The library users' loyalty in the context of the competition on the information service market phenomenon

ВОЙЦЕХОВСЬКА Мая
Доктор кафедри книгознавства Інституту польської філології Гданського університету
e-mail: maja.wojcechowska@gmail.com

Анотація

Стаття описує феномен лояльності користувачів бібліотек. Подано визначення цього поняття та засади персонального маркетингу. Описано фактори, що впливають на лояльність клієнтів. Здійснено класифікацію клієнтів за ступенем їхньої лояльності. В останній частині статті представлено результати дослідження лояльності користувачів бібліотек, проведеного автором.

Ключові слова: *лояльність користувачів, користувачі бібліотек, конкуренція бібліотек.*

Abstract

The article shows the phenomenon of loyalty among the clients (users) of libraries. Definitions of the concept and the beginnings of relation marketing's creation are presented. The elements influencing the clients' loyalty and the classification of clients due to the degree of their loyalty are described. In the last part of the article, results of the research concerning the loyalty of library users made by the author are presented.

Kejwords: *loyalty of users, libraries' competition.*

Analysing the changes in the organisation and the actions of libraries in the historic point of view, it can be noticed that, over the years, the role and the position of a reader has changed. The majority of librarians' actions focused on collecting and reliable developing the library, taking into consideration such additional actions as keeping and renovating the library and many other auxiliary activities, which are essential for keeping the library appropriate condition and order. It was not until the twentieth century that people started focusing on the receiver of a book and, apart from literature, they offered library services profiled for different groups of users. Actions, which were aimed at gaining the reading society for libraries, were started. However, only recently, facing competition from the side of new media, was the quality of services made by libraries analysed deeper and the clients' satisfaction measured. The problem of the loyalty of library services receivers is relatively new and so far not much tested.

Apart from important actions, basing on advertising the library and its services, and then attracting users, there exists a whole range of mechanisms, which facilitate the reader's attachment to the library as an institution and to a book as a product of culture and science. Only disposable use of library services does not generate a habit to visit the institution yet and it evidences either dissatisfaction from the service or being little interested in it, which is also expensive. Servicing a new client lasts longer, is associated with registration procedures and can be a result of of advrtising processes, which also require financial expenses. This is why, apart from focusing on gaining new readers, it is essential to create stable and strong relations basing on confidence and loyalty with them.

In the history of marketing the turning point in perceiving the role of client is widely considered to be Theodor Levitt's statement, who in his work *The Marketing Imagination* claimed that the aim of marketing actions is not only gaining a client, but also his maintainance (Wilmańska-Sosnowska, 2003, p. 9). Since this moment a davelopment of researches can be noticed (both of science character

and ordered for own needs by commercial companies), considering different aspects of clients' loyalty. New marketing conceptions in much bigger degree than it used to, increase the meaning of a service receiver. Organisations more intensively focus on the client himself, considering issues of structure or inner processes as peripheral. Such actions are called **relation marketing**, which according to Leonard Berry means „creating, maintaining and enriching relations with a client" (Perenc, 2005, p. 87). The aim of the relation marketing is to gain the client's loyalty, which is confirmed in the Maciej Rydel and Sławomir Ronkowski's definition through writing that the concept of the relation marketing means „building loyal relationships with clients and strategic alliances with business partners" (Perenc, 2005, p. 88). The relation marketing, unlike the traditional marketing, which is mainly headed towards the realisation of the very same transaction (for instance borrowing a book, using the database etc.), focuses on using relational marketong methods, aiming at creating stable and close, so fulfilled with positive relations with a reader (Gilmore, 2006, p. 189-193).

