Involving Customers in Redesigning and Marketing the Library

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Abstract:

Our paper describes the redesign process of Hakunila Library and presents a rough outline of our new marketing strategy. We had a midsized public library which looked (inside and outside) like a flashback to the 70's and was no longer as popular as before. We had a question: "What should we do differently?" and we searched for answers to this question with our customers in our redesign process. We decided to focus on two customers groups: adults and young people (aged 12-15). We started in a traditional way: a detailed questionnaire for both groups. We continued in a non-traditional and service-design-like way: three workshops with both customer groups. Now, we have a much better understanding of our customers .We have planned a modern, flexible library space with mainly recycled materials and only some new investments and named our star services based on the wishes of our customers. Still, this only the beginning – changing a library is hard work! In the near future, we will make more concrete marketing plans for our services – especially the star services! – and develop a more detailed brand-building plan.

Keywords: marketing strategy, brand building, Boston Matrix, service design, recycling

1 INTRODUCTION

Hakunila Library (a midsized public library in Vantaa, Finland) was built in 1976 and looked (inside and outside) like a flashback to the 70's. The annual lending and the number of library visits had been decreasing during many years, no matter we had tried new ways of marketing (e.g. social media). We were obviously doing wrong things and there was an essential question to be asked: "What should we do differently?". Basically, we had to change the

whole library and make a new marketing strategy – or vanish. Our main problem with this change was the lack of money. Therefore, we decided to test whether it is possible to design a modern, flexible library space with mainly recycled materials and only some new investments. As a matter of fact, green interior design should be considered by all library innovators, as climate change presents us with a massive responsibility.

In the library world, we have traditionally tried to understand our customers e.g. by examining lending figures or making customer surveys in order to develop the most suitable services. Some of us have learnt to use e.g. the Boston Matrix (or similar tools), too. Nevertheless, we have seldom seriously discussed with the customers about the development of the library services, let alone involved them in our design processes. Why not? Wouldn't the involvement of the customers be an excellent way to create trustful, understanding relationships with them, thus a beginning point of a successful library and also successful library marketing?

According to Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan (2011: 25), one of the key issues of marketing 3.0 is co-operation with the customers. The most advanced way to co-operate with the customers is to involve them in developing the services –this is called service design. A whole paper could be written about the definition of service design. Basically, service design means developing services with users of the services who are considered to be equal developers in the process. There are many kinds of service design tools to involve users in the design process such as design games, various kinds of participatory workshops and prototypes. (See e.g. Tuulasniemi 2011, a book which provided the inspiration for our project in Hakunila Library, or).

In this paper, we describe the redesign process of Hakunila Library (with our customers and an interior designer in the spring of 2012) and present a rough outline of our marketing strategy. The library is currently closed for renovation and the redesigned library will open in the end of August 2013. The years 2014 and 2015 will tell if we have succeeded in thinking outside the box and getting an increasing number of customers.

2 MARKETING IN VANTAA CITY LIBRARY

The existence of Finnish public libraries is based on the law and the funding comes mostly from the state and the municipalities. The Finnish public libraries also rely on the goodwill of the public; they are supported by persons who don't even use the library services. Therefore, there hasn't been the need to truly market the libraries. However, the lowering statistics and the shift to e-materials give us something to think about – one day we might find our shelves empty and cobwebs on our computers. It's about time to start marketing more actively!

2.1 Attitude and Skills

The education of the library professionals has focused on developing the professional skills and has not prepared us to think like a marketer. The library education in Finland is developing, but we have no time to wait!

Vantaa City Library is currently experiencing a change of generations. Almost a fourth of the personnel will retire in five years. There is a great number of librarians who think that marketing and library do not go well together. "We're in the library business, not in the

marketing business" was regularly heard in conversations about what should be done to promote the services. We need to change this attitude! Luckily for us, some of the newer recruits have a more flexible attitude to expanding the limits of librarianship. They have new ideas about how the library should present itself or what is "the sound of the library"(see e.g. Perälä 2011). They are also more ready to accept the customer's point of view about how things in the library should be.

