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Market orientation and service performance in libraries: An unexplored relationship

Abstract: This study investigates the inter-relationship between market orientation and service performance of 33 libraries in the south of Finland. Three kinds of market orientation were found: the *strong*, the *medium* and the *weak*. The findings show that the higher market orientation is positively connected with the libraries' superior service performance.

Résumé : Cette étude explore la relation interne qui existe entre l'orientation commerciale et la performance de service de 33 bibliothèques du sud de la Finlande. Trois catégories d'orientations commerciales ont été identifiées : *forte*, *moyenne* et *faible*. Les résultats montrent que l'orientation commerciale forte est positivement corrélée avec une performance de service supérieure des bibliothèques.

1. Introduction

Conventional marketing wisdom holds that a market orientation provides an organisation with a better understanding of its customers, competitors and environments, which subsequently leads to superior organisation performance (Kara, Spillan and Deshields, 2005). While researchers have explored the relationship between market orientation and business performance in different organisations, such studies in libraries and information providing institutions are scarce.

“Market orientation” (or market-oriented behavior) is a popular term used by marketing practitioners as an indicator of the extent to which an organisation implements the “marketing concept” (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Pulendran and Speed, 1996). Hence, a market oriented library is one whose actions are consistent with the marketing concept. Thus far, there have been a few studies which reflect the increasing interest of researchers in understanding the attitudes of librarians towards marketing (Savard, 1996; Shontz, Parker and Parker, 2004). Simultaneously, some researchers also started to pay attention to understand the domain of market orientation. Lozano (2000) provided a model for customer-orientation from the library managers' point of view. Harrison and Shaw (2004) studied market orientation and marketing culture of all staff in a public library of Australia. Singh (2005 a, b, c) empirically investigates the dimensions of market orientation in the context of thirty-three Finnish libraries and information providing services organisations. Thus, the recent literature shows the increasing interest of library and information professionals in understanding the constructs of marketing mentality and market orientation. However, given the importance of these two constructs- market orientation and marketing attitudes, it is surprising to note that not much attention has been paid to empirically investigate the linkage between market orientation and service

performance of library and information services providing institutions. Against this backdrop, this study investigates potential influences of market orientation on service performance of different libraries.

There is a large body of literature dedicated to studying whether market orientation results in superior organisational performance. Since its inception in the early 1990s, the positive linkage between market orientation and business performance has been well established in the corporate literature (Jaworski and Kohli, 1996; Slater and Narver, 2000). Although it has been suggested that this relationship holds across different industry sectors and national cultures (Jaworski and Kohli, 1996; Slater and Narver, 2000), there is a less support for direct contributory relationship between market orientation and performance in service firms (Caruana et al., 1998; Gray and Hooley, 2002; Han et al., 1998; Sargeant and Mohamad, 1999). However, in the library world, the relationship between these two constructs, i.e. market orientation and service performance has yet to be explored and established. This equivocality and lack of understanding of how market orientation contributes to service performance have prompted calls for research to investigate the mechanisms by which market orientation does contribute to performance of libraries. The purpose of this paper is to closely examine and develop a comprehensive understanding of the market orientation and service performance relationship in the context of libraries and information service providing institutions. The central question to be explored is whether or not the direct association between the two is meaningful and beneficial. Moreover, this paper directs attention to what may lie beneath the relationship of these two constructs. The present study is based on the notion that a leader in an organisation can have a large impact on its culture, which has been suggested in many earlier findings (Block, 2003; Brooks, 1996; Hennessey, 1998; Kasper, 2002; McNeil, 2001; Ogbonna and Harris, 2000) Therefore, it is important to learn about the market orientation that initiates at the top management and flows throughout the whole organisation thus resulting in a particular kind of library culture.

2. Methodology

The research data were collected from autumn 2002 through spring 2003. The libraries were selected from the home page of *Gateway to Finnish Research Libraries* which consisted of 23 University and 10 special libraries in the south of Finland. The library directors and customers from each library participated as respondents in this study. The libraries were chosen from the diverse subject fields representing different disciplines such as art, theology, humanities, social sciences, law, pure sciences, technology, and economics and business so that a broader picture of the marketing cultures of different libraries could be obtained.

