5.1.2 Information Consumer

Information is considered a basic national resource. Every bit of information is as essential as minerals and other natural resources for ‘consumers’ for the development of any university or institution.

The dynamic growth of knowledge, growth in the number of ‘consumers’ diversified nature of consumers requirements, escalating cost of
documents etc. are major problems to university librarians and libraries to provide a need-based information service to their clientele.

The library environment of consumers is the last link among recipients of the information in the communication cycle. For an effective information service a university librarian should ascertain about the information requirements of his consumers. In fact he should understand the following: Who are the consumers? What are their needs? Capabilities of consumers? Nature of consumers? Is he an undergraduate, postgraduates, researcher, teacher or university administrator?

5.2 Need

Consumers satisfaction remains far from the expected levels in most university libraries due to the system oriented approach for the library administrators. In the long run, by neglecting consumers satisfaction, no libraries can withstand the challenges posed by the information industry. Since a good consumer care programme aims at achieving better consumers satisfaction, such a package is needed for every university library due to following reasons.

1. To ensure better consumer satisfaction.
2. To give credence to the library policy to be a cent percent consumer-oriented university.

3. To develop good rapport with the consumers and thus ensuring a long and harmonious relationship.

4. To accelerate university libraries market development

5. To give a competitive edge in competition

6. To users satisfied as a media for promotion of library services

7. To create consumers loyalty

8. To improve employees morale and productivity

9. To reduce library staff grievances, absenteeism and turn over

10. To retain a human touches in an era of high-tech.

Consumer’s requirement drives the quality process understanding the consumers in terms of attitudes, value requirements, desire, etc. Each library must assess its consumers, their needs, service to satisfy these needs, and the framework or context for information services. This requires a change in the mindsets. The process of identifying the internal consumers is itself a very enriching experience, and is sure to motivate the behind-the-screen staff to provide the best to the colleagues, and in turn, to the systems.
5.3 Consumer-Focus Approach

The subject of consumer-focus coming to library and information science is very attentive. Libraries and other information services practitioners are seriously thinking about consumers-focus and that is the way the term like ‘customer’ and ‘client’ begun to replace library’s users, ‘patron’ and charmingly quaint (or so it seems now) ‘readers.’  Due to the impact of information technology in our society marketing of information is widely welcome. Marketing of information is also to satisfy the consumers needs as and when arise. Actually, the concept of ‘consumer-focus’ is market driven. Contemporary marketing is consumers focused, which reflects the change in approach to customer service, which has taken place during 1990s. Customers are not becoming accustomed to good customer service in many aspects of their lives. At one time, the aim was to ‘have happy’ customers. Then we were expected to have ‘satisfied’ consumer, but now we are exhorted to ‘delight’ them.

5.3.1 Consumers Profile

Now a days, information consumer is a much different person that the patron of just a few years ago. Advances in IT have raised their exceptions of information to a great extent that ever before. He is fully
Dunckel identifies the following demographic criteria, which affects customers’ expectation about customer’s services:

1. The general population is becoming more customer-oriented and at an earlier age than ever before in the history.
2. People are healthier and living longer, we are consumers for longer.
3. Customers are more sophisticated. They not only have more disposable income, but they are better educated, more informed, have higher expectations, and are aware of their rights and options in the market place.

There are very basic, very pragmatic reasons for looking at information services in term of customer’s services. Pressure is coming form the customers themselves.

5.3.2 Consumers Groups

Delighting customers involves a lot more than just meeting their information needs, and ensuring that all aspects of their experience of dealing with the LIS are at or above a standard, which they have helped to set. This involves use of consumer-focused marketing techniques of
segmentation, which enables us to understand the need of groups of consumers in the required depth. Without it, we are likely to treat all consumers the same, which is a sure way of not satisfying - let along delighting - a number of them. There will be definitely some consumers whom we will find more valuable than others will, and / or whom we can serve more effectively. In order to decide who they are, and how we serve both categories and others, we need certain key information:

- Who are consumers?
- What are consumer’s characteristics?
- What triggers consumers decisions to use LIS
- What service do consumers want now?
- What services will consumers want in future?
- What are consumer’s perceptions and expectations?
- What benefits are consumers looking for?
- What are consumers buying factors?

In marketing term, this will enable us to decide how big the market place, i.e. consumer base is, and how much of it we want to capture and what services we are going to offer in order to achieve that.
5.4 Consumer’s Oriented Service

Having identified the target consumer groups, we have to design and deliver the information products and services in a manner that suits almost all needs of our consumers. What this calls for, in terms of information delivery, is a clear understanding of consumer’s perceptions and expectations about information services. That means we have to base the design and delivery of our services as far as possible on what the consumers want, not what we happen to have available, which justify the availability of right information at right time to right consumers in right format.