The fast retirement process sets a challenge to save the tacit knowledge to the next generation. If we could reverse the process so that the younger generation would share their knowledge in turn, we could raise the level of marketing skills among the personnel without cost. Yet, the use of marketing professionals to educate the personnel is not totally out of the picture and it is possible to build up the marketing skills with real-life cases. For example, we organised a workshop for the staff of Hakunila Library and some other workers of Vantaa City Library. The workshop was held by consultant Jukka Hakala and the purpose of workshop was to answer one question: "How to get people to visit the redesigned Hakunila Library?" This proved to be a good way to get ideas and the concept can be used again with some other cases.

2.2 Marketing and Values

The City of Vantaa is deeply in debt and has launched a savings programme to improve the state of its economy. Karl Hemsley, the manager of Kilburn Library, states in his article (2011) that a crisis is also an opportunity and it should be used to create a truly customer-friendly library service. We utterly agree with him and are not going to waste a perfectly good crisis. ☺

The redesign process of Hakunila Library expresses strongly the values of the City of Vantaa (*innovativeness*, *sustainable development*, *social inclusion*), which encourage us to develop services with our customers in a sustainable way. Besides, the basic concept of the library is very environmental friendly: the collection, the ICT equipment and the library space are common property of its customers. Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan (2011) emphasize that every company is responsible for building a better world and should choose values that its customers can respect and truly rely on – they use companies such Bodyshop and Patagonia as good examples. These companies have used their values as their marketing assets, but most libraries fail to see environmental friendliness (as well as other values) as a marketing asset. However, there is(at least!) one exception: the chief librarian of Vallila Library Harri Sahavirta (2012) is famous for developing of the concept of 'green library' and there is a sign on the door of Vallila Library (Helsinki City Library) saying "A Visit to the Library Reduces Your Carbon Footprint".

So far, we (in Vantaa City Library) have mostly informed our customers[1] about our services without a well-planned marketing strategy. Our brand has been built with other HelMet libraries[2]. According to Taloustutkimus, a Finnish market research company, the HelMet.fi

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[1] There has been one worldwide scoop – the case of a book returned a hundred years late (in 2008) - but cases like this are quickly forgotten.
[2] The capital of Finland is Helsinki, but, to be more precise, the metropolitan area consists of three large municipalities and one small municipality: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. The public libraries of the four municipalities work in close co-operation and are known by their customers as HelMet libraries. The

net library has been among the most recognized web brands in Finland for several years. In 2012, it ranked second (after Google)[3]. Surely, developing the HelMet brand with other HelMet libraries has not been vain, but maybe we should focus more on the *social inclusion* (one of values of the City of Vantaa) and create a stronger brand of our own, supporting the local identity and telling more local stories. It is possible that a stronger local identity would attract more customers as well as local partners and sponsors.

3 THE REDESIGN PROCESS OF HAKUNILA LIBRARY

Hakunila Library is a midsized library in eastern Vantaa. It was built in 1976, has 586 sq. and the size of the collection is 30 000. In 2011[4] the annual lending was 170 000 and the annual number of library visits 120 000. The percentage of the immigrants and the unemployed are somewhat higher than in other parts of Vantaa. Hakunila has a reputation of a rough suburb, but many of its inhabitants claim that this is not true. There are many pubs and blocks of grey flats (dating back to the 70's), but there are also forests, sports competitions, an IKEA warehouse and Håkansbölen kartano (an old, famous manor with a lovely park).

This paper only includes a short summary of the redesign process and its findings. A more detailed description can be found in *Sustainable, Participatory & Low-Cost – The Redesign Process of Hakunila Library* by Katariina Ervasti and Paula Puustinen. The paper is written for the satellite conference (*Making Ends Meet: High Quality Design on a Low Budget*) which is organised on the 15th and 16th of August in Singapore by Library Buildings & Equipment Section.

3.1 A Short Description of the Redesign Process

Because we had little money and little time, we decided to focus on two customers groups: adults and young people (aged 12-15). The number of adult customers and the annual lending had been decreasing during the past years. Young people were using the library actively, but we had very little space for them. We started in a traditional way: a detailed questionnaire for both groups. We continued in a non-traditional and service-design-like way: three workshops with both customer groups.