A semi-structured interview guide consisting of both open and close ended questions was created for generating the data from library directors. The interview guide for library directors also requested information about certain personal and professional characteristics such as their experience, marketing education and exposure to marketing seminars and conferences of the respondents. The market orientation scale, adapted and modified from Lozano (2000), consists of 23 statements (table 1). From these statements of table 1, a factor called “market orientation” was derived by using factor analysis method. All items of the above scale were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability analysis revealed the Cronbach alpha coefficient 0.8601 for the overall model,

which reinforces the reliability of the scale and internal consistency of its items. Based on this factor “market orientation”, libraries have been classified into three categories on the assumption that if respondents have market-oriented behaviour then their service performance should also be reflected accordingly:

- Weak market oriented (the lower 25 % of market orientation scores)
- Medium market oriented (the middle 50 % of market orientation score)
- Strong oriented (the top 25 % of market orientation score)

As explained earlier, the sample also consists of customers of these libraries so that libraries’ service performance could be analysed from the customers’ viewpoint as well. The statements of this questionnaire were adapted and modified from Calvert’s (2001) questionnaire which compared the variations in expectations of library customers of New Zealand and China. The research data from library customers were collected randomly with the help of a questionnaire survey. The help of library management was sought in distributing the questionnaire which resulted in a higher feed-back. Overall, 165 questionnaire were returned out of 330 which amounted to 53% of the population. Minimum 3 and maximum 10 questionnaires were returned from each library. Most of the questions were measured on the Likert’s scale which consists of following major issues concerning the customer satisfaction on service performance of libraries.

- Accessibility of services and products
- Study environment
- Equipment
- Collections usefulness
- Conditions of collections
- Customer centeredness of services
- Staff attributes
- Customer appreciation
- Overall quality
- Customers’ opinion about pricing issue

Thus, in brief, this study examines the inter-relationship between market orientation and service performance of different research libraries. This research has used a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative methods in order to understand the overall impression of the library’s marketing culture which helped to analyse the required in-depth issues adequately. However, the results presented in this paper are only quantitative.

3. Results

3.1. The three levels of market orientation

This section reports the differences in the levels of market orientation across the different groups of libraries, which have been measured, with the help of statements in table 1. This study attempts to understand the market orientation of the libraries by classifying it into following different dimensions:

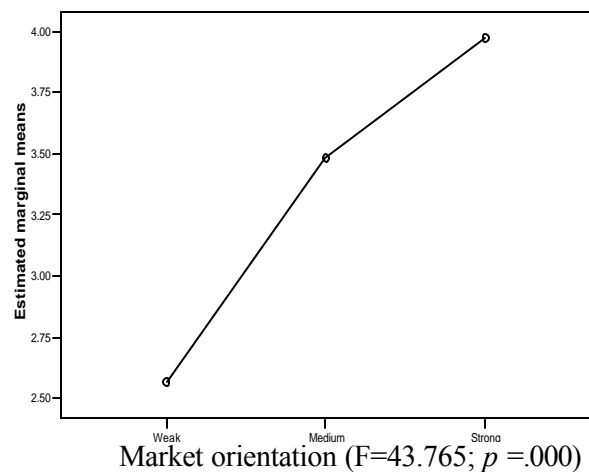
1. customer philosophy
2. inter-functional coordination

3. strategic orientation
4. responsiveness
5. competition orientation
6. pricing orientation

Based on factor and ANOVA analysis, three levels of market orientation are identified: *weak*, *medium* and *strong*. The means, F value and significance level for the different dimensions and items of market orientation are presented in table 1.

As it appears from figure 1 that the strong market oriented libraries have obtained the highest mean (3.97) by outperforming the medium (3.58) and the weak (2.46) group of libraries in overall market orientation. There is an indication of significant difference of market orientation across the three different types of libraries ($F=43.765$; $p=.000$).

Figure 1: Estimated marginal means of market orientation



The analysis of different dimensions of market orientation across the three groups of libraries has resulted into the following profiles:

The strong market oriented libraries

The strong market oriented libraries are more effective in creating a unifying service culture with market orientation at its core activities. They demonstrate a tendency to carry a customer philosophy approach in all the functional activities by putting customers at the centre. Team work, coordination, internal communication and sharing of information are at the best in this kind of market orientation. These libraries have a strategic orientation which is linked to the recognition of the need to translate their customer philosophy into effective implementation. This is reflected in their ‘proactive’ approach towards the customers. As these libraries regularly monitor more customer surveys by segmenting the market and seem to attach a high importance for providing marketing training and customer competency to library staff. They use the result of customer surveys for making changes in the services and products. However, these libraries feel some difficulty in assessing the cost-benefit ratio of services and products but they try to use the cost-benefit ratio in promoting or getting rid of their services. Simultaneously, they also keep on watching the market trends outside their libraries and sometimes conduct a study to understand the services and products of competitor libraries. In brief, the market

orientation of the strong market oriented libraries is significantly higher from the other two market orientation groups.