5.5 Identification of Information Needs

The information resources development in university library should start with the identification of consumers - potential, expected, actual and beneficiary - and their information needs. The needs of consumers - expressed / articulated, unexpressed and demand need- depend upon their work activity, discipline/field / area of interest, availability of facilities, hierarchical position, motivational factors, need to -seek new ideas, validate the correct ones, make professional contributions, establish priority for discovery and need to take decision. Their needs are also affected by several other factors such as availability of information
resources, internal and external information facilities, the uses to which the
information will be put, the background, professional orientation and other
individual characteristics of the consumers of information. In order to
have a clear insight into the actual information needs of consumers; one
should adopt various methods to gather information on many factors,
which influence information needs. Of course, no single method or tool
will be useful, but a careful handling of several techniques depending on
the consumers whose need being studied is necessary.

The major steps in the process of identification of information needs
includes study of subjects or organization and its environment, consumer’s
specific environment, on and about consumers, formal interviews and
followed by analysis and identification of information needs. The first
step is to identify and make a detailed study of core, peripheral and
supporting subjects / disciplines and sub-discipline of interest to the
organization following the methodology of studying a subject will help in
better understanding of the structure of the subject and guide in
identification of information needs

The second step is to study the nature and type of organization and its
environment and prepare a detailed profile of organization comprising its
overall objectives, functions and the factors that affect its functions including different divisions of the organizations.

5.6 *Quality of Services*

Quality means “to meet or exceed the needs and expectations of the consumers in the most cos-effective way.” It has four basic elements, which are

1. *Consumers expectation*
2. *Competitions*
3. *Cost, and*

With in the competitive economic environment, it is necessary to satisfy not only the stated requirement of the consumers, but also the implied needs. The good quality library services makes sure that, quality is every one’s responsibility and a part of every activity. A good quality system ensure also consistency of products and services and guarantees the utilization of same materials, same equipment and same method and procedure every time in the same way. Quality services especially in case of university library have three key aspect like-Management responsibility, Personnel and material resources and quality services structure. The following guiding principles of quality services are:
1. Meeting the requirements of the customers both internal and external, on time and with full satisfaction

2. The involvement and commitment of every individual to achieve quality

3. Quality is built in to the process and it comes through prevention rather than cure

4. Quality is measurable and it can be measured by non-conformance.

5.7 Characteristics of Quality Services

The following are the key characteristics of the quality services

- To become consumer-driven rather than self-focused
- To concentrate on process rather than be preoccupied with results
- Use workers heads in addition to their hands
- Total involvement, contiguous improvement and leadership commitment
- Quality Services is a human relations-oriented philosophy that requires fundamental changes in library management, treating them as an ever-appreciating asset.
5.7.1 **Output**

Quality library services gives the following benefits to the university library and satisfy consumer’s requirements.

1. Better product design and improvement of confidence among users
2. Developing an inventory of all the documents available in a library
3. Developing a database, which includes consumers for all types of materials in library
4. Improving quality of information analysis and consolidation products
5. Improving skills of and users to profitability interacts with information system and services
6. Integrating and networking all library resources into serviceable resources to consumers
7. Reduction in consumers complaints and efficient utilization of men, machines and materials, resulting in higher productivity.

5.7.2 **Quality Management**

The ultimate aim of a university library is to satisfy the information requirements of its consumers. The very nature of information services has to change according to technological changes. In order to meet the changes there should be a change in techniques in the management of the university library.
In today’s world customers / consumers prefer only high quality products and services. They are even ready to pay for the same. Users of information have the same attitude with regard to information also. They expect information products and services of high quality. A better way to procure quality information is to continually improve people, processes and environment of the university libraries effectively by inculcating principles of Quality Management

5.7.3 Benefits of Quality Management

According to Miller and steam, the principles of quality management, if implemented carefully would yield immense benefits a university library such as:

- Incremental changes leading to continuous improvement
- Forces university librarians to develop leadership skills to obtain effective results
- Increase staff participation in decision making
- Improves the level of training given to staff, thus increasing their skills and abilities
- Helps to break down barriers between library departments and improves communication within the library
5.8 Problems of Libraries

The Report of the Planning Commission's Working Group on Modernization of Library Services and Informatics for the year (1985-90) has brought to light the major problems faced by libraries, information centers and systems in India.

Some of the problems faced by university libraries in India are: The information resources of libraries are inadequate and print media predominates. The high and mounting cost of information resources and cost of processing and organizing it for use are increasing. There is a demand for wide range of information resources both from internal and external sources due to growth of knowledge. The financial resources are not only limited but funding provisions varies to a greater extent depending on the nature, types and size of the organization. The majority of the libraries in general are not getting even the minimum services to the clienteles. There is a requirement to serve more number of consumers than before. The lack of strong commitment on the part of universities to
provide the required support and infrastructure facilities - physical, communication and computer facilities to take best advantage of information technology in providing access to information resources worldwide. The problems in attracting and recruiting right type of professional staff to do the right type of job and to meet the ever changing information needs of consumers in the changed scholarly and publishing environment. Although many library networks have come into existence in India but the libraries are yet to utilize much form these networks. The professional working in libraries with few exceptions in special libraries is unsuited to changes involving use of computers and information technology. Besides the most of the libraries are developed along the traditional lines that too for serving bibliographic information in passive way. These problems are not new, but they have become much more very serious over the years and have in the last few years reached most critical proportions.

