

Customers Loyalty: An Appreciation and Satisfaction of Library and Information Services

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Abstract:

This study is about the investigation of customer's reactions, expectations and service requirements. It revealed many areas like collection, facilities and professional services where the customers of the library have higher expectations. This is very positive sign and also loyalty indication that the customers suggest the areas where library needs improvement. The customers have appreciated regular addition of books, cooperative nature of the staff, discipline and cleanliness. The services like new display, proper shelving resulting in easy location of books on stacks, help for locating documents etc. is defiantly which feel the customers to visit and use services more frequently.

Keywords: Customers Loyalty, Information Services, Customer Satisfaction

Introduction:

Today libraries are functioning in an economic environment as service-providing institution with focus on collection of documents for a specific purpose. Information became crucial input for any decision-making in the economic environment. This factor initiated the thinking among the Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals like other professionals to market the information in the form of a product. In this way, information became the commodity and all the users of information became customer including the library users. In the globalization process customer is one of the term established in the LIS profession replacing the terms like users, readers, visitors etc. The word customer is not only restricted to the profit sector but also in the non-profit sector

as well. Mostly, the customer is the ultimate beneficiary of the product or services. The libraries customers are well defined by Herson [1] are 'individuals who want some assistance or some materials that library might or might not hold'. In the age of competition attracting the new customers and retaining the present one is essential. The today customers have several choices for services and or products. It has become crucial task to satisfy the customer and keep them happy all the time. In the competitive age the number of happy customers is the indication of success of the organization.

Library users as 'Customers'

Every user who visits the library for seeking the information or a document is the customer for that library. The library services incur various costs and are compensated either by user who pays the fees directly or funded by the parent organization or both the ways. In this context, the library users fall under the category as a customer whether it a public, academic or special library.

Customer Satisfaction as Pre-requisite for Loyalty

In any business endeavor, adding new customers and retaining the existing one is important for survival in the market. It may be easy to get new customers but to retain them requires well-defined standards of products and services, to adhere them strictly. To identify and serve the loyal customers is an important part of the any successful business. The loyal customers are those who are using the products and services for considerable long period. It is very obvious that when the varieties of products and services are available in the market, the customer would avail those products and services, which meets expectations and requirements in best possible way. The more and more numbers of loyal customers indicate the consistency in qualitative service.

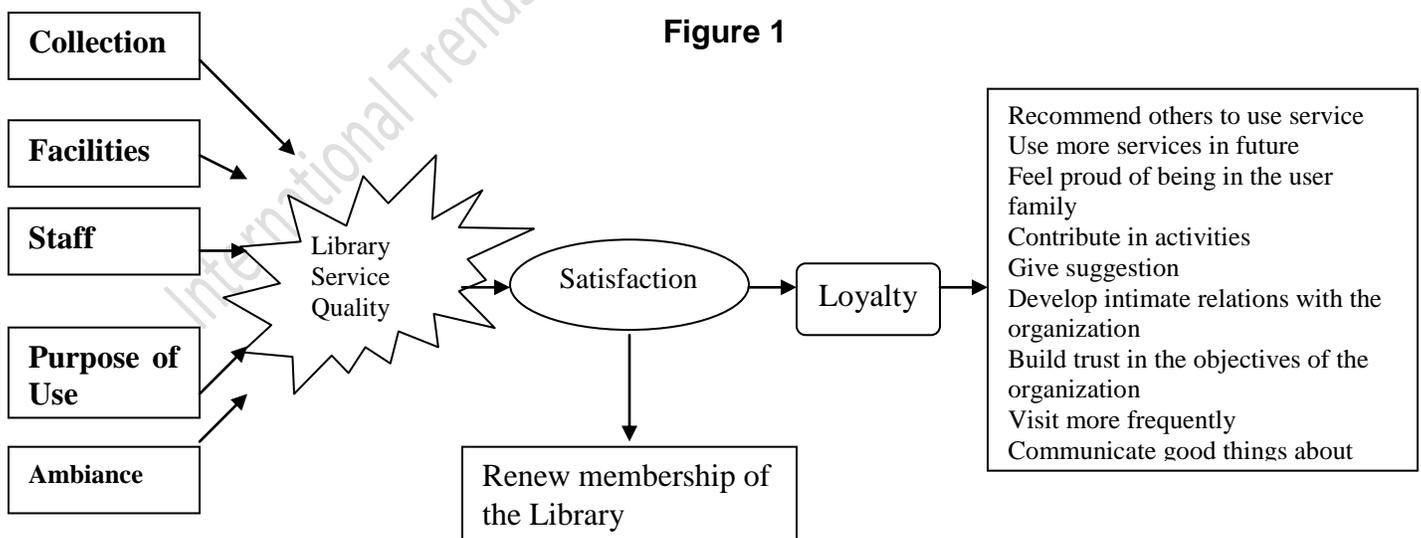
In a situation that when the customers are paying annual fees of the library and utilizing library services regularly then certainly they are satisfied with the services offered. Such satisfied and 'repeat customers [2], specially the more frequent ones, tend to be loyal'