Table 1: Comparing different dimensions of three market oriented groups of libraries

Market orientation (MO) dimensions	All libraries (N=33)	Weak MO (N=8)	Medium MO (N=17)	Strong MO (N=8)
F= 43.765; <i>p</i> =.000	Mean 3.3794	Mean 2.5652	Mean 3.4834	Mean 3.9728
Customer philosophy F= 6.637; <i>p</i> = .004	3.7475	3.0833	3.8824	4.1250
1. In the library, there is a great awareness of the importance of being an organization prepared to meet the users' needs and wishes. (F=6.846; <i>p</i> =.004)	4.61	4.00	4.71	5.00
2. The knowledge of our customers' needs and wishes is the base for all marketing activities of the library. (F=9.134; <i>p</i> =.001)	3.85	2.50	4.18	4.50
3. It's very difficult to fulfil our promises all the time. (F=.029; <i>p</i> =.971)	2.79	2.75	2.76	2.88
Inter-functional coordination F = 10.277; <i>p</i> = .000	4.0758	3.1250	4.2500	4.6562
1. The activities of different library departments are coordinated in a way that improves the users' level of satisfaction. (F = 18.976; <i>p</i> = .000)	3.58	1.88	4.00	4.38
2. Our staff work as a team: we share responsibilities, information and decision making. (F = 4.096; <i>p</i> = .027)	4.36	3.63	4.41	5.00
3. The credit of achievement is shared by all levels of the organization, not just by the management. (F = 2.455; <i>p</i> = .103)	4.09	3.25	4.29	4.50
4. In our library, we have put emphasis on developing communication channels to guarantee that the opinions of the staff who interface with the users are taken into consideration. (F = 2.271; <i>p</i> = .121)	4.27	3.75	4.29	4.75

Table 1: Comparing different dimensions of three market oriented groups of libraries (contd.)

Market orientation (MO) dimensions	All libraries (N=33)	Weak MO (N=8)	Medium MO (N=17)	Strong MO (N=8)
F= 43.765; <i>p</i> =.000	Mean 3.3794	Mean 2.5652	Mean 3.4834	Mean 3.9728
Strategic orientation F= 40.105; <i>p</i> =.000	3.2929	2.2361	3.4641	3.9861
1. We regularly collect information on the needs and wishes of our customers. (F = 8.051; <i>p</i> = .002)	3.88	2.75	4.06	4.63
2. We have differentiated offers and differentiated plans for the various users segments. (F = 2.138; <i>p</i> = .116)	3.12	2.50	3.06	3.88
3. For each user segment, we have identified the critical success factors in the use of our services. (F = 6.577; <i>p</i> = .004)	2.73	1.75	2.71	3.75
4. We introduce changes in the specifications or in the characteristics of our services / products when we identify new user needs. (F = 26.758; <i>p</i> = .000)	3.48	1.63	3.88	4.50
5. When preparing strategies, the library takes into account the impact of changes in the environment. (F =3.781; <i>p</i> = .034)	4.58	4.13	4.65	4.88
6. Staff members responsible for library areas or services have marketing experience or knowledge. (F =10.171; <i>p</i> = .000)	2.30	.87	2.65	3.00
7. We are very careful in selection of staff who interact with the customers. (F = 2.179; <i>p</i> = .082)	3.18	2.13	3.41	3.75
8. We thoroughly train the staff members who interact with the customers. (F = 11.406; <i>p</i> = .000)	3.42	2.00	3.59	4.50
9. It is not possible/ necessary to treat all the users equally. (F =1.195; <i>p</i> = .317)	2.94	2.38	3.18	3.00

Table 1: Comparing different dimensions of three market oriented groups of libraries (contd.)

