CHAPTER – 7
FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

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7.0 Introduction

Management is all about making effective use of the 3 Ms i.e., Man, Materials and Money in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation. All the 3 Ms are important in any sector but the first M i.e., Man, controls the other two Ms i.e., Materials and Money. He makes things happen, by coordinating and controlling all variables. Marketing forms the core function of management.

Marketing ensures a continuous demand for the products/services which are provided by an organisation. Marketing is nothing but an exchange process wherein the product/service brought out by the organisation is offered to the customer against something. Marketing does not need a commercial transaction though it is quite common.

Within the framework of the organisation’s objectives, the marketing objectives are drawn. In a commercial organisation, the marketing process aims to ensure the specified cash benefits to the organisation; in a charity, the marketing process ensures the specified level of usage for the product/service rendered by the organisation. For example, while in an airline company the marketing ensures adequate flow of travellers, in a religious centre, the marketing ensures the optimum level of visitors who wish to attend religious discourses.
Customers form the focus of marketing. The marketing process begins with the identification of customers, their needs and the services/products which satisfy them. The marketing programme succeeds in case the customer satisfaction level soars; on the contrary, it fails in case the customer satisfaction level goes down. Therefore, any design of a product/service needs to meet customer’s satisfaction.

A ‘market driven organisation’ is one wherein every staff member in the organisation ‘thinks the customer’ means, ‘puts himself in the customer’s shoes’ in all day to day activities or even in long term planning. A marketing organisation places the customer satisfaction at the centre of all organisation planning and procedures. It works in a fashion exactly opposite to the organisation centred culture wherein the convenience of the organisation is the paramount factor. In a market driven organisation, the quality is decided by the customer. The product/service is considered to be of good quality in case it exceeds the customer’s expectations. On the contrary, it is considered as low quality in case it falls below the customer’s expectations, whatsoever its features are. Therefore, market research forms an important part of the marketing process. It is concerned with the identification of the target customers, their needs and preferences.

The following 7 Ps are the ingredients of the marketing mix:

1 Product/Service : The product/service offered by the organisation;
2 Price: The cost to the consumer/customer;

3 Place: Distribution channel and logistics planning for the products;

4 Promotion: Communication about the product/service to the potential customers; publicity and actions to expand the customer base;

5 People: Changes to be made within the organisation in order to develop the staff skills in order to ensure consistency in service quality;

6 Processes: Examination of the processes which form important facets of service delivery chain. If the processes are set right, the output will automatically improve;

7 Physical evidence: Physical facilities or premises in which the service is delivered. This reflects on the quality of service.

The marketer mixes the various ingredients in appropriate quantity in order to achieve the objectives. Even in the library and information services context, all the above ingredients are very relevant. The eleven libraries of the British Council in India are very successful and they have made huge impact on the education and cultural scene in their respective cities. Their success can be attributed to their market driven policy and managerial commitment.
7.1 Findings

The findings of the study are as follows:

(i) There has been a tradition of 'market driven' approach in the British Council from the very beginning. The choice of reading materials and services are dictated by the local circumstances and not thrust upon from the headquarters.

(ii) The customer satisfaction level in the libraries of the British Council is high; upto 88% of the customers are satisfied with the quality of service rendered by the libraries.

(iii) Integration of Information Technology has made a significant difference in the quality of services rendered by the libraries.

(iv) 'Word of mouth' is the best means of promoting the library and information service and the British Council Libraries thrive on this means of publicity. More than 50% of the customers who visited for the first time came to the library by word of mouth publicity.

(v) Promotional efforts in libraries needs to go hand in hand with the stock renewals. They can only supplement the stock renewals in achieving the marketing objectives; but they cannot be a substitute for stock renewal. In other words, the promotional efforts can expand the customer base only upto a certain extent; to go beyond that, good stock renewals is a must.
(vi) Mere aggressive promotion will not get members unless the stock quality and renewal ratio is maintained at the accepted level.

(vii) From the revenue point of view, the traditional library services such as lending, photocopying, etc constitute up to 80% of the library revenue.

