

## **MARKETING OF ARCHIVAL REFERENCE SERVICES AT BOTSWANA NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICES (BNARS)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents the findings of a Master's Dissertation titled 'the gaps model of service quality: marketing of archival reference services of Botswana national archives and records services' which was carried out to evaluate marketing of archival reference services at Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS). A survey research method was used to exploit the objectives of the study. In order to enhance validity of the findings of the study, a triangulation data collection technique of questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentary research methods were used to collect data. The study has revealed that BNARS personnel failed to distinguish between marketing and promotion, which resulted in ineffective promotional / communication strategies. Some suggestions have been made to overcome this problem, including the need for BNARS to take its officers to regional (ESARBICA) and international (ICA) professional seminars and conferences.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Information services, Promotion, Publicity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Archival repositories are imperative information banks that house vital legal, fiscal, administrative and historic information. Archives house historic communal and individual remembrances that can be of benefit to historians, genealogists, intellectuals, students, and researchers to mention but a few. These people can only realize the value of archival collection, if they are informed on the availability of these sources thus stimulating utilization of collections. Advocacy and marketing are important elements of archives administration. The existence of archives can only be justified through the level of usage of their collections. Usage is the ultimate goal for processing of archives with other functions being just tools that archival institutions use to archive this ultimate goal (Harris, 1993). Good archival practices through acquisition, appraisal, arrangement, description and providing reference services are incomplete steps of archives management, if such materials are not accessible to researchers (Ngulube, 1999). Ngulube (1999) further adds that information is a raw useful material and its usage is dependent upon knowledge of its existence. To achieve the ultimate goal of utilization of their collections archival institutions will need to be customer oriented which can be achieved through adoption of marketing principles into their profession. It is then the responsibility of the archivists to create public awareness through planned marketing strategies to ensure that the ultimate goal of use of archives is achieved. Often this is not the case. According to Mnjama (1989), it has been the practice of the archivists over the years to arrange and describe archives and assume that customers will come and access them, but this has never been the case, as a visit to archival institutions has shown that archival services are underutilized. Failure to facilitate usage of archives will be wastage of the budget that could have been directed to other projects.

Although use is the ultimate justification for the existence of archives, studies on utilization of these sources has been reported to be insufficient. Factors that have been linked to this low utilization include but not limited to; legal and political obstacles (Sundqvist, 2008), disorganized manner in which they are stored, lack of appropriate instruments and tools to facilitate access (Kemoni et-al, 2003), lack of skilled personnel, lack of proper marketing strategies, irrelevant information sources and inadequate opening hours (Hlophe and Wamukoya, 2007), lack of awareness of the existence of the archives, rigid access regulations and conditions (Mogami, 2010). For the purpose of this study, focus was directed to the marketing factor. This study focused on marketing because this concept is still in its formative years in archives administration. This study investigated the perceptions of BNARS Archivists and Administrative personnel towards marketing. The study is important in elucidating the concepts of marketing which might help information professional improve their marketing skills.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was carried out to investigate the perceptions of BNARS archivists and their Administrative management towards marketing. Moreover, the study was to study their perceptions about applicability of marketing in Archives administration. Specifically, the study was to:

1. Find out the understanding of 'marketing' by BNARS personnel
2. Obtain the participants' perceptions on applicability of marketing concept in Archives administration
3. Identify the marketing strategies employed by BNARS
4. Establish whether BNARS has either a Research or Marketing unit for pre and post contact with the market.
5. Identify the methods used by BNARS to raise public awareness about their Archival Reference Services.
6. Establish how customers perceive the relevancy of BNARS Archival Collection in meeting their information needs.
7. Determine the challenges that BNARS face in marketing Archival Reference Services

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Information is a valuable raw material and its use is dependent on, and accelerated by knowledge of its existence and access (Ngulube, 1999). According to Ngulube (1999:19), "this means that the role of the information providing institutions should not stop at the production of services, but must have the added responsibility of creating awareness through adopting marketing strategies". Nevertheless, literature indicates there is confusion among information professionals (Archivists & Librarians) to distinguish marketing from promotion/publicity.

Ngulube (1999) carried out a survey in ESARBICA region to assess the extent to which archival institutions in the region put into practice the marketing strategies. The study found out that most of the responses presented by respondents as marketing strategies were a variety of promotional activities which were in general terms just a component of marketing. Ngulube (1999:20) state that "there is confusion at the conceptual level among information professionals that marketing is

nothing more than promotions”. Ngulube (1999:20) defined marketing as “... a managerial process which aims at achieving the objectives of any organization which wants to relate to its publics in the most effective manner”. This definition precisely indicate that marketing is all about determining customers needs and finding the most suitable solutions to meet those needs.

