
MARKETING STRATEGY FOR A PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Abstract: The aim is to develop a marketing strategy for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse. The funds for the adequate development and survival of the researched library are generally insufficient. State and municipal institutions and structures, as key financial and other partners, do not have sustainable policies and a long-term vision for the development of the library. This necessitates diversifying its funding sources through a marketing strategy. Accordingly, markets are segmented, current and prospective target markets are determined, and approaches for positioning Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse are outlined. Marketing tools "8P" (Product, Place, Promotion, Price, Processes, Physical Environment and Evidence, People, Productivity and Quality) and "4C" (Customer, Convenience, Communication, Cost) have been developed to ensure better positioning of the library and the implementation of the strategy.

Key words: business model, segmentation, positioning, targeting, marketing tools.

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Introduction

The relevance of the issue of marketing strategies for Bulgarian public libraries stems from their important role in the modern information society. Marketing strategies play a crucial role in researching, creating, obtaining, and preserving value and customers (Lyubenov, 2023). They are vital for the survival, sustainable development, and prosperity of the public library sector in Bulgaria. This sector is influenced by global threats and opportunities,

adapting to which necessitates the development of marketing strategies for survival and achieving competitiveness.

The COVID-19 pandemic stagnated many sectors and accelerated digitalization in the global economy. It demonstrated that a high degree of digitalization is necessary for modern libraries to survive in the new market realities. Overcoming the global challenges of the contemporary information society requires nonprofit organizations, including public libraries, to develop marketing strategies to adapt to market changes. The users of public libraries are changing, which necessitates marketing strategies to adapt to their new needs and demands.

Research on marketing strategies for public libraries in Bulgaria is scarce, despite their importance for the accelerated and sustainable development of the Bulgarian information society. Thus, shedding light on these strategies will enhance the development of various sectors. The goal is to formulate a marketing strategy for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov in Ruse. This will be achieved through 1) analysis of the business model; 2) segmentation, targeting, and positioning; 3) development of marketing tools. The study is structured into these three parts and includes a comprehensive combination of analysis, synthesis, comparison, and mathematical and graphical methods.

The total revenue of the 27 regional libraries in 2022 was 29 431 thousand BGN, with the state providing for nearly 27 613 thousand BGN for their funding (NSI, 2023). The revenues of the regional libraries account for about 63% of the funding for other libraries – national, community, city libraries, those in higher education institutions, and specialized libraries. As a result of the generated revenue, the regional libraries incurred expenses of 27 270 thousand BGN, of which 17 860 thousand BGN was for salaries and insurance, including 13 044 thousand BGN for librarians, and other expenses amounting to 9 360 thousand BGN.

Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov in Ruse is housed in a building that is a cultural monument and holds the richest public collection of over 4 500 original ex-libris prints. Built in 1916 according to a design by the Paris-educated architect Nikola Lazarov, this magnificent architectural masterpiece was home to Bulgaria's first chamber of commerce and industry, founded in Ruse in 1890. In 2007, the building was awarded the "European Heritage" label. Preserving and enhancing this significant historical and cultural heritage requires marketing strategies to diversify its funding sources and promote its development.

Business model

A business model includes (Stanimirov, 2022): customers; unique value proposition (a combination of products and/or services offered to customers);

distribution channels to reach customers; interaction and communication with customers; revenue streams; key resources; key activities for operation; key partners; and cost structure.

Table 1 shows a modest growth and a degree of stability in the number of users and borrowings over the past nine years. These figures naturally declined during the COVID-19 pandemic but have since rebounded. Despite the national trend where the average number of borrowings has been slowly decreasing annually across all types of libraries (NSI, 2023), the library under study has bucked this trend and even experienced some growth.

Table 1.