Market orientation (MO) dimensions	All libraries (N=33)	Weak MO (N=8)	Medium MO (N=17)	Strong MO (N=8)
F= 43.765; <i>p</i> = .000	Mean 3.3794	Mean 2.5652	Mean 3.4834	Mean 3.9728
Responsiveness F= 2.029; <i>p</i> = .149	3.1438	3.2500	3.3235	3.8438
1. We put efforts on adapting as much as possible our services to the specific needs of each customer. (F = 4.874; <i>p</i> = .015)	3.97	3.25	4.00	4.62
2. If any information is not available in the library, then we have no responsibility to provide suggestions on where to look for information outside the library. (F = 4.837; <i>p</i> = .015)	4.27	4.88	3.65	5.00
3. Sometimes, it is hard to reach the quality standards we set to ourselves. (F = .504; <i>p</i> = .609)	2.61	2.25	2.65	2.88
4. Although, it's good to show respect for our users, listen to them, pay due attention to their problems and treat them as individuals, but due to some reasons, we don't behave as such in practice all the time. (F = .296; <i>p</i> = .746)	2.88	2.63	3.00	2.88
Competition orientation F = 15.226; <i>p</i> = .000	1.85	.75	1.82	3.00
1. At some point, we have carried out an in-depth analysis of our main competitors and of the strengths and weaknesses of each one of them.				
Pricing orientation F= 5.221; <i>p</i> = .011	2.4848	1.6875	2.5882	3.0625
1. We have a precise idea, by user typology, of the cost and benefit as a function of the level of use of each one of services. (F = 4.369; <i>p</i> = .022)	2.55	1.75	2.59	3.25
2. We have considered the cost-benefit ratio for each one of the services and the convenience of relocating them, promoting them or getting rid of them depending on their level of use or the importance given to them by users. (F = 4.016; <i>p</i> = .028)	2.42	1.63	2.59	2.88

The medium market oriented libraries

The medium market oriented libraries appear to show a high responsibility towards the adoption of market orientation. Even though they carry out customer survey but the results seem to be used more in increasing the quality and effectiveness of collection and library's internal activities. Moreover, in doing so, no particular emphasis is placed on associating these efforts to offer satisfaction to the specific needs of customers. As a result these libraries do not seem to appreciate customer philosophy, inter-functional coordination, providing marketing competence to staff, and adaptability to market conditions, etc. Instead of concentrating on these aspects which increase strong marketing culture, institutional policies and activities of libraries get more attention. Unsurprisingly, being in the middle, this group of libraries seems to reflect a 'half way approach' in most of the aspects of market orientation.

The weak market oriented libraries

The weak market oriented libraries do not appreciate marketing as an important function of their activities. As a consequence, their approach towards the library customers lacks 'proactive' functional orientation of marketing. The analysis of market orientation dimensions shows that these libraries do not seem to see much benefit in engaging with activities such as customer analysis and adapting to market conditions. Marketing knowledge and experience are not a must for the librarians. Even though these libraries lack strategic, competition and, pricing orientation towards their customers, the marginal difference in the 'responsiveness' dimension demonstrates that they are not far behind than the more market oriented counterparts in serving their customers. From the marketing point of view, however, the significant differences in other dimensions of market orientation show that they are not overly active in these aspects.

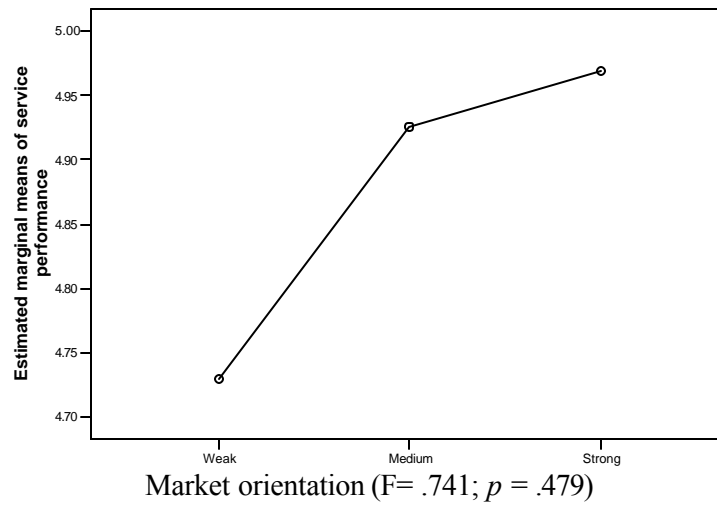
3.2. Service performance of libraries: customers' feedback

An effective service performance is created by the employees in the organisation and calls for them to be bonded by a common set of corporate beliefs and values. Through these norms, a suitable environment is developed for management to: display a commitment to personal empathy; foster a customer response of perceived quality; and eventually a dynamic organisation (Slater and Narver, 2000). The purpose of this section is to analyse the role that market orientation plays in determining the service performance of libraries. The findings explained in this section are based, primarily, on the assumption that a superior service performance is associated with higher levels of market orientation.