According to Desaez (2002), marketing is about collecting information, forecasting trends, consulting all concerned, understanding markets, formulating objectives, planning strategy, implementation strategies, evaluating everything, and communicating with everybody. Desaez (2002) maintains that marketing is part of an organizational philosophy which is a management discipline which provides the focus for the success of the organization. Desaez (2002) insist that two concepts of publicity and promotion are part of marketing that can be effective only if the marketing foundations from the list above have been established.

Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of archiving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization’s offering in terms of the target market’s needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets According to (Weingand 1987:5). Weingand (1987) emphasizes that marketing is a process that involves analyzing the market for planning purposes that will inform the implementation and management of marketing procedures. Marketing selects target markets and does not seek to be all things to all people, instead marketing places emphasis on the target market’s (consumer’s) needs and desires rather than on the producers’ preferences (Weingand, 1987:5-6).

Cater and Frusciano (2002) contend that information professionals have classified marketing under the functions of outreach/promotion activities without looking at the general understand of this concept. Jain and Jambhekar (1999) advices that before information professional can define the concept of marketing, they have to understand what business they are involved in. Information professionals need to know whether they are involved in information sorting, storage and retrieval for use or something beyond this, that involves looking for needs, wants and demands of their potential clients and reaching out to the identified customers rather than waiting for the customers to come to the information centre (Jain and Jambhekar, 1999).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A survey research method was used to exploit the objectives of the study. Though this study was largely quantitative, the study used the mixed research paradigms of both qualitative and quantitative approach. In order to enhance the validity of the findings of the study, a triangulation data collection technique of questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentary research methods were used to collect data. Also, the literature review was carried out for benchmarking purposes and to compare the results with other related studies. The total population was 38 including 13 drawn from BNARS personnel and 25 actual users of BNARS reference services (customers). All data was collected at 100% response rate.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The major findings of objectives 1-6 of the study are presented in the Table (1) followed by a brief discussion:

**TABLE 1:** Major Findings**Source:** Field Data

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Marketing entails user needs assessments and strategizing to meet such needs?	8%	92%
Applicability of marketing in Archives Administration	92%	8%
Availability of marketing strategies at BNARS	92%	8%
Availability of a research or marketing unit for both pre and post	0%	100%
Existence of target customer identification strategy	23%	77%
Availability of public awareness(Promotion and External Communication) strategies	100%	0%
Efficiency and Effectiveness of BNARS Promotion / Communication strategies	36%	64%
Relevancy of BNARS collection to customers information needs	100%	0%

**OBJECTIVE 1: BNARS Personnel Understanding of ‘Marketing’**

The study sought to find out how BNARS personnel were conversant with marketing as a concept. The respondents were asked to define how they identify and classify marketing. The findings of the study revealed that 50 % of the respondents defined marketing to simply involve promotion strategies (publicity and Outreach), while 42 % of the respondents understood marketing as a concept that involved exhibitions, tours, seminars, newsletters and workshops. Only 8 % of the respondents described marketing as a practice that entails conducting of user needs studies and strategizing to meet identified needs. Overall, the findings demonstrate that respondents (BNARS personnel) failed to distinguish marketing from promotion.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Applicability of Marketing in Archives Administration**

The study sought to investigate BNARS personnel perceptions on applicability of marketing in Archives administration. Respondents were asked whether marketing was applicable in Archives administration. As evident from Table (1), the majority of 92 % of the respondents articulated that marketing was applicable in archives administration, while only a few 8% were of the view that marketing was only applicable in profit making business/organizations. The above findings appear to suggest that, though BNARS personnel confused marketing to mere promotional activities, the organization appreciated the importance and relevancy of marketing in Archives Administration.

**OBJECTIVE 3: BNARS Marketing Strategies**

The study investigated marketing strategies used by BNARS to inspect its market. Respondents were asked whether there were any marketing strategies in place used to analyze the market. Moreover respondents were asked to indicate such strategies if any. Majority of the respondents, comprising of 92 %, approved there were marketing strategies in place in BNARS and television, radio, workshop, newsletters, tours and newspapers were presented as existing strategies. In contrast, 8 % of the respondents argued there were no marketing strategies in place. These findings further confirm that BNARS personnel confused marketing with promotion.

Generally, the above findings concur with the findings from the article ‘*The Marketing of Archival Services and Products in East and Southern Africa: Opportunities for Survival in the Next Millennium*’ by Patrick Ngulube. Ngulube (1999:21) argued that “Marketing in the true sense of the world is not applied in the archival institutions in East and Southern Africa. Much of what passed for marketing was a variety of promotional activities which was a variety of promotional activities which in essence are just component of marketing”.