The client's loyalty is defined as „readiness of a client to do the shopping again at the same deliverer" (Kienzler, 2008, p. 116) or also: „a particular state of the attitude of na client to to the provider company (the producer, the wholesaler of the shop etc.) based on the stability, the long-term and acceptance of the offered goods purchase conditions or services. The client's loyalty, so his —attachment" to the deliverer (the selling person), is a sense of self- understanding and cooperation between them. Shaping the client's loyalty is the aim of complex marketing actions, and its obeyance is —prized" with preference purchase conditions. A loyal client is a client who is —attached" to the company, who is not influenced by the competitors' actions (so called client who is hard to gain), and who represents, according to the made decisions, the interests of his receiver" (Altkorn and Kramer, 1998, p. 134-135). Józef Penc writes about the loyalty of receivers, defining it as —systematic and continually repeated purchase

of a particular product in the same place and by the same purchaser by means of habit, confidence and satisfaction from the bought product (brand)" (Penc, 1997, p. 231). According to Penc, the loyality can have a dual character: unseperable or seperable. „Loyalty of unseperable character means a situation, in which a consumer purchases in a sense product of one mark, and loyalty of seperable character is connected with purchasing products of two brands one by one. The consumers can be loyal to brands of products, shops and other things" (Penc, 1997, p. 231). ―Other" institutions include such libraries, which, in spite of their unproductive character, try to gain and ―tie" the client to themselves equally to other institutions.

Józef Penc, after Philip Kotler, made a division of the loyalty degree of clients (Penc, 1997, p. 231), describing four groups:

- Clients who are unchangably loyal (using only the services of one library);

- Clients who are seperably loyal (using services of two or several libraries because they think that the libraries offer services of similar level and they fulfil each other);

- Clients who are changably loyal (they pernamently tie with one library, thinking that in the moment it realises their reading needs best);

- Unloyal clients (they like variety, they do not tie to any of the libraries, they change the institution, which they want to use, according to the situation).

Lilianna Nowak, analysing different levels of clients' loyalty and the degree of their attachment to the organisation (Pilarczyk and Mruk, 2006, p. 65) made a division, which in case of library users could be presented as the following:

- Potential users;
- Users who use library services for the first time;
- Users who repeatedly make borrowings/visits;
- Stable users;

- Lawyers, unusually engaged, faithful and loyal readers, using serviced of only one library.

A little different classification, taking into consideration the attouchment of client and frquency of using the offer, was made by Edyta Rudawska (Rudawska, 2005, p. 29-32), differenciating:

- Lack of loyalty (occuring among people who, for different reasons, will never become stable and loyal library users, for intance people firmly discouraged to reading),

- Passive loyalty (characteristic for more and more intensively increasing group of readers, who often borrow books but are not attached to one library permanently, and who are ready to resign from the services of the previous library for another one if the latter offers them a better quality or higher comfort of servicing),

- Hidden loyalty (appropriate for people who are quite hardly attached to one library but use their srvices rather rarely for different but significant reasons, for example because of frequent trips and lack of possibility to return and exchange the read books),

- Special loyalty (appearing among a narrow group of library users, appropriate for people who arer emotionally and strongly attached with the institution and frequently using its services. Readers of special level of loyalty are also ambassadors, not rarely cooperating with librarians on different fields, for example as a part of volunteering in public libraries or also proclaiming fair opinions about the quality of services).

The basic benefits, which are caused by the existance of the loyalty phenomenon, include:

 - Fixation of the habit to read and use tested and reliable sources of information among the readers,

- The recommendation system (stable readers are satisfied with the library services and they willingly recommend them to others, thanks to which the amount of users increases),

- The decrease in costs connected with servicing readers (stable reader is more independent, he needs less help and librarian's time during a visit in the library),

The sorts of loyalty described above are ilustrated by picture 1.

Using a service

		FREQUENTLY	RARELY
The client's attachment	BIG	SPECIAL LOYALTY	HIDDEN LOYALTY
	SMALL	PASSIVE LOYALTY	LACK OF LOYALTY

Pic. 1. Sorts of loyalty

Source: prepared on the basis of Rudawska2005, s. 30

- Bigger acceptance of the pernament inconvenience (stable readers do not antagonize so easily with pernament difficulties with using the library services as sporadic readers),

- Less interest in services and competitive products (Pic. 1).

Nowadays, a continual increase in the requirements of library users can be observed, and what comes after is the difficulty to create stable relations based on satisfaction and content. There are more and more dofferent needs and expectations of library users, who describe theis requirements core specifically, which is often conflict and hard to realise. It causes the necessity to make the process of segmentation, and then to create varied offers, adapted to the appropriate group of readers. Gaining their loyalty requires not only the service provision process of high level and fulfilling the needs of information character, but also fulfilling emotional or sociological needs. All this results in

the fact that the guarantee of user's satisfaction, which is the basis of loyalty, is more difficult.