The survey and the workshops took place in the spring of 2012. We distributed the questionnaires in the library, but the questionnaires for the young were also sent to two schools. We got approximately 200 replies from the adult customers and 300 replies from the young customers. The results of the survey formed the basis of our redesign process and facilitated the design of the workshops.

We planned three workshops for both groups on three different days, at 4 p.m. for the young customers and at 6 p.m. for adult customers. There were about 10-15 adult customers per workshop. Most of the participants were pensioners (aged over 60 years) but there were a couple of middle-aged customers, too. The young customers were more active, about 20

HelMet libraries have a common library system and a net library, their customers follow the same user regulations and their staff work together as teams and participate in the same training events.
[3] http://www.taloustutkimus.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiskirje/uutiskirje-8-2012/google-jo-kymmenen-vuotta-suomen/
[4] Hakunila Library was closed because of the renovation in the beginning of November 2012. This is why the statistics presented here are from the year 2011.

participants at every workshop. Finally, a detailed plan of the redesigned library space was drawn by Minna Haapakoski, an interior designer specialised in green interior design.

In the first workshop, we wanted the participants to evaluate the library space as it was at that moment and write their observations down. We gave them green and red Post It –notes, the green ones for positive comments and the red ones if there was something that should be changed. We also mingled with the customers and wrote down their spontaneous comments. After that we gathered the customers together and discussed about the comments. A method like this had been used in Turku City Library (see Tapio, Hannula & Tapio 2012), but we added a conversational part. The method worked very well – the young customers gave us 116 comments, the adults 85 comments. The notes provided them an anonymous way to express opinions they might have been too shy to tell us face-to-face. It was crucial to discuss with them during the Post-It -session, as they considered some of their opinions as minor details and would not have written them down. The discussions after the Post-It -session were also crucial – especially with the adult customers who were more talkative - and we gained more ideas.

The second workshop was different for the adults and the young people. In the second workshop, we wanted the young customers to give us concrete ideas of what their space should look like. They were given out papers and pens and asked to draw a library space in which they would like to spend time. If somebody didn't like drawing, we asked them to write down what they wanted (colours, furniture, equipment etc.). We gave the drawings to the interior designer who used the ideas in her own design.

With the adult customers, we tackled the problem of finding the right book (or other materials). In most public libraries in Finland, a system called YKL, based on the Dewey Decimal System, is used for categorizing books. If you look at the main classes of YKL, they may remind you of a curriculum guide of a university. A typical customer of Hakunila Library does not see the world like this, their needs for information arise from their everyday lives. We had decided to get rid of the rigid classification system (YKL) in our non-fiction section and organise books in so-called 'theme areas'. The whole staff of Hakunila Library had participated in designing the theme areas. There were seven of them: Hobbies and Technology, History and Biographies, Home and Well-being, Society and Nature, World and Languages, Art and Music, Science and Textbooks. In the workshop, we wanted to test whether these theme areas are understandable to our customers. We put the names of the theme areas on the table and gave the customers small notes with names of the books in them. We asked them to locate each book in the theme area they though it should be. After this, we discussed with them about the choices they had made. All in all, this usability test proved that the theme areas were understandable to our customers and helped us to develop subcategories.

In the third workshop, our interior designer Minna Haapakoski showed a 4-D presentation about her plan and she had also brought colour and carpet samples with her. It was not the first version of the plan, since we had reported her the results of the survey and the two workshops and she had made drafts based on them. Neither was it the final version, the customers (as well as the staff) had the chance to ask questions and suggest changes.

3.2 Why Are We Here? – The Four Main Reasons for Our Existence

Based on the results of the surveys and workshops, there are four main reasons for our existence.

For our adult customers, the main purpose of the library is to provide books, magazines and other materials, to be checked out (and in) or to be browsed in the library. Our young customers consider this important as well. Yet, finding the right book, magazine (or other materials) is not always simple and finding the right person to ask for help is not simple either. In the workshop, the adult customers were perplexed about our service desks. There were two service desks in the library. There was a desk where customers could check items out and in, get their reservations, pay their fines etc. Opposite this desk, there was a reference desk where customers could get a library card and advice on information search. We tried to justify the existence of these desks as well as we could, but the customers just did not get it. "Why do you have you have two service desks in a midsized library like this?" they kept asking. Since it was so difficult for them to understand, we decided that in the new library we would have only one service desk. The redesigned library space (with its theme areas mentioned in 3.1) will make it easier for our customers to find the right book(s) or other materials. There will be only one service desk and one staff member will circle in the library and offer his/her help to customers.

