

Renewing the marketing strategy: from meeting user needs to values creation

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Abstract:

Today the library has to orient not only to users' needs, but also to the problems of all society. So we are learning to think about our users not only regarding their information needs, but also considering their attitudes, emotions, and most importantly – their values. Our practice shows that the modern customer actively addresses to the human values. This was proved by successful implementation of our two new projects – „Talking Textbooks“ (recording of audiobooks for blind students) and „The Library without Walls“ (servicing students with special needs at their home). For these projects we have actively used fundraising (EU Structural Funds, the Archimedes Foundation), stakeholders' support (partnership with Office of Academic Affairs of Tartu University and help of the volunteers.

It appears that investors, stakeholders and volunteers are highly motivated by the social values the projects offer. Therefore, the projects that show their special value for society will draw more attention of public and sponsors. The library services are not only our product in the marketing-mix and not only what and where we do, but also why we do it. In other words, it is time to widen the library marketing approach, and on the agenda for libraries today is a relationship and values based marketing.

Keywords: values based marketing, relationship marketing, Estonia libraries, users with special needs, blind users.

If you have too little money, you need to think! Reserford

Five years ago, in 2007, the University of Tartu Library (Estonia) won the 5th IFLA Marketing Award. The strength of our project lied in the skilful use of cooperation with the business sector and students' organizations to attract additional resources.

However, we did not rest on our laurels but developed new services and new projects for our users from the university. It may seem unbelievable but this year, our library again won the first prize with our projects *Talking Textbooks* (recording of audiobooks for blind students)

and *The Library without Walls* (servicing students with special needs at their home). In order to find additional financing for our projects, we have actively used:

- **Fundraising** (EU Structural Funds, the Archimedes Foundation),
- **Stakeholders' support** (partnership with the Office of Academic Affairs of the University of Tartu),
- **Help of volunteers.**

How did we make this happen? The originality of our projects and the key to success lied in our novel marketing strategy - we came to a conclusion that it was necessary to re-think the whole approach to the traditional library marketing.

What is meant by “traditional approach”? This is a traditional customer-centred marketing activity, where we address the users' needs, wants and expectations. For example, our library does quite actively “listen to our users' voices” by researching the expectations of different user groups. Our new projects and services traditionally undergo a thorough marketing-mix analysis in order to tailor them “for the right people, at the right place, at the right time, at the right price and with the right promotion”, if to quote the already classical words of Philip Kotler. We also systematically monitor the satisfaction of our users with the library services.

Our practical work and communication with users show that today the library has to address not only its users' needs and wants, but also the problems of all society. So today we are learning to think about our users not only regarding their information and other needs, but also considering their attitudes, emotions, and most importantly – their **values**.

What is meant by “values”? Where from do they emerge? The best thing is that we do not need to invent the values that can already be found in every society. We only have to select such as we need for forming the basis of our marketing communication.

In psychology, values show us what people find to be valuable in society and life. In philosophy, value shows the social and cultural importance of things and phenomena. There are several sources of values and in order to engage in values-based marketing, we need to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which values are held by our library and how can we reflect them in our services, symbols, organisation culture and communication?
- 2) Which values are held by our users and how can we consider them in our marketing strategy?
- 3) Which values are held by our potential supporters and how can we use them for forming the basis of our cooperation?
- 4) Which are the key problems of our user groups and our society? How can we solve them in order to create the so-called “massive value”?

Why are values important for the library's marketing strategy? Because they are all about people. Creating value is the act of creating something worthwhile – something that benefits one or many. According to Stuart Dobson, “value is typically that which adds value to one's life, whether that be an individual, a group, or the whole of society”. Values are benefits, improvements; they alleviate suffering, reduce cost, and increase availability. And it appears that investors, stakeholders and volunteers are highly motivated by the social values the library projects offer. Therefore, the projects that show their special value for society will draw more attention of the public and sponsors.

Hence, here is my first advice for “Marketing on a Shoestring”:

Set yourself large goals that would help to create values! Think not only about whose needs to meet and how to do it, but think a little higher – about how you could make the world a little better place, whom you could really help and make happier and why you should do all this.

Why did we choose blind and visually impaired students as the priority of our marketing activities of recent years? The reason was that we “listen to the voice of our users”, but we know that sometimes, this voice can be low and even weak – this may happen in case of library users with special needs. Another reason was that we felt that if we had better information about their problems we could help them and thus we would not only meet the needs of one target group but do something more – create some additional value.