Moreover, there occurs a kind of feedback when the increase of level and variety of the library offer causes an increase in users' expectations. The increasing expectations of readers stimulate the perfecting of the offer of library services. This process together with increasing the quality of services of other organisations and the possibility to compare them by the readers with the library results in the fact that gaining the loyalty becomes increasingly difficult to achieve.
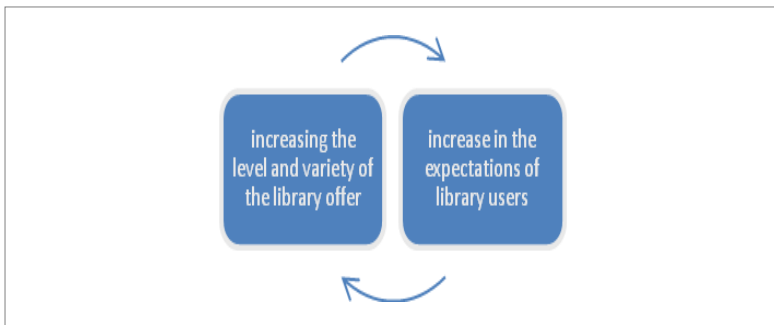
Pic. 2. The process of increasing the quality of library services

Source: own work

Izabela Witczak, analysing the phenomenon of service quality and the clients' loyalty, indicates that „gaining full satisfaction […] is a starting point to build loyalty, but does not guarantee it automatically" (Witczak, 2003, p. 15). For a longer time the client's satisfaction was considered to be the basis for successful marketing actions. Meanwhile, on the basis of different analysis, it was noticed that the mojority of satisfied clients (commercial institutions) changes the companies they work with and the products which they buy very often. As a result, the satisfaction from a product or a service does not mean loyalty towards the organisation which offers them.

What is more, it is significant to dirrefenciate the phenomenon of loyalty from so called **repeated behaviour**. Loyalty is connected with emotional perceiving of the service, and the repeated behaviour is only a regular use of the library services, which are dictated by practical reasons (for instance convenience, the efficiency of servicing etc.). And so, in the case of repeated behaviour, the decision about borrowing a book in library X can be based on objective „cold" premises and be connected with, for example, the comfort of close localosation of the institution, functional web page or relatively big choice of literature. The decision of using the services of library X can be also dictated by the unwillingness (lack of time, laziness etc.) to find an institution, which would better fit the individual needs of clients. However, in a situation when a deterioration of any of the conditions of functioning of the library happens, or when there appears a more attractive service in another institution, the decision about the choice of the institution can be changed. In turn, for loyal readers, emotional factors, such as sense of community, satisfaction, relation, impression of being special, etc. will play a bigger role.

From the practice of commercial companies it outcomes that the majority of shopping transactions is made with a narrow group of clients, and the participation of stable receivers in the total amount of clients, which is called the loyalty factor, often considered to be the gauge of the success of an organisation (Wilmańska-Sosnowska, 2003, p. 10). In order to investigate this phenomenon among the library users, an analysis of the borrowings registration system was made (pic. 3). The results of the research, made in March 2010 in three academic libraries on a group of more than four thousand users, revealed that the majority of them are people visiting the library only once, twice or three times (2166 people), so the readers who decided to try the library services, but resigned from them for some reasons. Those are users who, during a visit in a library, did not have any formed skills to use the sources and to serve the library system, so they were time-consuming clients requiring a big involvement from

