

### Assignment 8

**1. Read and refer to the chapter and the article ‘Marketing Mix’ when answering this question. Identify products offered by a public library or another non-profit agency you are familiar with (at least three). Organize the products into product lines. What are the core benefits that consumers derive from the respective product lines?**

“An organization’s product mix can be described in terms of its length, width, and depth” (Andreasen and Kotler, p. 317). Koontz (2004) indicates that a “product can be a good, service, idea, place or even person that is offered to the customer.” The children’s department at the main branch of the Stanislaus County Library, located in Modesto, California, offers a number of different types of products for children (and their families). Below is a table of the product mix.

| <b>Books</b>                    | <b>DVDs</b> | <b>CDs</b>    | <b>Programs/Events</b>             | <b>Services</b>      | <b>Place</b>                    |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Reference books                 | Fiction     | English music | Story times                        | Reference librarians | Memorial tree in department     |
| Picture books                   | Nonfiction  | Spanish music | Puppet shows                       | Library assistants   | Displays of collections         |
| Readers                         |             |               | Magic shows                        | Spanish speakers     | Displays of California missions |
| Fiction                         |             |               | Plays                              | Performers           | Papier-mâché elephant           |
| Nonfiction                      |             |               | Musical performances               | Internet access      | Posters                         |
| Books on tape                   |             |               | Summer Reading                     |                      | Child-size tables and chairs    |
| Books on CD                     |             |               | Read to a Dog                      |                      | Mound chairs                    |
| Playaways                       |             |               | Dinner Theatre                     |                      |                                 |
| Spanish/bilingual picture books |             |               | Día de los Niños/Día de los Libros |                      |                                 |
| Sp. readers                     |             |               | Teen Anime Day                     |                      |                                 |
| Sp. fiction                     |             |               | Teen gaming nights                 |                      |                                 |
| Sp. nonfiction                  |             |               | Book fairs                         |                      |                                 |
| Sp. books on CD                 |             |               | Craft fairs                        |                      |                                 |
| Sp. playaways                   |             |               |                                    |                      |                                 |

From the product line of books, the benefits children derive from using these products include gaining information to complete homework assignments or learning facts from nonfiction choices, entertainment (the sheer fun of reading), improve their literacy and listening skills, or learn a new language. For Spanish-speaking children, the Spanish books may help them retain their home language and allow them to spend time reading together with caregivers/relatives who primarily speak Spanish.

From the DVD product line, children can learn and be entertained by watching educational videos (i.e., Dora the Explorer), be entertained by watching feature movies (i.e., Disney), learn about people and places (i.e., Indians of North America) or how to do something (i.e., playing the guitar) through nonfiction choices, and they can also spend time with their families watching a good movie together.

From the CD product line, children can learn vocabulary, narrative skills, phonological skills, and rhyming by singing to children's songs in either Spanish or English. Dancing to the songs is also a form of play and exercise.

From the programs/events product line, children have numerous educational and recreational benefits. Through story times, very young children can develop six pre-reading skills, such as print motivation, print awareness, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, narrative skills, and vocabulary; learn to listen; and enjoy the stories, music, fingerplays, bubbles, and hand stamps. Through summer reading, children can earn prizes for every seven days they read (at least 20 minutes for kids under 12; teens must read at least an hour a day for four or five days) while also developing good reading habits. Through Read to a Dog, children uncomfortable reading aloud can reduce their anxiety by petting the dog and can even reduce a fear of animals if they do not have pets. Musical performances can introduce music to the lives of children who may not see musical instruments very often. Plays, puppet shows, magic shows, and Dinner Theatre (family movie night) can help children develop listening habits while having fun. Teen gaming nights and anime day allow teens to learn team-work skills and make some new friends.

From the services product line, children can get help from reference librarians and library assistants to find books to read for fun or specific books (or articles in databases) for a class assignment or even help answer questions about all kinds of things. Spanish speaking librarians/libraryassistants can do the same for children and parents/caregivers who mostly speak Spanish. Special performers provide the learning and entertainment for programs/events. The library also offers free Internet access for children to play games, browse around, or to do homework.

From the places product line, one neat service the library provides to enhance the look and feel of the children's department is displaying children's collections in either a vertical or horizontal display case. Children can display their personal collections (Legos, dolls, tea sets, Russian nesting dolls, Hot Wheels, etc.) by signing up during specified times. The displays also give children a sense of pride. The children's department itself is very colorful and inviting as a place, also. There are some posters, colorful book displays, and a giant fabricated tree that was installed as a memorial for a young man who used to volunteer in the library. The tree has his

initials, and while many of the children may not know what the tree is really intended, the tree looks realistic and children can sit to read under it with some mound shaped chairs. There is also a stuffed squirrel that gets moved every so often so small children can be sure to look for him during their next library visit. The section dedicated to books on California missions also has dioramas and models of missions made by real elementary-school students, and there is also a large papier-mâché elephant displayed on a shelf. These all add to the appeal of a fun, friendly space for children. The environment encourages children to pull out books and read them or look at the pictures.

