

***National Libraries Not For Researchers Only:
How To Market the Content of National Libraries***

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The reality is far less clearly cut:

- The cultural heritage is composed of widely varying collections in the different national libraries
- Market segmentation requires a very differentiated marketing policy
- Marketing cannot be limited to “content” in a strict sense
- Most librarians continue to consider marketing as something from outer space

Market segmentation : which segments?

- The offer of the kind of documents and of documentation will define a number of segments
- The service offered
- Geographical segmentation
- Demographic segmentation
- Segmentation according to attitudes and lifestyle

Segmentation implies different marketing mixes

Identification of market segments

Open days as an instrument towards identification of market segments (Royal Library of Belgium)

- Promotional or communication activity
- A first exploration of the market, on the condition that they are well prepared and organized
- Prerequisite : a large and general cultural theme in which a large public is interested (multicultural, spectacular, ...)

Open Days in the Royal Library of Belgium (2001)

Theme : 2001 Nights in the Library

- A large, well known cultural theme
- A pleasant wink to the first year of the new millennium
- The perception by Western populations of other cultures
- Subjects such as the Eastern world, the night, the stars, storytelling, ...
- Exhibition of documents concerning this theme in different sections of the Royal Library
- The theme was also produced outside the traditional atmosphere of the Royal library
- Students from an art school made paintings on this theme
- Music students presented musical impressions
- The event was eminently suited to Brussels, a city of various cultures and languages with their own stories; a city with a large variety of artistic disciplines and expressions

Open Days and market segmentation

- The opportunity to watch and study a large and differentiated public
- The guides had been instructed to 'listen,' which implies a specific attitude, technique and readiness
- Promotion and communication
 - Reduce inhibitions and fears towards the 'research library'
 - Demonstrate that cultural documents can be 'used' and 'enjoyed' in a national library by various non-traditional segments of the larger public

Open Days in the Royal Library of Belgium (2001)

Theme : 2001 Nights in the Library

Signals and reactions :

- A wide, but not specialist cultural interest
- A first rudimentary segmentation could be made up
- Many of the visitors were unaware that the national library offered so many possibilities
- No insight into the availability of documents
- A large variety of and widely diverging perceptions of search strategies
- Fear and initial inhibition toward search strategies : learning flexibilities were not manifestly known

Open Days in the Royal Library of Belgium (2001)

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Conclusion

With regard to products and services (value to the client or user)

- We have to continuously learn to discover the needs and requirements of the potential user groups
- Search facilities should be offered on various levels as well as remote access

With regard to location and availability (convention, distribution)

- Geographical segmentation also through remote access

With regard to costs

- Costs should not only be considered as 'cash value'; every effort in time or energy to get hold of the documents is a 'price'. The location is an element in price-fixing
- Price discrimination strategy?

With regard to promotion and communication

- A specific promotional and communicative approach to different segments is necessary

Open Days in the Royal Library of Belgium (2001)

Theme : 2001 Nights in the Library

Instrument for a first natural and informal contact with a large and differentiated public?

- The aim to reach a large public has been successful
 - We had some 8,000 visitors
 - Cf. the average of 14.000 readers' tickets annually issued and 90.000 yearly visits to our eleven reading rooms
 - The first conclusions from this experiment have to be refined by more specific research

Our little experiment was customer-oriented. And yet, a Canadian inquiry made in 1998 proved that 82.5 % of librarians did not include customer-oriented aspects in their definition of marketing!!!!!!!!!!!!