***Visitors, Users, and Average Number of Borrowings in Thousands
(Regional Library "Lyuben Karavelov" – Ruse, 2024)***

| Years | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|------|
| Visitors | 113 | 125 | 136.5 | 92.6 | 82 | 45.6 | 50.6 | 68.7 | 89.3 |
| Users | 7.1 | 8 | 8.5 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 4.9 | 6 | 8.3 | 9.3 |
| Borrowings | 168.2 | 184.8 | 195.5 | 175.9 | 153.1 | 95.3 | 108 | 128.8 | 188 |

Users still perceive the library primarily as a place for reading and borrowing books. In a broader sense, it is seen as a welcoming space for information and communication for everyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or religion. Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse needs to support lifelong learning while providing an environment for active social interaction within local communities. A wide range of library, cultural, and other services related to technology are necessary, including community support services – opportunities for entertainment and socialization. The library must continuously develop new and increasingly interactive services.

The library is situated in the Dondoukov-Korsakov building in the center of Ruse. It does not have divisions or an extensive network of branches. Despite having a digitalisation strategy (www.libruse.bg, 06.04.2024), the digitalisation of library and other collections with public access is very limited, resulting in a lack of online distribution channels. Many of the scanned documents are not visible in the library's catalog due to effective copyrights and are only accessible through an offline staff interface.

The perception of poor digitalisation – about 0.4% – is due to the absence of an up-to-date national database. So far, some of the library's collections have been digitized through the North+ project (<https://bgseverplus.eu>, 06.04.2024) and the "The Written Treasures of the Lower Danube" project (www.litdanube.eu, 06.04.2024). Additionally, the library has provided over

3,000 documents that have been digitized as part of the Municipality of Ruse's project (<https://digiruse.eu>, 06.04.2024). Digitization is currently ongoing, and according to the library, the number of digital copies available in its electronic catalog as of 2024 is 6,233.

The library communicates with users via email, phone, and social networks. It has a website and a live chat for instant messaging. Every review left by users on Google Business Profile is analyzed and responded to. However, the library urgently needs promotion because the good examples, such as the availability of printers – including 3D printers, scanners, computers, and many other technological, cultural, and entertainment services – do not reach the public and practically do not lead to better results for the institution.

Regionally, the library needs communication activities in the PR sphere, both offline and online, while nationally, the Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BLIA) should take on this role. The latter must represent all industry players at the national level. It should promote the sector to the public and advocate for its interests before the Ministry of Culture, striving to improve the environment and financial support for the sector.

The library should increase its revenues through: 1) attracting more funds from the state and municipal budgets; 2) diversifying its revenue sources. Although the amount of state funding increases almost every year (Table 2), the effect of this increase is minimal, as other key economic indicators such as the minimum wage, insurance contributions, inflation, etc., rise faster, worsening its financial position. The funding is insufficient, limiting the library's development, survival, and prosperity.

The main part of the revenue for 2023 is of the following structure (www.libruse.bg, 03.04.2024): budget subsidy – 77%; own activities – 3,2 %; other – 19,8%. The budget subsidy constitutes 77% of the revenue structure, while own activities and other revenue make up 23%. The revenue structure indicates that the largest portion comes from budget subsidies and so-called other revenue, mainly project financing. Revenues from own activities are 3.2%, indicating a strong financial dependence on the Ministry of Culture. There is a significant need to substantially increase revenues from own activities, projects, and other sources to achieve financial independence and ensure autonomous and dynamic development in today's turbulent world.

The BLIA should proactively advocate to the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance for increased funding for the cultural sector using objective arguments. It is necessary to address how the library network's operations can be reorganized with the same limited resources to provide higher-quality services to its users. Optimizing the library network will free up resources that are not currently used for library activities.

Table 2.

Dynamics of Funding in Thousands of BGN (Regional Library “Lyuben Karellov” – Ruse, 2024

| Years | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| State | 588.6 | 766.1 | 758.3 | 862.1 | 949.1 | 1045 | 1216.4 | 1372 | 1597.3 |
| Own | 55.52 | 39.60 | 41.603 | 39.54 | 45.266 | 37.190 | 40.494 | 13.785 | 68.246 |
| Other | 43.03 | 21.8 | 13.38 | 22.82 | 70.62 | 56.92 | 71.78 | 851.76 | 411.05 |

The library's basic resources include a collection of over 600,000 units and a building area of about 6,000 square meters. The staff consists of qualified librarians, information technology specialists, and individuals with specific skills such as design, prepress, bookbinding, and pedagogical services. There is an automated library system, including an electronic catalog, which serves as a powerful marketing tool offering opportunities for communication with users and presenting the collection's content with digital copies of documents, incl. available online.