(viii) IT is only an enabler for service delivery and it does not yield revenue on its own in a library.

(ix) Most of the promotional efforts in the libraries go to promote the revenue oriented services such as lending, membership etc. Not much is being done to promote the use of other information services such as Bibliographies, Referrals, BLDSC, General Enquiries, Inhouse video viewing etc.

(x) The libraries have a tendency to adopt a sort of ‘complacent’ attitude as far as Home Video and Children’s library memberships are concerned. They seem to be cashing on their monopolistic position in respect of these two memberships since they do not have any competitors in these areas.

(xi) Printed materials like books and periodicals continue to be the most sought after materials in the British Council libraries in spite of all the competition and hype created by e-resources, online sources and other media like television.
(xii) Customers perceive the British Council libraries as centres wherein quality books and periodicals are made available and they do not wish to see the books/periodicals being replaced by other sources.

(xiii) Though the libraries are market driven, all do not have a marketing plan. This means that there is no promotional strategy for each library and the promotional activities can be termed as ‘random efforts’.

(xiv) User education is one service which is not adequately represented in any of the libraries. Since the libraries are already automated and they are increasingly getting IT enabled, they need to introduce user education programmes which will enable the users exploit the library resources fully.

(xv) The promotional methods for library related services are by and large of low cost type such as mailshots, book displays, poster/brochure displays, organising small events etc. The high cost promotional events such as paid advertising, mega events, all India campaigns etc are noticeably missing.

(xvi) For marketing the UK university education and examinations, more proactive approach is followed. This includes paid advertisements, presentations by the UK academics, organising Education and Career Fairs, visits to institutions etc. Mere ‘word of mouth
publicity' is not adequate to attract sufficient number of higher education students.

(xvii) Though there is a common policy and objectives for the libraries, they work almost independently as far as marketing is concerned. A holistic network of libraries for marketing the services at all India level is missing.

(xviii) The libraries make good use of media contacts in order to promote the services.

(xix) Resource renewal is not taken seriously in some of the libraries and the result has been obvious -- fall in membership.

(xx) Window display in the libraries is conspicuous by its missing.

### 7.2 Suggestions

(i) The libraries need to make use of the window display methods in order to promote themselves since they are all located in prime areas.

(ii) All libraries need annual marketing plan and staffs need to be provided professional training in the preparation of marketing plans. The marketing plan assumes special importance in the context of British Council libraries wherein membership growth is an important prerequisite.
(iii) British Council libraries need to renew stock @ 10% minimum every year. Also 10% stock needs to be weeded out every year.

(iv) A course on library marketing needs to be introduced in Indian library schools. This can be offered as an optional paper at the Masters level or as a separate intensive short term course.

(v) For efficient marketing programmes, the libraries need to build up databases of various individuals and organisations who form important elements in the marketing process. The databases should include potential customers (both individuals and organisations), media people, marketing and advertising agencies, marketing consultants, library equipment suppliers, event organisers, booksellers, library interior suppliers etc.

(vi) Libraries need detailed training in marketing methods such as Preparation of Marketing Plans, Events Management, Sponsorships and tie ups, Advertising and Publicity, Online marketing, Copyrighting, Presentation skills, Exhibitions and displays, Media cultivation, Library interior planning, Organising activities etc.

(vii) Customer care training is a must for every British Council library. This training needs to be run regularly every year, in order to reinforce the ideas and build customer care attitudes among the staff.
(viii) Customer care standards be implemented in all the libraries and it needs to be monitored regularly. The standards need to include all aspects of library services including library interiors, provision of reading materials, speed of response and communication standards.

(ix) Customer care meetings need to be organised in every library as frequently as possible (ideally every week) in order to discuss various customer care issues.

(x) Process improvement techniques are very important in the British Council libraries and all staffs need to be trained in process improvement techniques.

(xi) Staffs need to acquire multi-language skills in order to communicate with customers from various backgrounds.

(xii) Adequate budget provision needs to be made for marketing and promotion in every library. It is recommended that 2% of the books/periodicals budget be earmarked for marketing the resources. In the case of British Council libraries this needs to be increased to 3% since the libraries have got revenue responsibilities too.