5.9 Consumer’s Care & Libraries

Consumer care is the new standard by which consumers judge an organization. To man organizations it can be more important than their products, services and promotional methods. Since it is tool to assure consumers satisfaction, in the competitive environment, libraries can use
consumer care to bring the users again and again to the library. For this, library management needs to amalgamate technical professionalism with marketing professionalism. Consumers care (CC) can be offered in university libraries in the following forms.

5.9.1 **Professional Assistance**

Today the general trend in university libraries is to go high tech., As a result more and more operations are getting automised. Management consultant **John Tschohl (1997)** says that the more often we are forced to interact with machines, the greater will be our yearning for human contact.

Through consumers care libraries can provide human assistance in professional matters like using INTER-NET, E-mail, OPAC, compilation of bibliographies, formulating search strategies, using compact disc CD-ROM etc.

5.9.2 **Promotion and Communications**

As a media, consumers care (CC) can be used to create awareness about the products and services offered by university library. To achieve this libraries can conduct personal orientation sessions to the new members at the time of admission or to the whole members when the library intends to introduce a new service. The personal contact thus made can install
confidence in library professionals and may initiate interaction between staff and users in future. From such interactions library administrators can extract essential feedback data to assess the specific requirements of users groups to reorganize their products/services. The frequent interactions can create a cordial and healthy working atmosphere.

5.10 Suggestive Model

A ‘model’ of the service triangle can be used to design consumers care programme in libraries. According to this model, the triangle is formed with service strategy, staff and the system around the customer. Customer is the core of the model and every thing - the strategy, people policies and support systems must be planned and implemented with customer satisfaction in mind. So, service strategy, users friendly system and customer friendly employees are the basic elements of the model. Strategies are general programmes of action and development of resources to attain comprehensive objectives. In case of service institutions it is the services strategy which directs the organization whom to serve, what to serve and how to serve. To prepare a strategy for libraries, the management has to go through several steps. The process starts with the identification of target groups by determining the proportion of individuals already demanding the services and the proportion that will never be
interested. E.g. students, teachers and research scholar form the target group of a university library system. Once the target groups are identified, the next step is to identify their information needs. Most often users are offered with services, which the management perceives best for their consumers. This is subjective approach. To make it objectives, library management has to conduct a well-planned user analysis to bring out the exact information strategic information a user friendly and adaptable system can be designed to perform operations. The last but surely not the least is to develop a consumer-oriented front line staff capable of connecting the consumers and the system in an efficient and effective manner.

5.11 Conclusion

In view of the fast development technology, does the libraries feel uncertainty about what the future holds for them? It is true that as a result of such continuous development, the future profession of a librarian will be different and the traditional skills will have to use in a different way. In this rapidly changing environment there is no common place for the local librarian as an information intermediary. As far as users are concerned, they always need some one in an advisory role who can be called upon when necessary and they also need export advice on the information
sources available in new areas. This may be what the future librarian may be like i.e. a professional to whom users turn for help and advice on search techniques, database quality, database development and the range of database access that is available.

Access to library services form outside the library building is becoming increasingly popular these days and with the availability of on-line help packages, users seek minimum assistance form the librarians. This certainly an emerging pattern in most the university libraries of the west, where the users the directly using computer networked services.

The convergence of library and computer services highlights the needs for training of these information professionals. The librarians overall knowledge of information sources should therefore prove an important asset to the wider community when they seek broader approach to their problems.

Following are some suggestions, which must be taken to implement consumer-focused approaches in actual practice in the university libraries, for which we have to:
1. To establish clarity about mission of information services by making them consumer-oriented, bringing the consumer in picture.

2. To set-up a ‘consumers service’ or ‘consumer care’ unit in university libraries to like after consumers needs and wants for information

3. To adopt marketing techniques to identify the market, i.e. the consumer-base in internal as well as external environments.

4. To identify the needs, wants and demands of the consumers, i.e. to develop a user-profile by conducting users’ survey.

5. To look at the information products and services through the user’s eyes

6. To identify, design, package and promote tailor-made information products and services affordable to the pocket of consumers to satisfy them

7. To be alert with the competitors in the information business.

8. To add value to information in terms of ease of access, quality of service and speed of delivery

9. To train, develop and empower the library staff to work for the consumers

10. To listen, understand and respond to the consumers
11. To develop a unique relationship with the consumers and treat each one as someone special and

12. To use problems as opportunities to demonstrate just how good the information services unit can be.

These steps will not involve much expense, only the sheer will to execute them in organized manner will do them happen in reality, as that is the only way to satisfy the consumers and maintain consumers effectively.