The customer who is satisfied with the specific service or product generally tends to share experiences with others. The library users also discuss about the collection, service environment and facilities among their colleagues or friends and such discussions, suggestions and recommendations increases the membership of library.

The satisfied customers most of the time participates in the activities of the institute such as book club, users' meet, lectures organized by the library etc.

Research Model

It is proposed that the customers who subscribe the library services more frequently and repeatedly by paying annual fees are likely to be loyal customers of a library. The loyalty is outcome of satisfaction of the service quality delivered by the library. The customers judge service quality by up-to-date collections, relevance for the purpose, the positive attitude and service orientation of the staff, adequate facilities, general atmosphere and ambiance of the library. These are the general attributes [3] on which the customer decides the service quality, which are equally applicable to the service quality of any library [4] The purpose of 'use of the library' plays central role in the service quality, and which consequently results in satisfaction of the services.



The Attributes for Loyalty:

Collection is the documents available in the library. The nature of the collection depends on the organization and its activities. The customer is satisfied when the documents required are procured and made available to him.

Facilities are the amenities, which help the customer to use the library more efficiently and effectively. The facilities like comfortable and adequate seating arrangement, Internet connectivity or Wi-Fi, Photo copier, OPAC terminals etc.

Staff members who deliver the services play vital role for building positive impression about the library services. They are the one who represent the organization. The interaction between the staff and the customer is the point where impression about the organization is created. These 'Moments of Truth [5] are important for service quality because of its subjectivity.

Purpose of use means the reason for which the customer visits the library. The idea to visit the library could be recreation, learning, up gradation of knowledge, personal development, study or any other reason. The level of satisfaction is largely depends on the purpose of visit of the customers.

Ambiance is the physical atmosphere, which support the learning and study. This includes the cleanliness, functional furniture, neatness, location of various sections and colour scheme used etc.

These are the main attributes on which customers judge the service quality of the library. The customers' fulfilment of expectations of service results in his satisfaction. The satisfied customers are most likely to become repeat customers. These repeat customers tend to become loyal as their expectations of service are fulfilled. Hernon and Altman [6] defines the term Loyal as 'the customers return repeatedly; they recommend the library to their friends and colleagues, and may be more forgiving when the system makes a mistake'.

The above discussions will help us to formulate the research hypothesis.

Hypothesis

There are two hypotheses formulated as follows:

1. Repurchase of services indicate satisfaction about the service quality.
2. The satisfaction has significant relation with loyalty reflected through recommending others to purchase the services and using more services in future.

YASHADA Library

YASHADA is an acronym for the Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration, an apex training institute for the Government of Maharashtra situated at Raj Bahavan Complex Pune. The mandate for the library is to provide documentary and information support to the faculty, staff and trainee participants engaged in various activities related to the training programmes. The library has collection of 45000 + volumes on the subjects like Public Administration, Women and Child Development, Economics, Environment, Management etc. The library also subscribes to 125 journals on various related subjects.

Apart from the faculty, staff and trainee the library also offer guest membership to the selected government officers and senior executives in and around Pune. These are the officers who contribute to the institutional activities by being trainers, guest lecturers, writing articles, developing training modules etc. The library membership for such persons is given on the payment of annual fees and the deposits.

