CHAPTER 4

MARKETING OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Generally the concept of marketing is considered to be associated with commercial products where the prime concern is to maximise profit. Therefore, marketing is closely related to selling. Libraries do not earn profits. Benefits of libraries are intangible. Hence, traditionally it is difficult to think of the marketing of the libraries. But, the concept of marketing is equally applicable to non-profit organizations. Marketing activities of non-profit organisations is referred as Social Marketing. The awareness about literacy drive, eye donation, leprocy eradication, AIDS, Rotary Club, Lions Club, environmental protection etc. are results of effective social marketing. Marketing of libraries belong to this class.

The basic concepts of conventional marketing and that of non-profit or social marketing are not different. The only difference is that in non-profit or social marketing the objective is not profit in terms of money. If more persons respond to the cause that is being marketed, the purpose is better served. It concerns with making community aware of a
social cause. The method of both the types of marketing are more or less the same.

1. What is Marketing?

Marketing is a complex activity, "Marketing is surrounded by mystic. Definitions vary from 'corporate planning' to the preparation of a media schedule for advertising" This amply demonstrate the variety of definitions available in the literature on management in general and marketing in particular. After scanning the relevant documents on management and library science, two suitable definitions were found. The two are suitable because they serve as operational definitions for this thesis.

'Marketing is identifying the targeted users (including the current non-users) and their needs, making sure your services fit the targeted users' needs, and promoting the services to the targeted users'.

'Marketing is an appropriate attitude, an approach that matches products with market segment needs, and has a set of tools, techniques and concepts". 

The essence of two operational definitions point at knowing users and their needs, matching services to their needs, as the process of marketing. Management Science has identified many ingredients of the process of marketing.

4.2. Ingredients of Marketing

The entire literature on marketing—both in management science and library science—appears to be unanimous in accepting the 4 p's to be the ingredients of marketing. These four p's are:

1. Product
2. Place
3. Price
4. Promotion

Dr Patricia G. Oyler, in her two days workshop on 'Library Marketing' at the S.N.D.T. Women's University, Bombay (7-8 Sept 1992) added two more p's and these are Prelude and Postlude. Yes, for every activity preludes in the form of preparations and postludes in the form of follow-ups and evaluation are necessary. No activity can be successful without these two p's.

The four p's are the ingredients of successful marketing strategy. These ingredients have different components. All these have to be mixed in the right proportion to achieve the
desired results. Hence, these are also known as Marketing Mix. Some authors have referred to these four p's as the variables of marketing. The following sections give more details about each of these ingredients.

4.2.1. Product

Product is the item that is proposed to be marketed. In the case of libraries, it is their services. For a commercial product it's features, quality, brand image, packaging, guarantee, after-sales service etc. are the components of the product. Similarly, if library services are the products, then good collection, proper cataloguing, regular shelving, regular shelf reading, proper ventilation, lighting, seating arrangements, timely reference service, helpful staff etc. are the components.

4.2.2. Place

Place refers to the customer's location. The emphasis is on the proper distribution mechanisms, appointing sales representatives, maintaining inventories of sales etc. In case of libraries, place refers the users spread in different departments of the parent-body. In a multi-site campus of universities, users spread over the various laboratories, research centres and other affiliated organisations pose a number of problems to those who wish to consult the library,
situated at some other central location. Inter-library loans, mobile libraries, supply of photocopies on request and all other resource sharing activities are different components, helping the users at places away from the source of information. The recent developments like CD-ROM, online information access and networking of libraries are aiming at solving the problem of distance between user and the source of information.

4.2.3. Price

Price of any commodity or service has to be affordable, without sacrificing the quality of the product. This means that profit margin for the commercial concern should be reduced, because nobody should suffer loss. In fact, one definition says, that marketing is the "process by which a company satisfies the needs of its customers at a satisfactory profit".

In the context of libraries, profits are intangible. But, the cost of running a library is increasing with every passing year. There is a vast output of literature and concurrently prices of books and subscription amounts for periodicals are increasing, but there are no matching rise in the grants. On the contrary, there are resource crunches, cuts in library grants. Libraries are being forced to charge their services.