The key activities require a combination of specialist competencies to create library and other services, as well as to manage communication and distribution channels within the value chain. While universities primarily offer educational services and conduct scientific research, the educational services provided by the library are aimed at individuals outside the formal education sector—retirees, children, and adolescents during vacations and their free time. Other key activities include specialized information services (bibliographic and factographic), bookbinding, and the increasingly promising digitized library services.

Key partners include state and municipal institutions and structures, educational institutions (such as secondary schools and universities, etc.), non-governmental organizations, and business enterprises. These partners are crucial not only for the organization's financial health, overseen by the Ministry of Culture, but also for expanding the reach of its services to more users.

National programs and laws (Public Libraries Act, Community Cultural Centres Act) are inconsistent and do not provide a clear vision for the long-term development of public libraries or their role in fostering local communities. These laws do not align with the increasing importance of libraries on a European and global scale as centers of learning, culture, communication, and integration.

The library is included in the municipal development plan, but this plan primarily focuses on its immediate operations rather than its long-term sustainable development. There is no municipal funding or municipal committee dedicated to the development of library-information services, despite normative

requirements. A policy is needed to ensure that the library remains functional and valuable to the community at the local level, making it a priority and prestige for the municipality.

The library collaborates with various universities, which participate in its annual conference. It accepts interns and trainees from universities and collaborates with them in the field of high technologies. It exchanges ideas and best practices in library and information sciences and other fields, with university researchers acting as experts in the implementation of the library's projects. It also holds meetings to solve practical problems. The library receives financial support from the Research Fund, amounting to 10,000 BGN for 2024.

The library also partners with non-governmental organizations to implement projects (www.libruse.bg, 06.04.2024). It works mainly with NGO partners through the Erasmus program, having submitted three project proposals under Erasmus in 2024 alone, focusing on activities specific to the library, such as bibliotherapy. The library regularly participates in projects with the Global Libraries Foundation (<https://glbulgaria.bg>, 07.04.2024), aimed at enhancing librarians' skills, acquiring new knowledge, and developing sustainable library services.

The main expenses for 2023 are structured as follows (www.libruse.bg, 03.04.2024): salaries and wages—66%, including librarians—35.4%; books, periodicals, and other library documents—3%; other expenses—31%. The main specialists, library workers, do not receive good remuneration. The smallest portion of the expenses is allocated for books and other library documents, i.e., for updating the library collection, which is a key resource for the institution. The primary issue is that funds for basic activities are insufficient, which significantly limits the opportunities for dynamic and adequate development and survival in today's uncertain world.

Segmentation, targeting and positioning

Macrosegmentation is the first step in segmenting the markets of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov - Ruse, as it aims to identify the "product markets" (Lyubenov, 2023). Following this, microsegmentation is used to identify the markets within the defined macrosegments. Various variables will be used as criteria for segmentation according to the specifics of the markets. Market segmentation serves as the basis for defining the library's target markets.

Currently, lending books to the clients of the library constitutes over 80% of its products. The remaining products and services (bibliographic references, factographic information, on-demand scanning; training in financial, computer, media, and other literacy; cultural and event services such as book presentations,

meetings with creators, film screenings, performances, concerts, exhibitions, conferences; creation of objects using a 3D printer; publishing activities, scanning, printing, photocopying; recreational services such as guided tours of the library, etc.) have a niche character. The library's products and services form its product markets (Figure 1), i.e., the macro level.

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Library services (main – book lending) | Bibliographic references |
| | Factographic information |
| | On-demand scanning |
| Educational services (main – literacy training) | Financial literacy |
| | Media literacy |
| | Computer literacy |
| Cultural and event services (main – presentation of books and authors) | Film screening |
| | Performances and concerts |
| | Exhibitions |
| Publishing activities (main – copying and printing) | 3D printing |
| | Scanning |
| | Book publishing |
| Conferences – in collaboration with schools, universities and other institutions | |
| Recreational services – guided tours of the library | |

Figure 1. Product markets of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov - Ruse

Based on the structure of the users of its main service (book lending) for 2023, with a total of 9,272 registered readers, we can perform microsegmentation. According to the data in Table 3, segments are divided by age (1–13; 14–18; 19–28; over 28 years) and gender (male and female). Children make up over 50% of the readers, followed by those aged over 28 years at 34%. Women have a slight majority as users, with an 8% higher participation rate compared to men.