In order to do this, we started to communicate closely with blind and visually impaired students, and we found out that they tend to drop out of the university relatively often, mostly because of the fact that they are not able to prepare for the exams as thoroughly as they should even if they have borrowed all the necessary materials from the library. It is not enough if we make information and books accessible for these users. They need more – we need to make the content of the books, the texts, accessible for them.

This is why we launched the project *Talking Textbooks*, aiming at helping blind and visually impaired students in studying and preparing for exams. The project encompasses reading books out loud and saving them as audio files. The project *Talking Textbooks* is supported by another project of ours, *Library without Walls*, introducing a new library service – at home service. Library users, for whom visiting the library is difficult due to their physical or sensory disabilities, can borrow and return books with the aid of voluntary helpers.

In this case we proceeded from the needs of our users, but also paid special attention to whether people are happy or unhappy. Figuring out what makes them happy or unhappy is a key to creating new values. New services have been very warmly welcomed by the target groups. The library has become a real helping hand for students with special needs, supporting them in their studies and helping them to achieve good results. Social value of these projects cannot be underestimated. Due to it, the library was successful in finding additional financing for these projects from the EU structural funds.

Initially, it may seem to be a paradox that we are planning to do large things while we have no financing for even small things. I try to explain it with an economic theory. In marketing approach, values are seen as the general satisfaction that people achieve by using the benefits we offer or, the profit gained by these benefits. This can be shown with the following economic formula:

Value = Benefits (Functional profit + Emotional profit) / Sacrifices and costs (Money + Time + Energy)

To achieve the greatest value for all parties we have to reduce costs. How could this be done? Our library decided to use the help of volunteers. For our projects, we posted an invitation for volunteer assistants on the library homepage, and during the first 24-hours we received responses from 88 people – university students who very much wanted to help their blind classmates. Some volunteers started to help in home service and others read out the materials, thus the largest part of textbooks were read out loud and saved for free by the volunteers.

How could the costs be even more reduced? You could do it by using additional financing. Here is my next piece of advice: *to reduce the expenditure of the library's money, time and energy, use fundraising and the help of volunteers!*

Do you remember the words Voland said to Margarita in Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*? "Never ask for anything. Especially from those who are stronger than you are. They offer and give everything on their own..."

How glad we would be if it really were like that. In real life, however, we experience a permanent budget deficit. Money is needed for realising even the most beautiful idea in the world, and you have to work hard to find this money. Search for off-budget financial sources is an important part of the marketing activities of a modern library. We have to learn to combine wisely the budget and alternative sources; we need to know where to ask for support and, when the potential investors have been found, we have to know how to convince them that our projects are worth their support.

We all know the first cynical question of a sponsor – *WIIFM? What's In It For Me?* What is it that we usually offer? Honour and fame, the name of the sponsor printed on our advertising and information posters. What is it that we can promise them? – "Give us some money and we will buy more books that the students need", "Give us some money and you can see that the researchers will be better satisfied with the library". Forget it; it does not work anymore! Today's investors want to know that they have helped to make the world better – thus we have to offer them the chance of participating in this mission. We need to show them how we measure the result, better in a quantitative way: "With your help, the library is able to offer such innovative services that will help five blind students graduate from the university within the nominal study time. In three years, you will be invited to their graduation ceremony". Such argumentation will be much stronger.

Besides traditional book stacks/shelves, a library could have two more "storage rooms". One for the ideas for new projects about what the library could do for solving the problems of people and society, but lacks necessary resources. The other one should contain a list of potential investors, who could share the values of our projects; among these investors should be sponsoring firms, but also different foundations that are much more generous in giving money than the sponsors.

It would be good if these foundations were sorted according to their fields of activities, objectives and application deadlines. Ideally, the library could be able to check once a month whether some application deadline is nearing. It is important to remember that

- Money will be given to the ideas that coincide with the values;
- Money will be given for positive changes;
- Money will rather be given for opportunities, not for needs;
- Money will not be given unless it is asked for.

This means that the library will be given money in case when

- It is understood that the problem the money is asked for is really existing and needs a solution;
- The library believes that it is doing a valuable thing and spends money for solving just these problems of society it is asking the money for;
- The library hopes that its activities/the project is really necessary and helps to make the world a better place.

Such an approach even cannot easily be called asking for and getting money for reducing library costs, but it is, rather, a creative cooperation that inspires the helping of people and making them happier.

When analysing the budget of our latest project, it was clearly seen that its most expensive feature was the human resource (contributions of digitisers and people who read books out loud); therefore, we decided to use volunteers. In addition to that, we used active fundraising – we applied for financing from the Primus programme of the EU structural fund via the ARCHIMEDES foundation (an independent body established by the Estonian government with the objective to coordinate and implement different international and national programmes and projects in the field of training and education). This enabled us to implement our new services without major investments by the library.