**OBJECTIVE 4: Research/Marketing Unit: BNARS Pre and Post Contact With the Market**

The study sought to establish if BNARS had any research or marketing unit for both pre and post contact with the market for target customer identification and quality service delivery. Respondents were asked whether their organisation had a research/ marketing unit. In response all (100%) the respondents acknowledged that there was no such a unit or division in their organisation. To probe further on this matter, respondents were asked to indicate who their target market was. Majority of the respondent (77%) approved that though their organization had no target customer identification strategy in place, coincidentally the organization had customers that include the academia, politicians, citizens, internationals and the general public.

Moreover respondents were asked whether there were any market segmentation strategies in place. Market segmentation provides the framework which can be used to answer questions like, “who are our customers/users/readers/clients?” and can also form the basis for identifying potential customers and effectively targeting marketing effort with the objective of developing new loyal customers (Nkanga, 2002:308). The findings revealed that BNARS did not have any market segmentation strategy in place.

The above findings imply that BNARS did not have a research or marketing unit for pre contact with the market so as to appreciate who are their customers/users/ readers/ clients and who their potential patrons were. According to Epstein (2006:3), “too often, entrepreneurs launch sales and marketing efforts thinking only about where they want to go, not where they’re starting from, with unfortunate results”. Decisions on marketing strategy should be taken after careful analysis of external and internal environment factors such as market threats and opportunities (Ledoux and Melesse; 1995). As rightfully argued by Ledoux and Melesse (1995), analyses of users information needs is a marketing pre-requisite because the core of marketing lies in responding to the needs and demands of the users.

**OBJECTIVE 5: Public Awareness: Promotion and External Communication**

The study sought to determine the promotional tactics BNARS used to raise awareness about its archival reference services. BNARS personnel were asked whether their organization had any promotional or external communication strategies to educate their potential and actual customers about their archival reference services. All respondents (100%) were in agreement that in BNARS they had means through which they raise public awareness about their services. According to the findings such promotional strategies comprises brochures, internet home page (BNARS Website), newsletter, and BNARS guide. These findings suggest that though BNARS was not engaged in total implementation of all components of the marketing mix (7P's (Product, Place, price, process, physical environment, people and promotion)) or (4C's(Consumer, Convenience, Costs, Communication)) they implemented at least one component of the marketing mix which is promotion (communication).

**Efficiency and effectiveness of BNARS promotion / communication strategies:**

Researchers found it indispensable to assess efficiency of the identified BNARS promotional strategies. To realize this intent, actual users (customers) of BNARS archival reference services were asked how they learnt about BNARS archival reference services. Though BNARS customers gave varied responses, majority (64%) reported they learnt about BNARS archival reference services through friends (colleagues). These findings suggest that though BNARS engaged in promotional activities, those activities were not reaching the intended audience thus being ineffective. The ineffectiveness of these promotional /communication strategies may be linked to BNARS failure to connect promotion /communication to other marketing mix variables.

**OBJECTIVE 6: Relevancy of BNARS collection to customers' information needs**

The study sought to determine whether BNARS archival reference services were relevant to meet users information needs. All customers (100%) acknowledged the relevancy of BNARS collection in meeting their information needs. Furthermore, BNARS customers were requested to indicate how often they were able to access what they were looking for. The findings revealed that majority (84%) were often able to access what they were looking for.

From these findings, it can be deduced that even though BNARS was not conducting any market research/ pre contacts with the market (analysis of the market, user needs assessment surveys), the organization was able to satisfy the needs of the actual users of their services. This might have a relationship on customers they receive. It might be that their customers are perpetual users who continue to use BNARS services because from their past experiences they know that BNARS can meet their information needs. Though BNARS must be acknowledged for meeting the information needs of its customers, it is also important for the organisation to recognize the importance of attracting new customers to its services.

**OBJECTIVE 7: Challenges faced by BNARS in marketing**

The major findings of objective 7 of the study are presented in the Table 2 followed by a brief discussion:

**TABLE 2:** Challenges faced by BNARS Staff in Marketing

Challenge	Response
Inadequate funds	53%
Inadequate human resource (understaffed)	77%
High turnover of skilled & experienced personnel	53%
Lack of training in marketing (Failure to draw a distinction between promotion and marketing)	92%
Lack of marketing policy	23%
Lack of a research unit	100%
Lack of transport	8%

**Source:** Field Data

The study investigated the barriers that hamper BNARS from embarking in a vigorous marketing; make use of all marketing mix variables. When asked if they faced any challenges in marketing of their services, all (100%) the respondents (BNARS personnel) indicated that they did. When asked to state the challenges, they cited the following; inadequate funds, high turnover of skilled and experienced personnel, lack of training in marketing, lack of marketing policy, lack of research unit, and lack of transport. There is no doubt that failure by BNARS personnel to distinguish marketing from promotion had a negative impact on justifying for resources.