Based on the education criterion (including school education) of the users, several segments have been formed as shown in Table 4. The largest group comprises children and students up to the 4th grade—over 38%, and students from the 5th to 7th grade—over 12%, totaling 52.2%. Following them, university graduates constitute 22.3%, those with secondary education 11.2%, and the rest have single-digit percentage values.

Table 3.

Structure of users borrowing books by age and gender, (Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, 2024)

| Age (in years) | Users | % |
|-------------------|-------|------|
| 1 – 13 (children) | 4658 | 50,2 |
| 14 – 18 | 876 | 9,4 |
| 19 – 28 | 591 | 6,4 |
| Over 28 | 3147 | 33,9 |
| Total | 9272 | 100 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 3894 | 42,0 |
| Female | 5378 | 58,0 |
| Total | 9272 | 100 |

Table 4.

Structure of users borrowing books by education level, (Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, 2024)

| Education level, incl. school | Users | % |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|
| Primary | 27 | 0,3 |
| Secondary | 1037 | 11,2 |
| Higher education | 2068 | 22,3 |
| Children and students up to 4th grade | 3531 | 38,1 |
| Students from 5th to 7th grade | 1127 | 12,2 |
| Students from 7th to 12th grade | 832 | 9 |
| Other | 650 | 7 |
| Total | 9272 | 100 |

Regarding the profession criterion (Table 5), there is no profession that dominates the structure of the book lending library service. The library information system includes retirees in this group, who mainly read for entertainment after retirement, and includes children and students (59.2%), who, when categorized in bibliometrics, are recorded as students up to the 4th grade, students up to the 7th grade, and students from the 8th to 12th grade.

Table 5.
Structure of users borrowing books by profession, (Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, 2024)

| Profession | Users | % |
|---|-------|------|
| Workers | 311 | 3,4 |
| Agricultural workers | 42 | 0,5 |
| Engineering and technical specialists | 415 | 4,5 |
| Medical specialists | 90 | 1,0 |
| Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Geography, Biology | 109 | 1,2 |
| Teachers (Preschool, Primary, Secondary) | 179 | 1,9 |
| Philosophy, Sociology, History, Pedagogy, Philology, Economics, Law | 548 | 5,9 |
| Students | 403 | 4,3 |
| Writers, Journalists, Artists, Musicians | 238 | 2,6 |
| Retirees | 741 | 8,0 |
| Children and students | 5490 | 59,2 |
| Total | 9272 | 100 |

By economic status the main group borrowing books from the library consists of children, pupils, and students – 64%. They are followed by the unemployed (16%), the employed (12%), and retirees (8%). Although retirees are generally considered to make up a significant portion of public library users in Bulgaria, at Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, they constitute the smallest share.

Users borrowing books by economic status, (Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, 2024)

| Economic status | Users | % |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| Workers | 1117 | 12,0 |
| Retirees | 741 | 8,0 |
| Unemployed | 1521 | 16,0 |
| Children, pupils and students | 5893 | 64,0 |
| Total | 9272 | 100 |

The library must plan for appropriate software and hardware that will enable the implementation of programs for cultural heritage digitization, the development of integrated library systems, and networks. This will facilitate the

cooperative use of resources, labour optimization, effective library services, remote access to resources, and the presentation of the culture of the region to the world.

Digitalisation should be based on the application of standardized principles that align with contemporary requirements and best practices in the field of library document digitization. The digitalisation process for the library is a complex set of interconnected activities, including the selection of archival documents for digitization, the creation of digital images and corresponding metadata, quality control, long-term storage and preservation, and ensuring access and use of the digital products.