In principle, we try to reduce the costs of traditional marketing as well. But we have noticed an interesting aspect in relation with values-based marketing. As a rule, the reduction of costs is directly related to the enlargement of benefits. Why? This is because the larger is the benefit the library is offering to its target groups and society, the easier it is to find sponsors, investors, stakeholders and volunteers.

For the majority of people, the awareness that they have helped to make the world a better place gives great joy. Ancient Chinese words of wisdom say: if you want happiness for one day – go fishing. If you want happiness for a month – get married. If you want happiness for a year – get an inheritance. But if you want happiness for the whole life – help somebody.

Library services are not only our *product* in the marketing-mix and not only *what* and *where* we do, but also *why* we do it. In other words, it is time to widen the library marketing approach, and on the agenda for libraries today is the **values-based marketing**. Values-based marketing is a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers, for building strong customer relationships and for managing these relationships in ways that benefit the customer, the organisation, and its stakeholders (Bermand Hutagalung).

Table 1. Comparison of marketing approaches

	Customer-centred marketing	Value-based marketing
Objective	Meeting the users' needs and keeping the users	Making the world a better place
Basis for marketing conceptions	Differentiated needs of target groups	Values of society
Means of communication	ICT	Social networks, direct communication
Marketing attitude	Positioning of the organisation and its services	Culture, mission, vision and values of the organisation

All in all, the classical marketing is engaged in the promotion of the product/service in order to satisfy needs and wants and create benefits. But people need more than just benefits, they

need additional values. How much do we think about values, how much do we create values? We must not forget that a library is a social institution and its mission has to include the meeting of user needs and wants, but also creating values for society.

People – our users and supporters – are aware of the risks and instability of the global society of today and its economic and social changes. Values-based marketing gives them hope that there is somebody out there who cares and gives them a feeling of security.

We must emphasise that the traditional marketing methods are not dying. Values-based marketing does not ignore the traditional approach but makes marketing clearer, more specific and focussed and offers more ways for performance evaluation. How could we make this “classic menu” even more enjoyable?

First, we must learn from our old mistakes. Which are the basic mistakes made in the classical marketing?

- Megaphone – we send everybody one and the same message.
- Monologue – we do not listen to people.
- Our objectives are not clear enough (we know what we want to do and how, but do not know why we want to do it).
- Our performance cannot be measured.

Important key words of the new approach are:

- Personal contact;
- Dialogue, the ability to listen;
- Values;
- Spending money only for effective and beneficial activities;
- Performance measurement.

What does it mean in practice?

1) We involve our partners and stakeholders, for example, from our university or local government, in our research and creation of values. In our latest projects, the University of Tartu’s Office of Academic Affairs became our main partner and co-financer of the project. In order to obtain direct feedback to our project, we organised several seminars for public discussion together with the Office of Academic Affairs of the University of Tartu. These seminars were attended by blind students, digitisation specialists, members of the university staff and librarians.

2) We channel the key values of the library into marketing communication. For instance, if one of our key values is free access to information for all, we shape our marketing message in a way that the idea of information accessibility includes also the creation of new possibilities for those who cannot access information due to some specific problem, such as their inability to see and read the text. We make it clear how the library can help in such cases.

3) We launch a marketing campaign to promote the values we have created with messages, but also with images and emotions, telling our users, investors and the general public about our work. For example, the *Talking Textbook* project promotion lets our users know not only what the library has to offer, but this marketing project also helped us to produce the idea that “the library cares”.

4) We have to find a way for performance measurement. We decided that with our projects, the library has to make sure that blind students would not drop out of the university because of the lack of learning materials and that they should get all the materials needed for successful passing of exams in the form of audio files. We were very glad that this summer, a cultural management major received her MA with the help of the library, where several dozens of books were voiced and digitised for her use. The library also helped her in compiling the references chapter of her thesis and in checking out the quotations and references, which would otherwise have been an enormous task for a blind person.

5) We are continuously keeping in contact and receive feedback from our users. During the project, we discussed with them our new services, technical problems (saving and forwarding of files, text identification etc.) and issues of user satisfaction. Good proposals were made on how to develop our services. For example, the idea to purchase the Braille printer was born exactly at this seminar – as we found out that such a printer was not available for the blind users anywhere in the whole region of South-Estonia. Such discussions revealed another special need for the library users of this group – they needed home service. This gave rise to our second project, *Library without Walls*, where volunteers helped to give library services at the users' home.