Secondly, the library is also to be the cultural centre of Hakunila - there are not that many cultural events in the area. In addition to organising author visits (and other literary events), our adult customers want us to organise art exhibitions, musical performances and film screenings. Like the adult customers, the young want to have music performances and film screenings, but they also ask for guided activities like a reading group and a homework club. Previously, we had arranged several author visits (and other literary evenings), but we organised art exhibitions and musical performances very seldom and had never shown a film in the library. We didn't have an exhibition space for art or a room equipped for film screenings. Musical performances require a lot of space and the library was full of unmovable bookshelves. However, these problems are not impossible to solve - the redesigned library space will be more flexible and easily modified for different kinds of events. Our bookshelves will be lowered and painted, and wheels will be added under them. They can be easily moved if we want to organize e.g. a musical performance. There will be a room which is equipped for both film screenings and small art exhibitions. A reading group for the young is not that difficult to start – we already have one for the adults – and we are currently looking for a volunteer to run a homework club. Yet, the amount of cultural events organised by the library cannot be very high since the amount of staff is limited. However, we can look for partners (such as organisations or volunteers) to organise these things.

Thirdly, our library should be a homely place to spend time in. Our adult customers want to sit comfortably and read a book or a magazine or listen to music while drinking coffee or tea. This is what the young customers want too - the most wished items were a sofa or bean bags and a huge TV screen (for the gaming console). They also wanted more colour, more pictures or graffiti on the wall (instead of "ugly paintings" we had) and a carpet on the floor. The redesigned library space will be more homely and colourful, with more chairs, bean bags and rocking chairs to sit on while sipping coffee or tea. There will be a coffee machine; our library has only 586 sq. so a coffee machine might be a more realistic idea than a cafeteria. The redesign plan makes good use of some of the old furniture. In addition to movable, colourful bookshelves, the plan also includes painting walls and old furniture (chairs, tables,

rocking chairs, standard lamps etc.) and coating tables with pages from poetry and comic books.

The young customers also wanted more space in the library. Their criticism was completely justified: there was only a table and some chairs, a couple of bookshelves and three computers (shared with children) for them in the library. They also made it very clear that they did not want to be a part of the children's section for they are no longer children! Since we had decided to remove one service desk, we would really have more space for our young customers.

Both customers groups also appreciate silence. This is a challenge in our library, because there are no walls in our customer area. If a child starts to cry or a group of young people speak loudly, everyone in the library hears it. Building walls would make our midsized library a labyrinth, but building one silent room would not. Therefore, there will be a silent room in the new library for those who want to concentrate without disturbance.

It was a bit of a surprise to us that also the young customers enjoy the silence and some of them even demand it. In some questionnaires, there is a text saying *throw JONNEs out of the library*. (JONNE is a slang expression for a boy who behaves badly and loudly.) Indeed, we have two customer groups of young people in Hakunila Library. The first group is those who behave well and are interested in borrowing books and other materials. The second group is the JONNEs, boys and girls who want to spend time in the library, sit in a group and chat, use the computers and maybe browse magazines or comic books. The results of the survey reveal that these two groups do not like each other. Based on this criticism, there will be an area for the young people, completely separate from the children's section, where they can spend time (alone or in a group), use computers, tablets or a gaming console and read magazines (or whatever they prefer). There will be also be another, more peaceful area (close to comic books and the music section) for those who want to choose their books without meeting the JONNEs.

Fourthly, our young customers are very interested in computers and other e-equipment (e.g. tablets, gaming consoles). Their wishes are slightly different from the wishes of the adult customers. In the survey of the adult customers, the possibility to use computers ranked ninth among the preferred activities, even though we have many regular customers who surf in the Internet, print out documents or pay their bills in online banks. The results of the adult customers did not show high interest in e-books, e-music or the latest technical equipment either. Yet, if we want to keep our young customers and increase their library use, it is essential to make investments! Previously, we had only three computers – and the same computers were also used by children – and one gaming console that could be used once a week in our gaming club.