Therefore, in keeping with this perspective, the service performance of different libraries has been measured through their respective customer feed-back on accessibility of materials, study environment, equipment, collections and different aspects on the service quality, etc., against the libraries' level of market orientation. Figure 2 shows that the highest mean (4.97) of libraries' overall service performance has been observed in the strong group followed by the medium (4.93) group of libraries. The weak group of libraries has obtained comparatively lower means (4.73) in contrast with the strong group. This finding indicates that there is a positive connection between the market orientation and service effectiveness of the libraries being shown by the customer feedback on their service performance. *Though the finding is not significant statistically, nevertheless it does indicate a positive trend and linkage between the two constructs which is that a greater degree of market orientation corresponds to a greater level of*

achievement in the service effectiveness of the library services, the ultimate result being higher customer satisfaction.

Figure 2: Overall means of service performance of libraries in relation to market orientation



The overall picture of the customer satisfaction with the service performance of libraries in three different marketing market orientations is summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Customer satisfaction with the service performance of libraries in three market orientations

Service performance indicators of the libraries	The weak market oriented libraries (WMO)	The medium market oriented libraries (MMO)	The strong market oriented libraries (SMO)
Accessibility of services and products	Lowest	Medium	Highest
Study environment	Medium	Lowest	Highest
Satisfaction with library equipments	Medium	Lowest	Highest
Collections usefulness	Lowest	Medium	Highest
Condition of collections	Highest	Medium	Lowest
Customer centeredness of services	Lowest	Equal to SMO	Highest
Staff attributes	Medium	Highest	Lowest
Customer appreciation	Medium	Lowest	Highest
Customers' opinion on pricing issue			
-Justification of library to charge fees	Medium	Lowest	Highest
-Charging external users	Highest	Lowest	Medium
-Willingness to pay	Lowest	Medium	Highest
Overall quality	Lowest	Almost equal to SMO	Highest

Thus, based on the findings presented in table 2, the service performance of the three market oriented groups of libraries could be described as follows:

The strong market oriented libraries

The strong market oriented libraries put more effort in ensuring the accessibility of their materials, collections, services and products by providing adequate guidance through appropriate sign, symbols and hand-outs. The customers are satisfied with the physical study environment factors, such as library interior, lighting, furniture, availability of study areas where talking is permitted, etc. They are also happy with the working conditions of various library equipments such as catalogue computers, Internet, CD-ROM databases, photocopiers, computer printers, etc., which they frequently use while exploiting the libraries' collection and resources. They find their libraries' collection useful and feel that it caters to their information needs but see shortcomings in the conditions of the collections. The customers are satisfied with the overall efficiency of various library services such as inter-library loan, borrowing of materials, photocopiers, computer printers, opening hours and promotional activities, etc. However, they seem to be dissatisfied with the staff attributes (welcoming behaviour and assistance to customers) i.e. the way services are delivered to them. Nevertheless, they appreciate the libraries' efforts in procuring library materials, organizing teaching programmes, user survey, and introducing new services and products and moreover express satisfaction with the overall quality of libraries' collections, facilities and services.

The medium market oriented libraries

The medium group of libraries put comparatively less efforts than the previous group towards the accessibility of library materials and services. This group seems to be the least bothered about the physical study environment factors such as library building, attractive interior, comfortable furniture, lighting, temperature, etc. Moreover, customers of this group also seem to be the most dissatisfied with the working conditions of the various library equipments such as computer catalogue, database computers, photocopy machines, computer printers and audio-visual materials, etc. They are also comparatively less satisfied with the usefulness and condition of the library collections. These libraries provide customer centeredness in their various services such as organisation and borrowing of materials, opening hours of libraries, inter-library loan and promotional activities addressed to customers. Moreover, customers give the highest appreciation to the staff attributes of this group i.e. they seem to be satisfied, the way, they are receiving services and assistance from the library staff. But, in spite of this, the customers appear to be most critical about libraries' collection and procurement policy, the teaching programmes of libraries and user-surveys. Nevertheless, they are quite satisfied with the overall quality of libraries' collection, facilities and services.