Here is my third piece of advice for “Marketing on a Shoestring”:
Change slightly your approach to marketing strategy! There is no need for giving up the classical, good old-style marketing but today, it is important to complement it with new, values-based marketing aspects.

What do we add into the meaning of a marketing mix for libraries? For our library, marketing is the way in which we determine the library's best opportunities, given its objectives and resources for satisfying customer wants and needs. The library must distinguish among different groups of customers, choose which groups it can serve effectively, and communicate the central benefit it offers to that group. Analysis of the marketing mix helped us to design and implement the tactics to achieve this goal. In other words, for us, the marketing mix means 4-Ps for Users Satisfaction.

But even the marketing mix cannot remain the same, because our new orientation towards our users means that we do not think only about their needs but also about their dreams, emotions and happiness. What is the new meaning the library of today could add to the classical 4 Ps?

- Product (service, project) – usefulness;
- Price – perceived value;
- Place – the maximum availability;
- Promotion – relationship, knowledge.

Moreover, in our marketing mix we are not limited by traditional 4P and 7P models. We also analyse four additional and equally important Ps: **Problems** in society, which we can help to solve, **Purpose** of the project, **Potential investors**, **Partnerships**.

All these aspects are relevant to our marketing strategy. However, new and more efficient methods can be used for tactical activities as well. Close relationships-based approach to our users is another important addition to the traditional marketing.

For example, the success of our project was based on the immediate information received from representatives of the target group: personal interviews with blind library users about their needs and wishes, and a possibility to send comments and suggestions about necessary special services and how the library could help them in their studies via the library homepage. It was not easy to find exhaustive information about the needs and wishes of blind and visually impaired students, as they visit the library only rarely. For us, this is a specific group of library users, whose ‘voice’ is really quite low and could be unnoticed by the library. Thus, we first found out their contact persons at the university and reached the Advising Centre at the UT Office of Academic Affairs, with whom we started to communicate and cooperate.

As a result, we got a good statistical overview of our target group. Next, we asked each of these students how the library could help them in their studies. In order to get operative feedback, we created a special space on the library web page for comments and suggestions that would help us in further developing our services.

Here is my fourth piece of advice for “Marketing on a Shoestring”:
Be sure to listen very carefully to the voices of your users and do not forget that some of them may sound very low – you have to make an effort to hear them! Remain in a constant dialogue with your users! The best tactics you can use here is relationship marketing.

Table 2. Relationship marketing

Traditional marketing	Relationship marketing
Aimed at selling	Aimed at keeping relations with customers
Management of product portfolio	Management of customer portfolio
Inconsistent customer relationships	Constant contacts with customers
Main stress on product characteristics	Main stress on customer’s needs
Short time scale	Long time scale
Little attention to customer services	Main attention to customer services
Product-limited obligation to fulfil the customers’ wishes	Wide-scale obligation to meet the customers’ needs
Quality is guaranteed by the characteristics of the product	Quality is guaranteed by the development of relations
One-way communication	Dialogue, mutual learning

Relationship marketing really makes good use of tactics, because it includes:

- Constant clarification of the needs that create value for the users;
- Differentiated approach to users;
- Devotion to deep relationship with the users and fulfilling of promises and expectations;
- Two-way communication (dialogue);
- Changing and personalisation of activities by monitoring and feedback.

All this requires extensive re-thinking of library marketing and indicates that the library marketing approach update is in order. To sum it up, the library of today needs to think about the problems of its different users, but also about the problems of society. It is necessary to give important additional value and great social importance to library services.

Here comes my last piece of advice – *let us not forget our mission!*

A library that is not engaged in marketing at all can be compared to a slowly disintegrating old house with a closed door where there are no guests. The libraries that use the traditional, user-centred marketing resemble well-kept houses with open doors and windows where the hosts are happy to have the rooms always full of guests so that everyone could find something to meet their wishes and needs. Would the new marketing paradigm require the building of a new house? Not at all. Our house would only need some slight renovation or a new garden that would make the whole street look better, because the hosts want to take care not only of their guests, but worry about the street, the city, the country and even, about the whole world.

The objective of both the classical marketing and the new, relationship and values-based marketing is to meet the needs of the customers. But the library that is engaged in values-based marketing has a mission, vision and values that are important for society and, I dare to say, for the mankind. This brings a unique humanist aspect into our activities. A library is not only a marketing organisation but a social institution with an important role in the development of history and culture of mankind. As such an institution, the library could help in solving problems of society and this could be our mission. The new marketing helps our libraries in reaching the next level in meeting people's values and aspirations. Such a library can also find stronger support from society, investors and stakeholders.