Objects for digitization include library documents housed in the various departments of the Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse. These comprise books, periodicals, cartographic materials, sheet music, graphic prints, phonograph records, microfilms, microfiches, official publications, reference materials, audio cassettes, and paintings. Additionally, archival documents from cultural centers and schools in Ruse and the region, for which the library serves as a methodological center according to the Public Libraries Act, can be subject to digitization.

The activities of selection, scanning, processing, quality control, corrections, storage, preservation, usage, and dissemination of digital images should be regulated by specific internal documents. Priority documents for inclusion in the Digital Library can be: unique originals; rare, valuable, and unique editions; frequently used documents by readers; and items essential for the preservation of literary and cultural heritage.

Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, recognizing not only the global development trends but also the developments in library products and services, should actively pursue digitalization activities. This will require identifying the key segments of its digital products and services – Fig. 2.

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Digitalised and online library services | Archival documents |
| | Organisation documents |
| | Library documents |
| Online educational services | Library |
| | Training |
| | Consultations |
| Online and hybrid conferences | |

Figure 2. Prospective Digitized and Online Services of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse

The library should diversify its products and services beyond the traditional library offerings by including prospective services. This will enable it to reach new market segments (Figure 3) such as providing access to electronic and other databases, automating the search for books and periodicals, using smart devices and e-readers, and virtual reality. Community services offered can include reading for people with special needs, courses for parents, children, and students, job search assistance, and adult education in languages, computer skills, and more. Additionally, consulting on bill payments, taxes, and other matters can be offered.

Libraries contribute to the achievement of the UN's sustainable development goals by: 1) increasing the revenues of small enterprises; 2) providing for lifelong learning opportunities; 3) ensuring productive employment and decent working conditions.

They provide equal access to diverse information for making informed decisions by individuals, organizations, and others, regardless of their financial status.

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Technological services | Databases |
| | Smart devices |
| | Virtual reality |
| Community services | Courses |
| | Trainings |
| | Consultations |

Figure 3. Prospective Services for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse

Library services, including those offered by Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, contribute to the improvement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by:

- Promoting universal literacy, including media and information literacy as well as digital literacy.
- Overcoming barriers to universal access to information and helping government, civil society, and business institutions better understand local information needs.
- Providing a network for the dissemination of government programs and services.
- Strengthening the movement for digital inclusion through public access to ICT, and the availability of information specialists to help people develop new skills for navigating in the digital space.

- Supporting the research community.
- Preserving and providing access to the world's cultural heritage.

In line with the sustainable development goals (www.nsi.bg, 22.04.2024), public libraries in Bulgaria have the following basic objectives: promoting reading and access to information; supporting self-education, formal and informal education; ensuring access to cultural heritage; digitizing library products and providing access to them for a wide range of users. These goals are also relevant for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, but based on segmentation, its most prospective target markets are community services, digitized services, and technological services.

After segmenting and determining the target markets of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, the next step is positioning. The library faces strong national and global competitive pressure from all organizations offering similar products and services. This gives its positioning a strategic character and requires (Lyubenov, 2023): 1) emphasizing its regional identity, 2) differentiation and 3) determining the approaches for positioning.

Regional identity

The Ruse region is an integral part of the Danube region, which is the largest macro-region in Europe. It encompasses 14 countries (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Ukraine), with nearly 200 million inhabitants. Over 50 million people live in the areas surrounding the Danube River. Along the Danube River and its immediate vicinity are five European capitals – Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Belgrade, and Bucharest, making the river a Trans-European transport corridor. The EU has a strategy centered on the Danube River, which shapes identity and image of the region in alignment with European and national values.

The identity of the Danube region, and specifically the Ruse region as part of the Bulgarian territory, does not conflict with the often-contradictory regional Balkan identity, which traditionally shapes the current image of Bulgaria and other Balkan countries. The Danube identity of the Ruse region stems from the characteristics of the territory rather than from the characteristics of regional institutions or the state as abstract organizational entities. This identity does not conflict with the existing Balkan identity and image due to the Bulgarian people's attachment to the land and education. Therefore, the territorial characteristics of the Ruse region, with its nature, history, culture, and traditions, play an important role in positioning Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse.