Methodology

Step 1: Tool Development

To test the above mentioned hypothesis a special tool was developed. The attributes and the statements (Table 1) are given below:

Table 1

Measurement variables and statements

No	Attribute	Statement
I	Collection	1. General evaluation of the range of the collection of the documents in the library.
		2. The printed collection in the library meets my requirement.
		3. The range of books within my interest is adequate.
		4. The range of journals within my interest is adequate.
II	Facilities	5. The book I want is available in the library
		6. It is easy to locate books on the shelf.
		7. It is easy to renew books if required for more periods.
		8. General evaluation of the facilities (seating area, atmosphere, study room, OPAC, Internet) etc. provided by the library as a whole.
III	Staff	9. Overall evaluation of staff competence.
		10. The YASHADA library staff provides good and professional services.
IV	Purpose of use	11. I use the library for the purpose of (You may select one or more options)
V	Satisfaction	12. Considering all your experience of YASHADA library, how satisfied are you in general?
		13. To what degree do you consider that YASHADA library fulfils your expectations?
		14. Imagine a library, which is perfect in all aspects. How close to this ideal do you consider YASHADA library to be?
VI	Loyalty	15. Will you continue be using library services in future also?
		16. Would recommend your friend to become a member of YASHADA library?
		17. Please indicate three important things you LIKE THE MOST in YASHADA library.
		18. Please indicate three things you DO NOT LIKE in YASHADA library.
		19. How frequent you visit our library?
		20. Any other suggestion for improvement or facility you would like to have in YASHADA library?

Step 2: Identification of Target Group

The analysis of circulation records gave useful information about the members of the library. Apart from the in-house faculty and the course participants YASHADA library gives paid membership to the State Government officers and visiting faculty members. This facilitates them for continuing education and library support for the training input contributing to the main activity of the academy. Such category of customers is named as Guest Members in library records. The persons who are active library members for more than two years from the beginning are selected as target group for the present study. The cut off date for selecting the respondents was 31st March 2013. There were 662 total members registered as Guest Members on 31/3/13 and out of which 72 (10.87%) members (Table 2) were active till 31/3/2012. Thus the members selected as respondents for the study had repurchased the services minimum two times. Out of these 72 active members there are 6 (8.33%) members who have continued their membership for more than 10 years. Similarly, in all there are 21 (29 %) persons having membership continued for more than 5 years.

Table 2

YEARWISE DISTRIBUTION OF GUEST MEMBERSHIP (As on 31/3/2013)

Sr No	Year	Number of Library Membership given during the years	Number of Active (Loyal) Members as on 31 March 2008	Loyalty in terms of the years
1	2008-2009	34	2 (5.88 %)	18
3	2009-2010	115	2 (1.73 %)	13
7	2010-2011	226	12 (5.30 %)	8
12	2011-2012	218	36 (16.51 %)	3
	2012-2013	69	20 (28.98 %)	2
		662	72 (10.87 %)	

Step 3: Administration of Questionnaire

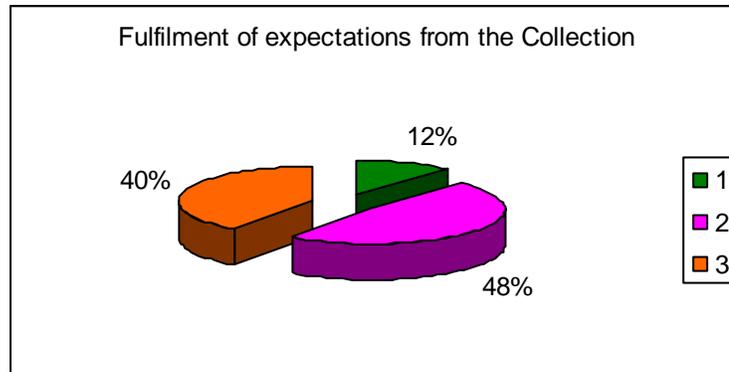
A questionnaire was constructed based on the attributes (Table 1). It was sent to those 72 loyal members (Table 2) by post with self-addressed and stamped envelop for their response. Out of the 72 questionnaires mailed response from 42 (58.33 %) was received and the data from these responses were tabulated, correlated and analyzed for study purpose. Out of these 42 respondents 7 (16.66 %) are female and 35 (83.33%) were male respondents.