4 A ROUGH OUTLINE OF OUR MARKETING STRATEGY

According to Helinsky (2012: 18), there are four steps in library marketing: 1) Analysis (What is the library like now and how do we see the future?) 2) Strategy, Marketing plan & Budget (What should we market? To whom? How much does it cost? What products and services do we have? What are the expected results? What is the timetable and who is/are in charge of it?) 3) Implementation 4) Feedback and evaluation. Helinsky (2012: 21-37) recommends tools for the analysis of the present situation and the future, such as SWOT, PEST and Porter's five forces. None of these tools were used in our analysis, as we were

inspired by service design and wanted to involve our customers – our analysis is described in the previous chapter.

For the analysis of the products and services, Helinsky recommends the Boston Matrix, a tool developed by Boston Consulting Group in the 1970's. The matrix places products and services into four categories, which are 1) Stars (products & services which are likely to grow rapidly and should be invested in) 2) Cash Cows (well-established products & services which are popular with customers but not likely to grow) 3) Question Marks (products & services that nobody knows how to handle, they can become Stars or Cash Cows or can absorb a lot of energy with little return) and 4) Dogs (products & services which are not likely to grow, they should be abandoned or kept if they support other products & services). (Helinsky: 38-41.) As this article should be a short one, we will not present a detailed Boston Matrix of Hakunila Library and will only make some remarks about it. We will neither present a detailed marketing strategy with marketing plans for all our services, but we will shortly discuss the continuum of marketing and building a brand for Hakunila Library.

4.1 Stars, Question Marks, Cash Cows and a Dog

After the redesign process, we have a good understanding of what our adult customers and young customers want. Children were not involved in the redesign process and we can only make guesses (based on e.g. lending figures and their behaviour in the library) about their wishes. For our customers, the main purpose of the library is (still!) to provide books, magazines and other materials. Lending books (and other materials) is the traditional cash cow of the libraries. Yet, the annual lending of Hakunila Library has been decreasing during many years. Why? This question could be (and has been previously) answered like this: reading is not as popular as before, Google provides answers libraries have provided before, there are so many other things to do than to go to the library etc. Some of this might be true, but maybe we should not blame the outside world so much and focus searching for answers inside the library instead. After the redesign process, we have defined creative ways to display books (this includes e.g. the new theme areas mentioned in 3.1) and active customer service (this means developing more active ways to recommend materials as a part of our basic customer service) as our stars. E-materials could be stars as well if we had more e-books, e-music etc. In Finland, there are negotiations going on about this in the national level. The staff of Hakunila Library cannot influence these negations very much so we will not consider e-materials in this paper at all.

Our customers also want our library be a homely place to spend time in. As it was already mentioned in 3.2, the redesigned library space will be more homely and colourful. There will be more chairs, bean bags and rocking chairs to sit on (for all customer groups). There will also be a coffee machine and a silent room for those who want to concentrate without disturbance. Therefore, we consider the homely, comfortable library space as a star and will invest time and effort in promoting it. There are no other homely, comfortable spaces like this in the Hakunila area – not even a single cafeteria, only noisy pubs.

In the redesign process, we also found out that the library should be the cultural centre of Hakunila. In addition to organising author visits (and other literary events), we should organise art exhibitions, musical performances and film screenings. The young customers also want guided activities like a reading group and a homework club. All these services are question marks. We know from experience that a literary event can attract a hundred

customers – or just five if the topic or the writer is not interesting enough or it happens to be a perfect weather outside. Besides, there are only seven people (including the district library director) working permanently in our library. Vantaa City Library has hired a cultural producer to help all the libraries in this task, but it is obvious that we will not be able to organise a great amount of events per year. As the library opens in August, we have art exhibitions, film screenings and a couple of events coming up. Yet, we need to find volunteers, if we want to be an active cultural centre, and this is something we must work on.