The region has significant industrial, transportation, and educational potential. It boasts a rich history and centuries-old traditions, crafts, festivals, cul-

ture, etc. Both the Danube River and the Rusenski Lom River Valley are established international tourist destinations due to their unique nature, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and developed tourist routes. This offers opportunities for symbiosis with tourism – cultural, educational, and other. The Ruse region holds substantial ecological, industrial, historical, and cultural value.

The main characteristics of any region, including the Ruse region, serve as a foundation for achieving competitiveness through differentiation based on regional uniqueness, which is difficult to replicate. Regional differentiation can be achieved through (Lyubenov, 2023): 1) natural and ecological factors – climate, relief, natural environment; 2) cultural-historical factors – traditions, lifestyle, history, cultural heritage; 3) territorial specialization based on the aforementioned factors. These form the unique identity of the region – history, nature, culture, traditions, specialization in library science, etc.

Differentiation

Successful positioning requires prior differentiation of the library. In this regard, the unique characteristics of the region play an important role and should be used as a differentiating factor for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse. The image of the region and its library products and services are defined by achievements in this field at the national and higher levels. The image of Bulgaria will also influence the image of the region and the city of Ruse. The image of the Ruse region as a tourist destination provides a solid foundation for the development and establishment of cultural tourism with the participation of the library. The international and regional policies of the EU also impact the image of the region and its administrative center – the city of Ruse.

In English language literature, lawyers use the term "trademark," while marketing specialists use the term "brand," which includes company and domain names, know-how, and more. The brand plays an important role in differentiation, and for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse this role can be fulfilled by the organization's name and its domain name, especially when they are well-established and widely recognised. A domain name provides quick, affordable, interactive, global, and personalized access, enabling global and more precise differentiation. The domain name should promote and highlight the quality characteristics of the library's products and services, making its digitalization very important.

Approaches to positioning

Creating a strong association between users and Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse involves positioning by user type. Such a positional association can be tailored for library products and services and for intelligent individuals oriented toward spiritual development. Positioning by cultural symbols relies on associations between these symbols and the region, including

its administrative center, the city of Ruse, and the library itself. Suitable symbols for positioning include those representing the region's cultural, historical, and other treasures – crafts, traditions, culture, history, and education.

Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse can also be effectively positioned through celebrities. This strategy is particularly effective when famous athletes, artists, doctors, scientists, and others are favored by its target users. Similar to star positioning in the offline world, this approach can be successfully applied online through influencers. Unlike the offline approach, influencers do not necessarily have to be famous personalities.

An influencer can be anyone who attracts the attention of many people through their posts. They are the most visible and impactful individuals on social networks, with thousands of followers, playing an essential role in positioning. Influencers can help reach a broader range of potential users as well as more narrowly defined and specific segments or niches. However, using influencers carries certain risks—poor representation of the organization, legal issues, difficulty in control, etc., which should be considered.

The positioning of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse can be based on the type of the user—avid reader, spiritually oriented, affluent, etc. The country's membership in the EU and the Danube region makes the library part of an economic and strategic union, part of its social responsibility for preserving Bulgaria's cultural and historical development, respectively, and the Ruse region. Transferable positioning is appropriate given the rich material and spiritual essence of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse, allowing the use of the statement that it holds the best of the material and spiritual wealth of its territory.

The positioning of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse can also be based on marketing tools. These tools play an important role both in differentiating the library from competitors and in the perceptions and associations of users, and consequently, their level of satisfaction (Lyubenov, 2023). It is not necessary to achieve superiority in all marketing tools. With the classic 4P marketing framework, it is sufficient to achieve superiority in at least one of its elements, while with the 8P framework (see the next section), superiority in at least two elements is required, with parity necessary for the remaining elements.

Marketing toolkit

Table 7 presents a synthesis of the "8P" marketing mix for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse. From the perspective of services, the classic "4P" mix (Product, Place, Promotion, Price) is expanded by considering the

interests of users through the so-called "4C" (Customer, Convenience, Communication, Cost), which essentially is the classic "4P" mix viewed from the user's perspective. To the classic "4P," new "4P" (Processes, Physical Environment and Evidence, People, Productivity and Quality) are added to more fully and accurately account for the rich intangible, historical, cultural, and spiritual essence of the library's products and services.