(xiii) Libraries could explore the expansion of market by extending the service beyond the 11 centres by postal loans, courier service etc. These services would be revenue earning and will be self sustaining too.
(xiv) Research in marketing techniques be a regular feature in British Council libraries. All libraries need to have contingency plans for recovery in the event of unforeseen adverse downslides.

(xv) There is enough scope for marketing the information products such as online databases, information search service, photocopies, BLDSC services etc. The British Council libraries could explore these areas.

(xvi) Finally, the libraries have built excellent reputation for customer service and it would benefit the professionals in general in case the British Council libraries hold occasional workshops/open houses/training programmes in customer care and quality services in libraries.

7.3 Suggestions for Further Research

(i) Regular research is needed on the impact of television and electronic media on usage of library materials.

(ii) Research is needed on the customer’s perceptions on the future of libraries – their profile and role, services and information resources they need to provide.

(iii) Research may be conducted in all British Council libraries in order to evaluate the quality of bookstock and its relationship with membership.
(iv) Further research is needed on customer preferences in premises, furniture and equipment.

(v) Further research is recommended on customer responses to specific library facilities such as library hours, arrangement of materials in the library, staff service, photocopying, signages etc.

(vi) All India research is recommended in British Council libraries on 'who borrows what' – which means types of books borrowed by different categories of customers. Since the British Council libraries are increasingly targeting the services to the younger generation, this research will provide useful data which will help in providing the right kind of reading materials for customers.

(vii) Research is needed on the use of specific titles of books, periodicals and videos regularly. This could be a useful knowledge management tool and will help procurement of popular titles for the libraries.

(viii) Research is needed on marketing of electronic information and online databases in the British Council libraries.

(ix) Libraries need to conduct regular evaluatory researches on the use of specific marketing techniques and their impact.
7.4 Conclusion

Marketing is an important activity in the context of LIS. It is not a luxury, but is an essential activity. It is not something to be done only for membership promotion; on the other hand, it has to be done as a library routine. It ensures good use of the services and library materials and it identifies those products and services which deserve phasing out. Marketing ensures good returns on the investments made by the library.

Though library professionals are committed to promote the use of library services, a professional approach in library marketing calls for systematic training in this area and this is noticeable by its absence in India. Essence of library marketing lies in the provision of reading materials of appropriate subjects and quality which the customers need. Any amount of promotional effort will be futile unless the core of library marketing i.e. provision of appropriate reading materials is done. This fact remains true even now in spite of increasing competition the libraries face from other media e.g. television and electronic information/online sources.

British Council libraries in India have been ‘market driven’ from the very beginning. This has ensured a high level of customer satisfaction in these libraries. However, they cannot rest on the laurels since lack of marketing efforts could result in membership falls. Continuous efforts to enquire into customer requirements, provision of quality resources and
active promotion are needed in order to ensure membership growth in these libraries. Though the libraries have a 'marketing culture', a professional approach to marketing is needed. This can be ensured by staff training in marketing and involvement of all staff in the marketing programme. Also adequate budget be provided for marketing activities in every library.

Cashing on the high reputation the libraries have built up, there is adequate scope for expanding to new areas such as marketing of information by market penetration and expansion programmes. Market exists for the information products like bibliographies, referral service, photocopies, BLDSC services, online databases and other information products brought out by the Council but are not promoted well hitherto. These services will generate adequate revenue and will be self sustaining.

Continuous research on customer, service development and marketing techniques is needed. Innovation in marketing is needed in order to match the competitor's skills. Adequate budget for marketing is to be provided in libraries.

Finally, in order to facilitate a holistic approach to marketing the services of British Council libraries in India, an integrated network of libraries is needed and this will augur in a new era of knowledge and resource management.
Let me end this report with the following quotation:

"Marketing is not an event, but a process... It has a beginning, a middle, but never an end, for it is a process. You improve it, perfect it, change it, even pause it. But, you never stop it completely."

- Jay Conrad Levinson

Nothing is more true in the context of LIS today.