**CONCLUSION**

From above, it is clear that BNARS personnel did not understand the distinction between promotion and marketing. This failure consequently lead to BNARS not utilizing all the marketing mix variables, rather, the organisation focused only on promotion or communication. Ultimately, the confusion of promotion to marketing affected other operations of this organization. The organization has been engaged in mass production or 'one size fits all' approach, hoping that their services will find consumers. Promotional or external communication strategies in operation have been ineffective and failing to reach the anticipated audience. The organization cannot attract new users because of lack of market research and user needs assessments to appreciate the market and understand customers' information needs. Furthermore it can be argued that the organization cannot justify for resources (financing) as it does not know its market share.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to address the challenges reveled by this study and to improve marketing at Botswana National Archives and Records Services, the following recommendations are put forward;

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Conduct workshops and send officers to professional seminars/conferences**

Literature denotes that a lot has been written about marketing in information services with the objective to distinguish marketing from promotion and how the two work together. Despite this, archivists are not able to understand the distinction between the two and how the latter depend on the former. For the purpose of this paper, marketing must be understood as a planned mix of activities around product, place, price, process, physical environment, people and promotion geared towards controlling the market. It is recommended that BNARS conduct regular workshops to update their employees about new developments in their profession. Besides workshops, officers should be sent to professional seminars and conferences to appreciate debates on pertinent professional issues.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: User Studies and Pre Contact**

The key to success in marketing is to know who your target market is. BNARS should make use of user studies / market research for identification of its both actual customers and potential customers. Service providers may not always understand what their customers expect from their services; therefore, subsequent to identification of the target market, BNARS should conduct user needs assessments for their target market. Management can then use the findings from user studies to segment the target market according to similarities in geographic, demographic, psychographic and behaviouristic variables. With the target market known, their information needs identified and segmented accordingly, this will allow service providers to have services designed specifically for information needs of target market segments.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Establish Marketing and Research Division**

The findings of the study revealed that lack of pre contact with the market was another hindrance to marketing of information services. This is contrary to definitions previously provided in this paper regarding the concept of marketing. In precise, marketing is a process that entails marketing audits, plan of action, setting up of goals and objectives and developing strategies to implement them. Promotion as an element of marketing does not happen prior to completion of those steps. In general literature denotes that promotion is more successful if the product, the target market and marketing strategies are based on market researches. It is recommended therefore, that an independent marketing and research division be established. This new division (marketing and research division) be allocated necessary resources (independent budget, human resource and vehicle) to enable the division perform its responsibility.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Compose and Document a Marketing strategy**

The findings of the study revealed that BNARS personnel failed to distinguish between marketing and promotion. It is recommended that BNARS engage experts /consultants to develop an Archives Administration marketing strategy that clearly defines marketing. The strategy should clearly outline all the variables of the marketing mix in reference to BNARS with a clear definition of all fundamentals of marketing. Prominently, the marketing strategy should

have realistic objectives set so that the outcomes of the strategy should be evaluated once implemented. The marketing strategy should speak to customer groups (segments), BNARS strength & weakness (resource, reputation), opportunities (technology, market), threats (competitors) and how best BNARS can promote its services.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5: Archives should use target marketing**

The study revealed that though BNARS made efforts to educate their customers about their services as required by most of marketing theories (e.g. 7 P's and 4 C's), promotional strategies used were ineffective. Mass marketing is more like marketing without direction. This is because mass marketing is based on the assumption that all customers' needs are alike, which is not true especially in provision of services (information services). Therefore, service providers need to know their target market and have them segmented. If the target market is known, promotional strategies can then be directed to the target market with the promotional messages and products/services tailored to the uniqueness of the target market segment.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6: Utilize Information Communication Technologies for Publicity**

Use of the websites is one of the advantages brought by ICT's. Websites can be accessed by users at any time without physically coming to the organization. Vital information such as archival collection, Access policy, Finding aids, Guides, and conditions of access can be posted on the website to ensure that customers makes informed decisions prior to their visit to Archives. Websites can also be integrative so as to allow interaction between customers and personnel of the service provider. With a website being easy and cheap to design, it is recommended that BNARS design its own website to reach out to the market throughout the world through World Wide Web platform.

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