the librarians. Readers, who regularly borrow books, are a narrow group of people. Users, who have visited a library from 10 to 20 times are 279 people, from 21 to 30 there are 75 people, and from 31 to 40 there are only 14 people. On the basis of the tested group one can conclude that the mechanisms happening in commercial institutions, which offer a sales of goods and services, have also a reflection in the processes of offering library services.
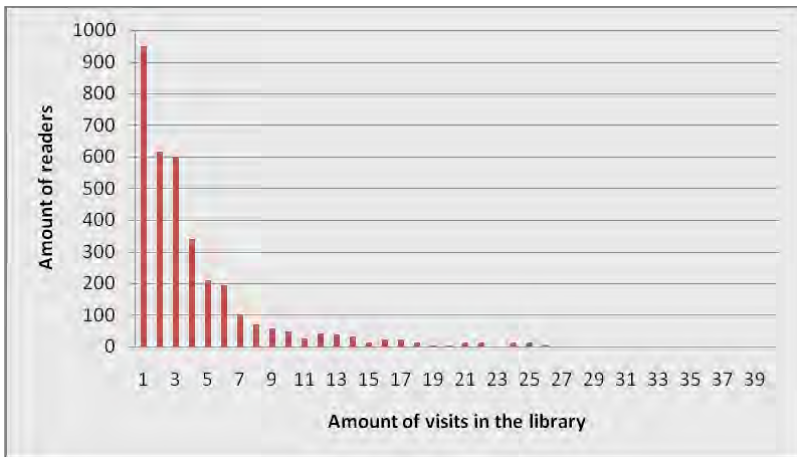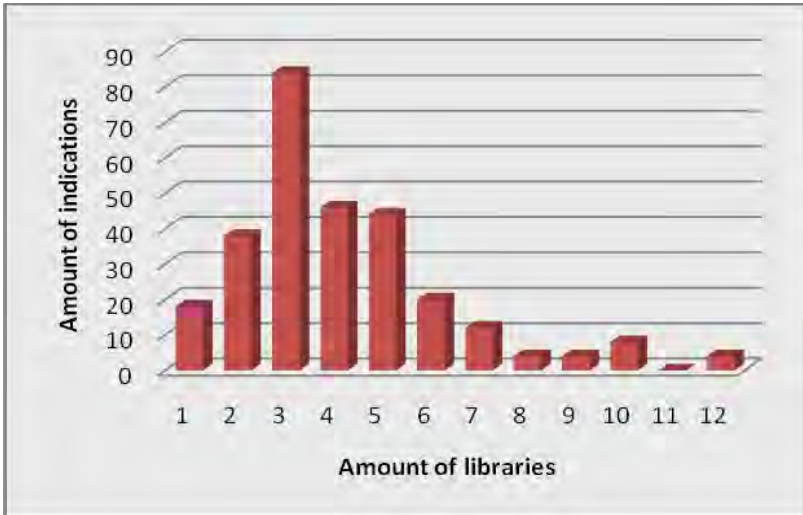

Pic. 3. The amount of readers' visits in libraries
Source: own work

The results of the analysis of borrowing systems shown above are a confirmation of the author's previous survey, made in 2009 on a group of more than 300 readers from different types of libraries. This research has shown that readers, looking for high quality of services, use a bigger amount of libraries or they search substitutes for their offers. As picture 4 illustrates, an increasing amount of readers[*] visits more than only one library. Most frequently, those are three, four, five or two institutions, which indicates a low level of loyalty.

---

[*] The research considered active readers of libraries

Pic. 4. Amount of libraries, which the readers have used for the last five years

Source: own work

In marketing researches, apart from the analysis of such basic data as the reader's last visits in the library, the frequency of visits, the amount of the books borrowed, the time for which the reader is signed to the library etc., it is possible to use different types of indicators,which illustrate the clients' behaviours. These include:

- The indicator of loyalty of the library users;
- The indicator of keeping the library users;

Indicator of loyalty of library users shows in what degree thy are attached to the institution, and what comes after, what percentage of them declares the willingness to use the services (borrowing a book). This dependence can be expressed by the following pattern:

$$\text{the indicator of library users' loyalty} = \frac{\text{The amount of users who declare the Willingness to use a service}}{\text{the amount of tested users}} \times 100\%$$

The indicator of keeping the library users illustrates how big part of readers, who used a library service before (made a borrowing),

will reactivate in this range, meaning that they will borrow a book or use other service, which is described by the following pattern:

$$\text{the indicator of keeping the library users} = \frac{\text{the amount of users, repeated acts of borrowing} \, (u \sin g \, the \, library \, services) \, in \, a \, particular \, time}{\text{the amount of users borrowing in the previous time}} \times 100\%$$