The weak market oriented libraries

The weak market oriented libraries do not seem to exert the adequate effort towards the accessibility of services and products as the previous groups. However, the customer seems to be satisfied with the physical study environment of the library. Moreover, the customers are most satisfied with the condition of collections of such libraries which is at the best across the three groups. But, they are dissatisfied with the collections usefulness and the working conditions of libraries' various equipment, efficiency of library services such as circulation, inter-library loans and promotional activities, different staff

attributes, and customer appreciation, etc. Moreover, the customers of this group seem to be the least satisfied with the overall quality of libraries' collection, facilities and services targeted to them.

4. Discussion

The objective of this paper was to examine the dynamics between market orientation and library service performance. This research has shown that there are major differences in the market orientation of different research libraries. Three kinds of market orientations have been labelled as: the *strong*, the *medium*, and the *weak*. However, the most important question put forward in this research is how beneficial a highly developed market orientation is to a library. The answer to this question was sought by analysing the opinions of the consumers on different services offered to them by their libraries. The market-oriented efforts of the strong market oriented libraries can be seen in the higher satisfaction of their customers. They stand out from the rest in providing customer satisfaction through superior service performance in most of the aspects. The service performance of the medium market oriented libraries is also of medium type. Typical of their service performance is the highest customer satisfaction with the staff attributes across the three groups of libraries. It has also been revealed that the service performance of the weak market oriented libraries has not been found to be superior. Instead, it goes hand in hand with their weak market oriented behaviour. The results of this study suggest that market orientation has an important role in determining the service performance of the libraries. This research shows that a small proportion of the libraries (the strong market oriented) find marketing challenging and demanding. These libraries use modern marketing theories and applications to gain a competitive advantage for providing a successful customer centred service. This could be attributed to their marketing education and more exposure to marketing seminar and courses as the demographic findings suggest. However, some respondents have also been found to be strong market oriented without having any formal education in marketing. A majority of the library directors have been found to have professional experience of 16-25 years or more than 26 years. In other libraries (the medium and the weak groups), the marketing concept does not always dominate the libraries' organisational thinking. The respondents are having comparatively less marketing education, and exposure to marketing seminar and conferences and professional experiences (1-15 years). Moreover, the concept of marketing has a poor image in the mind of these libraries. However, the results of this research show that a strong market oriented approach brings in more satisfaction to the customers. Marketing theories can thus be used to bring better strategic and operational marketing knowledge and know-how by the library managers in an understandable and useful way.

It has been found in the current research that the higher market orientation is connected to a higher extent with the service performance of libraries. This research is in the line of recent emerging perspective (Krepapa, et al., 2003, Steinman et al., 2000; Webb et al., 2000) which suggests that beneficial strategic insights may be gained when service firms take into account their customers' view on the organization's level of market orientation. A review of the market orientation literature reveals that researchers initially considered and measured market orientation as a management perceived phenomenon (Narver and Slater, 1990; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Likewise, Lozano's customer orientation model (2000) also takes into account only the library managers' point of view. In this sense, adopting solely a management-defined view of market orientation is one-sided in that it ignores the vital role that customers play in terms of value recognition (Webb, et al.,

2000). Recent thinking, however suggests that because market orientation contains a strong customer focus, an organisation can be accurately described as market-oriented only when its customers perceive as such (Krepapa, et al., 2003). Hernon (2002) also argues that “if customers say there is quality service, then there is. If they do not, then there is not. It does not matter what an organization believes about its level of service”. Therefore, the findings of the current research assume importance in the sense that they reveal that the higher level of market orientation of libraries result, may not be in perfect but undoubtedly superior service performance, as the customers’ feedback confirm.