The redesign process also made us reconsider our computer courses. In the survey of the adult customers, the possibility to use computers ranked ninth and the possibility to get assistance in using computers fifteenth among the preferred activities. During the past ten years, we have organised several computer courses in Hakunila Library. Most of the participants have been elderly people who have not used computers very much (or at all) before. Every once in a while, we have offered more sophisticated topics (e.g. social media), but our customers are mainly interested in the beginnings. Ten years ago, the computer courses were fully packed but now the amounts of participants have been falling. We also offer personal assistance: a customer can book a specific time for his / her computer problem and get one-to-one assistance. This service has proved to be popular and still is a cash cow. Thus, we have named computer courses a dog and decided to abandon them. Instead of the computer courses for the elderly, we want to develop the media literacy skills of children and young people as the redesign process revealed their interest in computers and other e-equipment. Once, we organised a film workshop for the young – the idea was to make a short film– and it was a success.

There is still one group of services that we have not dealt with in this paper and neither in the redesign process. This group of services could be called group services ・ as we have services for schools, nurseries or any groups who want to come to the library. We offer e.g. story hours, book talks and introductions to information search. These services are popular, a cash cow, as especially the schools want to visit the library regularly. Basically, we have promised to offer these services only to 4th and 7th graders but have often organised sessions for any class. In the future, we will focus strictly on the 4th and 7th graders as we must find time to develop our new star services.

4.2 Involving the Customers, Recycling – Building a New Brand for Hakunila Library

In April, we organised a workshop for the staff of Hakunila Library and some other workers of Vantaa City Library. The workshop was held by consultant Jukka Hakala and the purpose of workshop was to answer one question: how to get people to visit the redesigned Hakunila Library? One of the most valuables findings of the workshop was that we should not forget the underlying ideas (= involving our customers & recycling) of our successful redesign process in the future. Marketing a library can (and should!) be a continuum and we should try to build a brand based on these idea. This is not a simple task – the ideas presented below are tentative and we will work on them in the future.

Thus, the first question to be asked is: *how do we involve our customers in the development of our library in the future*? Surely, we cannot answer this question without our customers. Therefore, as the library opens its doors on the 30th of August we will start to promote our customer panels – there will be one panel for adult customers and another one for young customers and we will address this question with both groups. On the other hand, a new service could be designed with a group of customers from scratch. We already know that the

young customers want for example film screenings in the library. What if they designed the film screenings for the young themselves from the very beginning? They could choose the name of the service, design a logo, make a marketing plan etc. Naturally, the young customers cannot organise this by themselves, we need an adult or two to support and work with them.

The second question to be asked is: *so, we have used green interior design in our redesign process, but... how do we make our library as green as possible in everyday library life so that our customers will connect this value with our library?* This is a question that requires investigation: we must read the works of our colleagues (e.g. Sonkkanen, Asikainen & Sahavirta 2012) more carefully, develop eco-support[5] more actively, find contacts for organising recycling-related events and art exhibitions, consult our customers in about this in our customer panel etc.

As a matter of fact, we need a detailed brand-building plan which will be an essential part of our marketing strategy. So, we will continue with this topic and maybe produce an article about this for the next IFLA conference!

5 CONCLUSION

We had a library that looked (inside and outside) like a flashback to the 70's and was no longer as popular as before. We had a question: "What should we do differently?" and we searched for answers to this question with our customers in our redesign process. Now, we have a much better understanding of our customers .We have planned a modern, flexible library space with mainly recycled materials and only some new investments and named our star services based on the wishes of our customers. Still, this only the beginning - changing a library is hard work! We have to make more concrete marketing plans for our services – especially the star services! – and develop a more detailed brand-building plan. In addition to this, Hakunila Library is part of Vantaa City Library – we now have a rough outline of a marketing strategy but Vantaa City Library has none. However, the big question ("what should we do differently?") is now asked in all the libraries as Vantaa City Library has started a big change process. We hope that in the near future we will have a marketing strategy for Vantaa City Library, too!

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[5] Eco-support is a model originally created in Helsinki in 2006 and now developed by eight Finnish and three Estonian municipalities. In this model, each workplace (e.g. Hakunila Library) chooses one of its workers to be an eco-supporter who is trained to promote environmental awareness in the workplace. (See http://www.eco-support.net/en/ for more.)

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