The last indicator – the indicator of losing the library users shows what percentage of readers resigned from the library services:

$$\text{the indicator of} \, lo \sin g \, \text{the library users} = \frac{\text{the amount of users who resigned from the library services}}{\text{the} \, total \, amount \, of \, library \, users} \times 100\%$$

Apart from the numerical indicators, libraries should analyse the needs changes in time, the expectations, the attitudes and the behaviours of readers. The standard marketing researches ought to be fulfilled with the information, which tells what services the most satisfied readers use and what the reasons for their loyalty are.

According to Stanisława Wilmańska-Sosnowska, between the activeness of clients and the expenditure for servicing them, there should be a direct dependence. And so, an organisation should spend 10% of resources on promoting in the environment (from pot reserved for the marketing actions), on promoting among people already interested in the organisation's actions 30%, and for maintaining the stable receivers of services even 60% (Wilmańska-Sosnowska, 2003, p. 10).

Many commercial organisations, in order to maintain the previous clients on the unusually saturated market, decide to elaborate so called **loyalty programs**. They aim at encouraging the clients to regular shopping thanks to creating an atmosphere of taking care about the clients' needs. So called **stable** or **key clients**, using the loyalty programs, have usual additional powers and bonuses in discounts on products and services (they are used by more than 80% of commercial organisations, which implemented the loyalty programs), priority in access to information about a new offer (67%),

possibility to receive promotional gadgets, participation in different kinds of parties etc. (Mazurek-Łopacińska, 2002, p. 138-139). The key clients in libraries are:

- Users, who regularly borrow big amounts of books and who often use other services of the library,

- Users, who are connected with the library for a longer period of time (several borrowings of bigger amounts of books does not make the reader a key client of the library automatically),

- Users, who are ‒lawyers" of the library, so they are satisfied with the quality of the offered services, who have a positive opinion about the library, who are emotionally attached with it and who tell others about it,

- Users, who are aware of the substitutive/other library services, and in spite of this fact are connected with one library only.

Libraries, following commercial companies, also try to ncourage the readers with loyalty programs, but not always using this wording. Stable readers can count on a better access to the newest literature, shorter time of waiting for the most snatched books, the possibility to borrow a bigger amount of specimen and on such details as bags for books, library sacks or messages sent to their e-mail boxes (Christmas compliments, library newsletters etc.), and different types of library meetings. Many of these elements make the emotional relations with the library deepen, and as a result, submitting its services over the services of other institutions.

The process of deepening positive relations with readers consists of several characteristic actions:

- Iniciating contacts with the users by the librarians;
- Informing about new projects, services, solutions, or library's initiatives, which can turn out to be attractive for the reader;
- Encourage the use of library services;
- Analysing the behaviours and reactions of readers in order to increase the quality of services.

Achieving the sense of loyalty by the readers is, however, extremely difficult. The most common barieers include:

- unsatisfying quality of servicing (often in spite of interesting and valuable libraries);
- increasing attractiveness of other media (television, the Internet) and other institutions offering competitive services;
- impression of routine or monotony in case of too long time of using only one institution.

The proceedings of readers in a situation of dissatisfaction from a service is different and depends on many elments, such as the degree of dissatisfaction or the emotional features (the character) of the very same ―injured". Generally, users can be divided into passive and those who make an action, which is illustrated by pic. 5. Maintaining their loyalty, facing a decrease in satisfaction or also serious reservations to the realisation of the service, is possible, provided that immediate repairing actions are made (for example a kind response for the complaint, improvement of the disadvantages in the way of providing services etc.) satisfying the reader.