4.1. Service encounter

Service encounters occur where it is necessary for consumer and producer to meet in order for the former to receive the benefits which the latter has the resources to provide (Palmer, 2005). The concept has been defined broadly by Shostach (1985) as ‘a period of time during which a customer directly interacts with a service’. This definition includes all aspects of the service organisation with which a consumer may interact including its personnel, physical assets and other tangible evidence. One of the interesting results of this study is the anomaly between high service quality and customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the staff attributes in respect of the level of their market orientation. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) call such interactions between customers and service organisation employees as ‘critical incidents’ that make customers either especially satisfied or dissatisfied. The customers were not found to be satisfied with the quality of staff attributes in the strong market oriented group of libraries even though they rate the library superior in most of other library’s aspects. This highlights that customers seem to be more demanding even critical in spite of getting good services which might be the case especially in the strong market oriented libraries. However, on the contrary, the dissatisfaction of the customers with the staff attributes might be the same or completely different for different reasons in the libraries of the weak market oriented group. Another explanation may be that market orientation of the library leadership is not implemented at the desk by those employees who interact with the customers face-to-face. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that criticism may vary depending upon the customer expectations of information, and the way it is delivered i.e. the so called “moments of truth” (Carlzon, 1987). These may be different from library to library depending upon the interaction quality between staff expertise in delivering the information and their respective customer base. This finding points out a gap between the service providers’ and customers’ perceptions of staff attributes. Moreover, it highlights a proximate question of strategic concern: “what is the significance of such a gap for the relationship?” This finding does suggest the importance of communication in the formation of relationship building between the service provider and receiver. Moreover, it highlights that the human side of customer service is an important determinant in providing customer satisfaction (Martensen and Gronholdt, 2003) or dissatisfaction. Therefore, it can be assumed that the role of the library and information professional is getting increasingly indispensable and crucial as making information accessible to customers’ expectations is an extraordinarily complex task. Further, it is getting more and more complicated with the robust growth of information and as well as the increasing sophistication of today’s well informed high tech consumers. The implication of this finding does suggest that the gap between the service provider and receiver can be closed by increasing the marketing competence of service provider so that their behaviours are consistent with customers’ expectations and help in managing relationship with customers.

5. Conclusion

This research has compared service performance of different libraries against their level of market orientation. In this respect, it has analysed the actual service performance of entire library from the customers' viewpoint and thus responds to the call of recent emerging perspective which suggests that beneficial insights may be gained when organisations take into account their customers' view on the organisation's level of market orientation (Deshpande, et al. 1993; Krepapa, et al., 2003, Steinman et al., 2000; Webb et al., 2000). The findings of the present research suggest that market orientation of a library is an important determinant of its service performance. The implication for library managers is that it pays to be market oriented which results in higher customer satisfaction as was the case with the strong market oriented libraries. Regular assessment of customers' information needs and demands is a vital instrument for augmentation of library services and product. As such, it suggests that it is important for libraries to act in a market oriented fashion by understanding what customers need and deliver the value to their information needs and expectations. The findings about the 'service encounter' as discussed in previous section indicate serious implications for communication aspect between service provider and receiver which is at the heart of relational marketing. Thus, it would be beneficial for library managers to implicate the findings of the study for improving the market orientation of their businesses in their efforts to provide higher customer satisfaction. This study is an important step in validating the market orientation/service performance relationship in the context of library and information providing institutions which has been found positive though not significant statistically. As such, the findings suggest that a market orientation appears to provide a unifying focus for the efforts of employees within the library, thereby leading to superior performance. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the evaluation of a library's market orientation level from both the customer and the library viewpoint is not only intuitively logical, but also necessary in order to ensure that a library's perceptions of reality are not out of synchronization with those of its customers as also suggested by other researchers (Deshpande et al., 1993; Krepapa, et al., 2003) in respect of corporate organisations.

In brief, the overall findings of this research suggest that market orientation is a valuable tool for identifying differences between library and information service providers and customers' perceptions. Moreover, addressing the market orientation gap between library's and its customer's level is more logical for formulating strategies to enhance customer satisfaction. Of real interest to library management is how to change perceptions of '*us versus them*' (a wide market orientation gap) to '*we*' (consensus of market orientation perceptions), in other words how to move away from transactional standpoints towards collaborative perspectives. Closing the gap can be achieved by adjusting the market oriented behaviours of service provider to be consistent with customer expectations and by managing customer expectations (Krepapa, et al., 2003). Since, this is one of the first studies examining the relationship between market orientation and service performance in the context of library settings, the present findings are indicative rather than conclusive. The implications of the study are clear. The research must be refined and replicated in diverse environments and over time to increase the confidence in the nature of market orientation and service performance relationship in the context of libraries.

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