Table 7.

Marketing toolkit (8P, 4C) of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse

| Product | Place | Promotion | Price |
|---|--|--|---|
| Levels of services Characteristics: standards, indicators, categorization Accessories Warranties Branding | Channels Intermediaries Location: branches and offices, representations Transportation Storage | PR Advertising Sales promotion Personal selling Direct marketing (online marketing) | Price levels Pricing factors: costs, competition, demand Pricing strategy Discounts |
| Customers | Convenience | Communica- tions | Costs |
| Needs Demands Demand elasticity and resilience Recommendations | Website Self-service Hardware Software Accessibility Speed | Online Offline Mobile Direct Media Feedback | Time Financial and physical efforts Psychological discomfort Negative perceptions |
| Processes | Physical Environ- ment and Evi- dence | People | Productivity and Quality |
| Flow and organization of activities: standardized, individualized Sequence Customer participation | Setting Facilities Equipment Clothing Statements Guarantees | Employees: hiring, training, motivation, salary, teamwork Customers: training, education | Service productivity Efficiency Effectiveness Perceived quality by the customer |

Without the tactical "8P" toolkit, enriched with the "4C" from the customers' point of view, the marketing strategy of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse cannot be implemented. This toolkit takes into account the

role of the customer in the processes of providing library services, their interaction with the staff, the physical environment, and the presence of other visitors, helping the library become more customer-focused. These tools serve as a tactical means for implementing the marketing strategy and achieving its long-term goals.

The prioritization of specific tools in the marketing mix may vary depending on the type of markets, the characteristics of the business environment—both online and offline, the specifics of the users, and other factors. The traditional toolkit is suitable for tangible products, while the non-traditional is more appropriate for services. Moreover, each of the non-traditional tools can be considered within the framework of some of the elements of the classic "4P," but viewed broadly. Non-traditional tools can be seen more as areas deserving special attention within the traditional marketing toolkit rather than as independent elements.

Conclusion

Based on the conducted study, the following conclusions can be drawn for Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse.

Firstly, regarding the business model:

The number of users is not declining, but the combinations of products and services offered have a low degree of uniqueness, distribution is limited to one physical location in Ruse, with no online distribution channels. Communication with customers is predominantly offline and little online, PR activities are poor, which limits the opportunities for development in line with markets.

Although increased, funding remains insufficient, considerably limiting the development, survival, and prosperity of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse. The communication with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance needs improvement. There is a significant need to increase revenue from internal, project-based, and other activities.

Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse possesses key resources such as library and building assets, personnel, and an information system. Currently, the library's core activities have a narrow market scope (providing space for reading and borrowing books), which needs to be expanded by offering digital and other unique products and services.

State and municipal institutions and structures, as key financial and other partners, lack sustainable policies and long-term vision for the library's development. Educational institutions, NGOs, and businesses, although potential partners in educational and cultural services, also pose competition, necessitating a focus on unique collaborative products.

Funding for adequate material resources, staff maintenance, library service development, and updating library collections is insufficient, significantly limiting the dynamic and adequate development and survival of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov - Ruse. A marketing strategy is essential for its market development.

Secondly, regarding segmentation, targeting, and positioning:

The current target market primarily revolves around the library service of borrowing books, with children (over 50%) and students comprising approximately 60% of its users. Policies to retain them as future clients are crucial.

Highly promising target markets include digital and online products and services—library and educational, complemented with technological and community services.

Beyond fundamental goals like promoting reading and information access, supporting self-education, formal and informal education, and providing access to cultural heritage, community services, digital, and technological services should also be developed.

A unique and positive regional identity exists for positioning, leveraging its name and website as differentiating factors from competitors. Strong associations with consumers through cultural, educational, historical symbols, and marketing tools should be established.

Thirdly, regarding the marketing toolkit:

The "8P" (Product, Place, Promotion, Price, Processes, Physical Environment and Evidence, People, Productivity and Quality) and "4C" (Customer, Convenience, Communication, Cost) marketing instruments will facilitate better positioning and achievement of long-term strategy goals, thereby enhancing the competitiveness and profitability of Regional Library Lyuben Karavelov – Ruse.

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