Discussion

Collection

The core function of any library is to acquire printed books and other materials and make it available on demand. The customers certainly feel that library must know their needs and accordingly procure the documents as required by them. The general evaluation by the customers of library about the range of collection reveals that most of the customers (67 %) found the collection of the document very good and excellent. However, 29% of users found the collection good and only 5% of customers found it average. The customers of YASHADA library include very high profiles administrative officers who have very high levels of expectations to that of limited expectations. The customers with high expectations would certainly feel that there is scope for improvement in the general collection.

Generally, when the library fulfills customers' expectations they are likely to be satisfied. It has been asked to know about the fulfillment of expectations from the library collections then the 48% of users believe that the collection meets their requirements as expected. While the other 40% of users believe it meets their requirements more than expected, whereas remaining 12 % of customers believe that it meets their requirement just as expected.

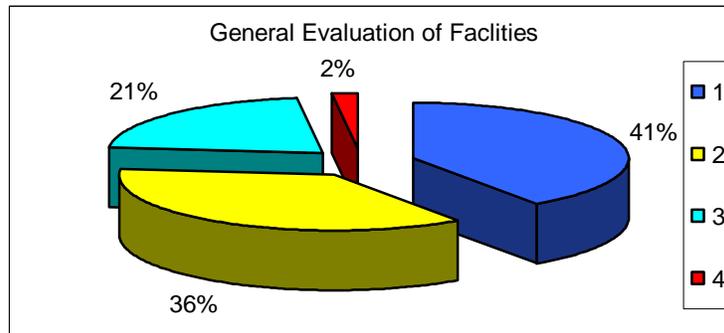


The collection of books and journals acquired by the library is within the interest area of the customers as agreed by the 95% of users. However only 5% users do not agree and suggested some additions.

Facilities

In order to understand the views of users about the facilities provided by the library, some questions were asked about availability of books, proper shelving, and renewal of books through telephone etc. Regarding the availability of books in the library, the 69% of users are of the opinion that the books of their interest are mostly available in the library. The 26% of users are of the opinion that the books they want are sometimes available in the library and 5% of users said that the book they want are always available in the library. The availability of books on the shelf is normally indicates the proper shelving after they are returned or added to the library. The 81% of respondents found that shelving is properly done in time, whereas the remaining 19% are of opinion that it is some time done. Majority of the guest members are staying in different suburban areas, where they found it difficult to return books in stipulated time. They prefer to renew their books through telephone facility made available by the library. Majority of the respondents (74%) find it easy to renew the books through telephone, whereas 24% of respondents feel it as most easy to renew the books through telephone. The remaining 2% respondents sometimes find it easy to renew books on telephone.

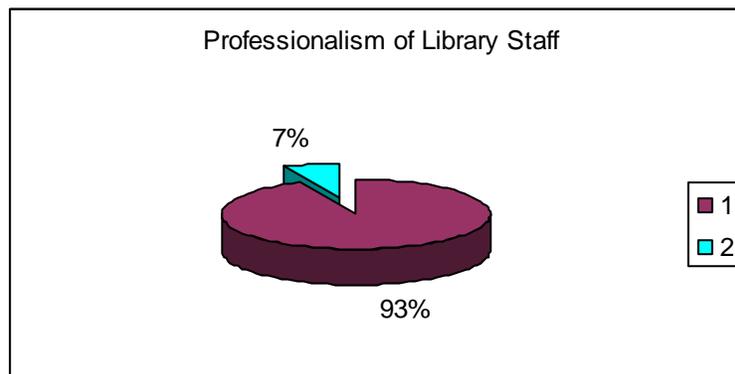
The general evaluation of the facilities like seating arrangements, environments, study rooms, OPAC, Internet etc. provided by the library are found very good by the 40% of respondents, whereas 36% of respondents are of opinion as excellent. The remaining 21% and 2% respondents feel as good and average respectively.



Staff

The competency of staff is generally judged by knowledge about their subject and activities performed in the organization and library. It has found that 76% of respondents consider competency of staff as a very good, the 19% consider it as good and remaining 5% respondents rated staff as an average.

It has been observed that the 93% of respondents are of opinion that the library staff provides good library services in a professional way the remaining 7% of respondents feel that they do not provide library services in a professional manner.