The researches from 2009 mentioned before indicate that in majority of cases readers are satisfied with the way they are served by librarians. However, almost 20% of the surveyed declares lack of satisfaction in this range and numerous miscondusts of the library staff. Both clients of commercial companies and of libraries unusually rarely, in spite of incomplete, offensive or just unpleasant treatment, submit formal complaints. Clients do not submit complaints because they are not convinced of their effectiveness (50%), it costs too much effort for them (17%), they do not want to cause difficulties (17%), they are too busy (8%), or too stressed (8%) (Rogoziński, 2006, p. 64). In commercial companies complaints are formalized by 4% of clients (Larson, 2003, p. 2), 96% of dissapointed people does not present their complaints to the service provider, but they will probably resign from his offer (Rogoziński, 2006, p. 64). Among the surveyed readers it was only one person, satisfied with the way of complaints

consideration. While considering a complaint one
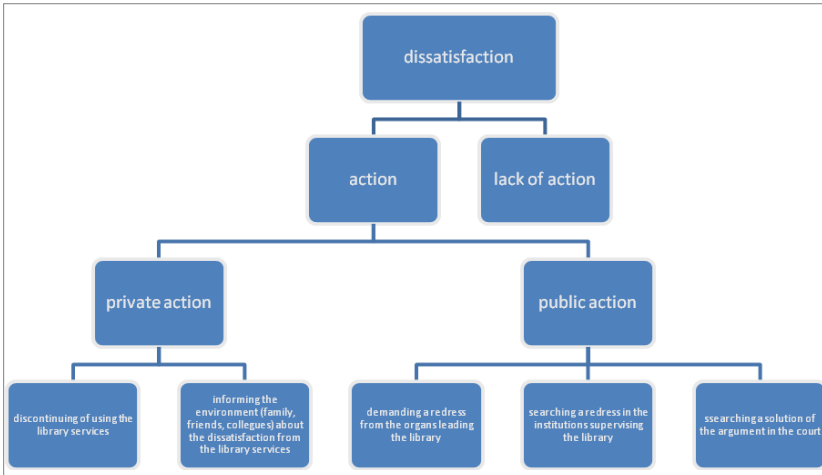
Pic. 5. Model of readers' actions in case of dissatisfaction from library services
Source: own work on the basis of Pilarczuk and Mruk, 2006, p. 68

should remember that, as the researches of business companies show, more than a half of clients, who reported a complaint, will still ise the organisation's services, provided that the complaint will reach the expected result and will be considered quickly.

Summing up the considerations concerning the issue of library users' loyalty it can be assumed that, facing increasingly growing competition, nowadays the most valuable marketing skill of librarians becomes the ability to strengthening the ties with a reader through identifying his needs and wishes, and, as a result, their realisation. The readers' loyalty is a result of high quality of services and successful marketing actions. Because it is conditioned by a wide range of factors, both depending on the library (service offer, the quality if services etc.), and independent, which the library does not have an impact on (for example the appearance of competitive companies), librarians should begin active actions, which increase the sense of

loyalty, particularly on those fields, where they have some possibilities of influence.

Reference:

1. Altkorn J., Kramer T. (red.) (1998), Leksykon marketingu. Warszawa.
2. Gilmore A. (2006), Usługi: marketing i zarządzanie. Warszawa.
3. Kienzler I. (2008), Leksykon marketingu. Warszawa.
4. Larson W. (2003), Obsługa klienta. Warszawa.
5. Mazurek-Łopacińska K. (2002), Orientacja na klienta w przedsiębiorstwie. Warszawa.
6. Penc J. (1997), Leksykon biznesu. Warszawa.
7. Perenc J. (red.) (2005), Marketing usług: wybrane aspekty. Szczecin.
8. Pilarczyk B., Mruk H. (2006), Kompendium wiedzy o marketingu. Warszawa.
9. Rogoziński K. (2006), Zarządzanie relacjami w usługach. Warszawa.
10. Rudawska E. (2005), Lojalność klientów. Warszawa.
11. Wilmańska-Sosnowska S. (2003), Klient jako obiekt marketingu. „Marketing", nr 2, s. 7-14.
12. Witczak I. (2003), Zarządzanie lojalnością klienta. „Marketing", nr 2, s. 15-23.