## **2. Short Answer:**

**You have learned that service offerings present five challenges:**

**making the intangible tangible**

**making a virtue of inseparability**

**managing variability**

**managing perishability**

**helping consumers consume**

**Please identify and select a library or nonprofit's service offering (e.g., the library's new branch outlet), and describe how you would overcome the five challenges in marketing the new service to the community. pp. 319-324.**

One of the services that is offered by the main branch at the Stanislaus County Library is story times. There are seven story times a week. WiggleWorms, aimed at children from birth to age two, is offered on Monday at 10:15 A.M. and 11:15 A.M. and on Tuesday at 10:15 A.M. Story Time is aimed at preschool aged children (3 to 6) and is offered on Tuesday at 6:15 P.M. and Wednesday at 10:15 A.M. The Spanish hour, Hora de Cuentos, is also aimed at children ages 3 to 6 and is offered on Thursday at 6:15 P.M. Bilingual story time, aimed at children ages 3 to 6, is on Saturday at 10:15. Although Modesto has a high percentage of Spanish-speaking residents, the Spanish and bilingual story hours yield a much smaller audience than the English WiggleWorms and Story Time. On Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, for example, the 10:15 A.M. WiggleWorms session had 114 people. Spanish story time on Thursday, October 13, had 21 people. Bilingual story time had 12 people on October 15, 2011.

For the librarian marketing library services, like Spanish and bilingual story times, five challenges include “making the intangible tangible; making a virtue of inseparability; managing variability; managing perishability; and helping consumers consume” (Andreasen and Kotler, 2003, p. 319-224).

Marketing the Spanish and bilingual story time is difficult because, as a service, there is not something that parents and children take home, like a book or DVD. However, the intangible benefits children receive by listening to stories, singing and dancing to songs, and participating in fingerplays are people skills (interacting with other children), listening skills (listening is a learned skill), and the six pre-reading skills that help children learn to read, including print

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motivation, print awareness, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and narrative skills. Currently, I provide one tip per story time focusing on one of these areas, which gives a “[sign] of potential quality” to parents who bring their children to story time (Andreasen and Kotler, 2003, p. 319). There are pamphlets available in the room where the story time is held. Recently, the Stanislaus County Library made changes to their website, and while the webpage for story times does include the benefits children receive by going to story time and being read to, more could be done to promote these intangible benefits elsewhere. Not everyone has the Internet available at home or through a cell phone. I notice that in the children’s department information about story times, including the benefits, are available in a tan brochure, but this may not be the most prominent place to put the information within the department. It also doesn’t help that the children’s story time room is not in the children’s department but in the basement auditorium. The stairs headed to the basement are behind a door. People do not even see the space designated for the story time, which is problematic for a service that is already “invisible” as the benefits are intangible. Another problem is that the space where the story times are held is not inviting or colorful like the children’s department. It does not say, “child-friendly.” Visual cues and signs are needed that discuss or list the benefits of story time in both Spanish and English and some interior improvements could be made, perhaps with a grant, to make the story time room reflect more like a preschool or kindergarten class room to place the story time as a fun, educational experience. Products can also be places (Koontz, 2004).

The Stanislaus County Library generally has a customer-first mindset and provides good, hands-on training for new employees. I received three months of training for story time programming that included reading and studying about early literacy, studying the Spanish story time collection of books and music, and learning fingerplays. While I feel that the story telling staff does a good job providing story time, I do not believe a study or survey has ever been done regarding customer insights on the story time services. It may be that the time available for Spanish story time, Thursday at 6:15 P.M., is not the “best” day or time for the segment of the population that is Spanish speaking with younger children. I would need to investigate why the library decided on this time. If it was chosen arbitrarily, it may be beneficial to experiment with an additional story time at a different day or time. Getting customer feedback about their story time likes and dislikes is also a way to manage variability in the story time service and may yield ideas for how to help others use the story time service. Experimenting with different days and times for Spanish story time is a way that helps manage perishability because it may shift the demand for Spanish story time, either negatively or positively.

Regarding making a virtue of inseparability, Andreasen and Kotler (2003) indicate that one way to make services more likely to be used is to have a customer-centered staff (p. 322). If someone had a bad experience at the library, they may not want to bring their child to a story time, even if the problem involved a different department. While library staff is mindful of their customers, more cross-promotion could be done in regard to Spanish story time. Reference and circulation

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do not generally provide information about story times or have literature available as people wait in line or stand at the desk. Circulation assistants could mention story times when families or parents/caregivers with young children approach the desk.

The main issues facing Spanish and bilingual story time attendance may be a combination of price (inconvenient times for working parents, during dinner time/church time, etc.) and need for more promotion. Many people I talk to while I am working at the children's reference desk often tell me that they never knew the library provided Spanish or bilingual story time. The service needs to be promoted internally, and reaching out to Latinos through the Spanish language newspaper and *The Modesto Bee*, Spanish radio, churches, and places like Latino bakeries and taquerias that often serve as "grape vines" for information within the Latino community. Perhaps as a work project, I would suggest creating a short survey or some other method to get customer information to find out the main problem regarding attendance in order to design a specific marketing plan of action.

References

Andreasen, A.R., & Kotler, P. (2003). *Strategic marketing for nonprofit organizations* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Koontz, C. (2004). The marketing mix: The 4-p recipe for customer satisfaction. *Marketing Library Services*, 16.