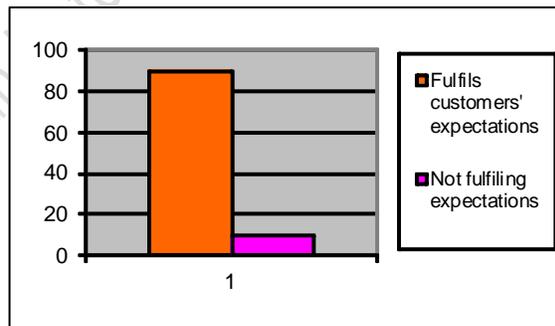
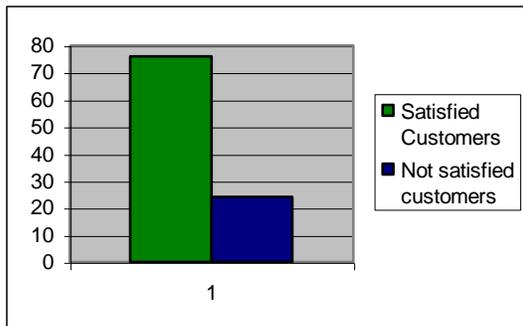
Purpose of use

The customers visit the library for different purposes. It has been found that 81% of respondents visit the library for more than one purpose. Most of the respondents (69 %) use the library for learning, knowledge and personal development. The remaining 31% respondents are of opinion that they use it for recreation purpose.

Satisfaction

The finding reveals that 76% of respondents expressed satisfaction about the library in general and 24% of respondents feel that they are completely satisfied. It is very obvious that the satisfaction came through fulfillment of expectations. In all 90% of respondents considered that the library fulfils their expectations as desired by them whereas 10% respondents feel that it is just at satisfactory level.

Perceptions



Loyalty

Loyalty of user is considered to be long-established when he renews (repurchase) and frequently uses the services of the library. In response to the question about more use of the library services in future, almost all (100%) the respondents opined that they would be using library services in future too, which indicates their loyalty towards library services.

If the user/customer is happy about the library services he or she would share his or her experience to others and motivate them to use the services. It has been found that almost all (100%) the respondents have feelings to recommend their friends to become member of the library to avail library services.

Things Customers like the Most

The users/customers of the YASHADA library are satisfied with the collection of books and variety of journals, magazines available in the library. The purchases of latest books especially in Marathi fiction and non-fiction, academic books are liked by the users/customers. In addition to it, users/customers expressed their opinion about most liked things as display of new books, open access, purchases of books suggested by the users/customer, helpful reception and availability of on line catalogue.

The customers have shown their admiration of the service provided by the staff. The customers appreciate the cooperation, discipline, prompt service provided by the library staff.

The quiet atmosphere, spacious ambiance, cleanliness, silence, comfortable seating arrangement, reading facility, convenient timings, user friendly system is also among the most liked things by the customers.

Things Customers Do Not Like

The customers have suggested that there should be proper lighting arrangement, provision for seating and ventilation in the stack. They have suggested making provision of air conditioning so as to avoid dusting problem. There are some complaints about use of mobiles, distance for parking and toilets etc by the customers. The customers have suggested that Internet facility should be properly maintained and net connectivity should be on during the service hours.

Conclusion

The loyal customers are like agents who propagate library services and facilities. They are satisfied with the library services and hence they renew the library services on payment. In this way they are also the source of income for the organization. The membership of YASHADA library has shown constant increase over the past years. The significant retention of membership is observed only after the year 2000. The reason may be that library became more inclined towards the customers and taking care about their needs. From the library

records it is also observed that additions of books to library were more systematic and regular during this period. Consequently, Library became more active and participants were encouraged to take membership. The initiative towards users/customer orientation is also helped to retain membership of the library. This study is a unique in the sense that the most of users/customers are IAS officers' Government Officers and not belonging to the parent organization. It revealed many areas like collection, facilities and professional services where the customers of the library have higher expectations. The customers have appreciated regular additions of books, cooperative nature of the staff, discipline and cleanliness.

General satisfaction results in to becoming regular user of the library services which help to build loyalty among the users/customers. This loyalty came through high reputation of the Academy and personal touch given by the organization to its services, which includes library as support service for the training.

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