Феномен лояльності користувачів бібліотек у контексті конкуренції на ринку інформаційних послуг

До ХХ століття бібліотеки зосереджувалися лише на зберіганні книг і обслуговуванні читачів. Згодом, бібліотеки почали відчувати конкуренцію з боку сучасних медіа, що спонукало здійснювати дослідження з метою виявлення потреб користувачів. Тому проблема лояльності користувачів бібліотек — відносно нова і малодосліджена, та поєднує дослідження як з бібліотекознавства, так і з маркетингу.

Розуміння ролі клієнта в умовах конкуренції змінилося наприкінці ХХ століття, коли важливим стало не лише здобуття нового клієнта, а й утримання та обслуговування наявного. Сучасні маркетингові дослідження приділяють набагато більше

уваги користувачеві послуг. Цей новий підхід названо ―персональним маркетингом". Від традиційного маркетингу він відрізняється тим, що розглядає не надання послуг, а створення позитивного образу компанії (у нашому випадку — бібліотеки) та налагодження добрих взаємин із клієнтом.

Лояльність клієнтів визначається готовністю отримувати конкретні послуги чи продукти щоразу в того самого постачальника. Лояльність може бути викликана звичкою клієнта, гарним обслуговуванням, або впевненістю в хорошій якості продукту.

Зараз вимоги до кількості та якості послуг у бібліотеках постійно зростають, тому важко визначити конкретні потреби сучасних читачів. Користувач бібліотеки прагне не лише отримати бажану інформацію, а й отримати консультацію та впевнитися, що працівники готові йому в цьому допомогти. Це закладе основи лояльності й може спонукати читача постійно користуватися послугами цієї бібліотеки. Водночас, зростання рівня і різноманіття послуг у бібліотеках та інших організаціях, що надають інформаційні послуги, підвищує рівень очікування відвідувачів конкретної бібліотеки. Ці процеси ускладнюють бібліотекам можливість отримати лояльних читачів.

Маркетингові дослідження комерційних компаній показали, що більшість продуктів і послуг купує невелика група клієнтів, а збільшення цієї групи є запорукою успіху компанії. Дослідження, проведені 2010 року в трьох академічних бібліотеках, підтвердили закономірність цього припущення також і щодо бібліотек. Більшість читачів відвідувала бібліотеки тільки до трьох разів, водночас до 15% читачів є активними відвідувачами, що користувалися послугами бібліотек понад 10 разів, і саме на цю групу припадає більшість відвідин і використаних книг, тобто саме ця група визначає ефективність роботи бібліотек.

Окрім числових показників, бібліотеки повинні аналізувати часові зміни потреб, очікувань, ставлення та поведінки читачів. Звичайні маркетингові дослідження мають бути доповнені інформацією, що розповідає, якими послугами користуються постійні користувачі та які причини їхньої лояльності.

Багато сучасних комерційних організацій з метою збереження клієнтів на ринку запускають так звані ―програми лояльності". Завдяки цьому постійні клієнти мають додаткові можливості та знижки під час придбання (отримання) товарів і послуг.

Бібліотеки також намагаються заохочувати читачів з допомогою ―програм лояльності", хоча й не використовують саме цей термін. Постійні читачі можуть розраховувати на найактуальнішу інформацію та доступ до найсвіжішої літератури, бути першими в черзі за популярними чи рідкісними книжками, позичати більшу кількість літератури, отримувати спеціальні аксесуари (наприклад, сумки з логотипом бібліотеки), повідомлення на електронну пошту про нові надходження й акції, привітання зі святами, новини бібліотеки і т.п.

Підсумовуючи думки щодо проблеми лояльності користувачів бібліотек, можна зробити висновок, що в умовах зростаючої конкуренції найціннішим маркетинговим навиком сучасних бібліотекарів стало вміння налагоджувати тісніший зв'язок із читачем, щоб знати його потреби та побажання, і, як наслідок, виконувати їх.

Лояльність читачів є наслідком високої якості послуг і вдалих маркетингових ходів. Оскільки на лояльність впливає багато факторів, як залежних від бібліотеки (спектр послуг, якість послуг і т.д.), так і незалежних від неї (бібліотеки-конкуренти), бібліотекарі повинні активно працювати, щоб покращити її позиції, особливо у тих сферах, на які працівники бібліотеки мають безпосередній вплив.

Переклад П. Сохана