It appears that the days of free library services are over. Asking the users to pay for the service is bound to have resistance. The libraries have to get money from users by persuading and convincing them. These are some of the issues in relation to the price.

4.2.4. Promotion

The commercial products are launched and promoted through advertisements through print media, radio and television. Libraries do not generally indulge in this type of direct promotion. Libraries have to resort to simpler means such as publishing of library guides, arranging lectures, film shows, debates and book discussions. Sandra Seddon says that library should organise users groups, say 'Friends of the Library'. By providing them a forum, library gets indirect publicity. Libraries can promote themselves by providing community information.

These four p's are the ingredients of the marketing-mix. The role of these ingredients in the process of marketing can be noticed by examining the various steps involved.

4.3. Steps in Marketing

The following are the steps in marketing a product or service:

1. Market Segmentation:

This means breaking up the market into parts according to customer needs. Customers may need the product in one form in a particular area and people of some other area may have a different liking. The product may be modified for that group. In academic libraries the type of assistance required for those who have just entered the organisation are different from those who are conducting research and studying in the library for years.

2. Market Positioning:

This means prioritising clients and making policies that guide the designing of other programmes to suit the priority client.

3. Consumer Analysis:

This involves determining the needs and preferences of the selected segments of the market. Here
information about consumers is gathered and analysed.
This quantification is for understanding users' needs.

iv. **Market Program**

This is the core activity in the marketing process. Determination of the optimum mix of the 4 p's is done at this stage.

- Various attributes of the product, its packaging are decided.
- Decisions about distribution channels are made.
- Exact price affordable to consumers and yielding good profit is arrived at by working the cost of raw material, production, distribution, after sales-service, promotion etc. and profit margin.
- Major decisions about the publicity campaign such as which medium, how long etc. are made.

All these decisions about the four p's are made and the market plan goes to the next step.

v. **Market Audit**

At this stage all the previous steps are reviewed and evaluated. Questions such as, should so much be
spent on publicity, why not test market in one region before country-wide launching etc. are raised and solved. Even implementation of the final plan and its further continuous monitoring, evaluation, and modifications fall within the realm of this stage.

Marketing, therefore, is not a one-time activity. It is a continuous process, and it has relationship with all other activities.

On reading the above sections, one may ask, is marketing of libraries really, a new concept.

The following section attempts to answer this genuine question.

4.4. What's New About Marketing of Libraries?

It appears that every stage and ingredients of marketing suggests to understand the users and users' needs and cater to them. This has been traditionally done by librarians through reference service, inter-library loans, seeking readers' suggestions, saving the time of reader, user education etc. Naturally, one is prompted to ask this question.

It is true that many of these service components were there in traditional librarianship. These services are offered to the end-users by the librarians. And it is only with a professional commitment that the librarians did or are doing these services.
However, the authorities who hold the purse strings do not entirely know the value of libraries and their services. Marketing makes the authorities perceive the existence and importance of libraries. Marketing lends a sense of service to all the library staff, irrespective of whether they are attached to the public service points or are working in the other sections which do not have direct public contact. Services need not be given on the impulse, but it should be given to see that all activities become cost-effective. Personalised services should not be given in a slip-shod manner or as personal favours. It should become the organizational culture. It shouldn't be done merely by a smart assistant at the desk, it is also offered by the chief librarian, through not directly. With marketing, library as a team can gain the confidence and support from authorities. In short, while traditional services were offered by lower level staff, when it is practiced as marketing activity, people at all levels enjoy its fruits and the services become more systematic and visible. The traditional services were more reactive in nature, i.e. only those who sought the help got it. In marketing, it is pro-active. Thus, marketing can be considered as an ongoing "... review of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats". This is referred as SWOT (Strength Weakness, Opportunities Threats) Analysis. This type of analysis is not

seen in the traditional services. Therefore, one can, without any hesitation, say that marketing of library and information services is a new concept.

The next chapter uses these ideas about marketing of library services to choose a suitable method for conducting research.