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**Integrating 5-Star Customer Services in Libraries and Information Centers for Efficient
Smart Cities and Communities**

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Abstract

The customers in all institutions and organizations are important resources that drive the services for optimum satisfaction. They are also the important factor in library and information sectors. As the library is about people and satisfaction of needs, it makes sense that these people are accorded with the highest regards, respect and warmth for that total quality service. The 5 star customer services become pertinent and great strategy in efficient library and information centers. Today, the customers have the power to make or mar any organization through information sharing in online and offline modes. This paper highlighted the concept of integrating 5 star customer services in library and information centers, the enhancement of services for smart cities and communities, the delivering of total quality services and the way forward. Hence, there is need to live, breathe and navigate the 5 star customer services in all libraries and information centers. This is the right time to begin to apply the requisite quality services that add value to peoples' lives with the good mindset. The 5 star customer services can be replicated in the libraries for the wholesome packages that aim to establish long lasting memories in the clients with the desire to come back for more.

Keywords: 5- star customer services, library and information services, librarians, smart cities and communities

Introduction

Every organization re-creates and innovates its services to get the customers coming back for me. The focus is to deliver services that highly satisfy and appeal to all the customers. It calls for more enhanced and strategized services. It calls for 5-Star customer service that is devoid of disgruntled attitude, verbal attacks, offensive body languages and other inappropriate behaviors that affect businesses. Information is a serious business that needs all the proper conducts to render effective services. The fact is that many information sectors with wide experiences and tools in the competitive market regularly strategize and move up the ladder with specialized services. Thus, the library and information sector needs to gear up in re-structuring and adopting top-notch service delivery for the most appealing engagements of the people, anywhere. Undoubtedly, ICT and the Internet have incredibly changed the way information services are delivered just as in other businesses. What this means is that the Internet of things (Mehmood, Ahmad, Yaqoob, Adnane, Imran & Guizan, 2017) including the social media, the online and offline aim to give total quality information services with seamless experiences, appropriate resources, exuding warmth and cheerfulness (Hernandez, 2019).

The competitive economy with the global trend in cities and communities leave the information managers choices to change with the tide in the new information strategies or be swallowed in the surge. That change must be adopted by the librarians, if they must remain relevant and drive the information society. The point is that the library and information are for the people and not for the resources waiting to be accessed. So these people must be shown acceptance, acknowledgement and value. Apparently, there is something that remains the same - people love it when others treat them well with respect and dignity. This is the philosophy of *The Thank You Economy* which is built on age long time-honored techniques of listening to and appreciating customers and newer services (Vaynerchuk, 2011). Indeed, the powerful words of old-school ways, “Please and Thank

You'' should never be thrown away. These are the words that boost 5 star services which every library and information service sectors must imbibe.

Clearly, customer service is not just the responsibility of the receptionist or customer or reference service desk officer. Everyone in the library contributes in some way to the customer experience either directly or indirectly. Thus, from the newly employed to the oldest staff, the 5 Star resourcefulness must resonate to enrich lives. It involves everyone, from support to marketing to IT to all the team and beyond (Williams, 2018 & Campo, 2017). It must be like Cooper (2018) affirmed, be part of the library DNA (the molecule of life). As a result, it needs to be built into the library systems, reflected in its recruitment, instilled in its team, demonstrated throughout the customer journey and delivered by engaged employees. Therefore, getting customer interactions right has never been more important, especially since social media has given unhappy customers a louder voice. Based on this, the relationship between the libraries and their customers must change to unending maximal collaboration.

The concept of 5 star customer services in library and information centers

Customer service is simply the process of ensuring customer satisfaction with a product or service. The concept of 5star customer service has been more associated with hospitality business. Today, it is no longer only in the domain of hospitality business but in library and information service sector as well. Robinson (2010) pointed out that libraries are implementing business techniques to build patron loyalty, to remain useful and relevant. The 5 star customer service is a whole desirable package of rendering the best by doing extra which will impact on the customer's senses and make them desire to come back. It is the transformation and easy flow of services for that memory that lingers in the mind and never goes away. According to Mckinney, (2017) customer service is the act of

taking care of the customer's needs by providing and delivering professional, helpful, high quality service and assistance before, during, and after the customer's requirements are met. Merritt (2015) stated that great customer care is not just about having a well-trained customer care team. It is about empowering everyone in the organization to go above and beyond with actions that have become every day practices.

Customer service is the foundation of every business and information is a critical factor in business. It connects all the dots in the business relationships ensuring wellbeing of every party involved in the services. Just think about this, the front line Team in all types of libraries is the 'human face' (Mossop, 2015) who impacts on the quality of learning and information in the customers. In the academic libraries, the students may be affected by poor customer services. In public and the national libraries, the members of the public may be embarrassed, the school library may scare the children away while the special and academic libraries may be isolated because of poor services. The poor responses on online services may cause untold public hate all over the social media. So what is more? The roles played in rendering and packaging of library and information services through any means must not be undervalued. It must be highly specialized, valuable and admirably.

Customers are simply important and can create rippling effects with referrals that boost the library and information centers, even via virtual services. Now, what happens, when reverse is the case? In the words of Public Library Online (2020) patron bashing—i.e. venting, ruminating, gossiping—might be the greatest failure when it comes to customer service and perhaps the greatest barrier to excellent customer service in libraries. It creates a toxic, negative environment that stunts innovation, wastes time and waters down service. Thomas (2020) summarized it all:

when customers are unhappy, there's a 91 percent chance they won't do business with a company again ... dissatisfied customers typically tell nine to 15 other people about their experience, some tell 20 or more.

Perhaps, this is one of the causes of low patronage in the libraries. Indeed, people want warm reception and acceptance irrespective of how they look and where they come from. People want spaces where things are happening, where there are new changes and attractive centers to relax. People want good attitude. These can actually be offered by the libraries by simply adopting 5 star customer information services making the library attractive and more accessible. In view of this, it is deduced that the 5 Star customer services embodies the ethics of services to community which is viewed first and foremost as a community resource – a place where people can get what they need in a trusted setting with experienced, hands-on assistance (Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) 2009).

Smart cities and communities for customer services

Almost all the cities and communities are fast changing into information society. This then increases the roles of librarians in enhancing supportive services that improve the lives of the people and their communities. The notion of inclusive participation and leaving no one behind emphasize (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020) the reason the 5 star information services must cut across boundaries for everyone's good. Library and information services enhance cities and communities by rendering smart learning in digital competences. According to Lister (2020) smart learning, based on cultural, civic or community interests and placed within a context of ad-hoc urban learning experiences set in authentic learning hyper-local environments might support and

develop citizen digital literacies and competences through a wide variety of informal learning activities. The communities are developed into high powered centers when the cultural heritage are incorporated in shared learning with requisites services for the dwellers. In the same vein Siountri, Skondras and Vergados (2020) pointed that the cultural heritage of a city, both tangible and intangible, constitutes a resource of inestimable value, the uprising digital era needs, as well sustainable use and management.

Importantly, a soothing, welcoming and friendly space is what is expected of libraries in becoming exciting community destinations for customer 5- Star Service experiences as well as gathering places for residents. No library environment should be devoid of these warmth and enriching services even in the rural communities. Today, the library users are empowered, smart with high taste and savvy technological know-how. They demand quick response to inquiries without caring how they are sourced. So because they want that, librarians need to be smarter and quicker in responding to enquiries for customer services that ensure sustainability (Brady, Kearsey, Monigatti, Sindel & Tsui-P, 2010). That is part of 5 star customer services. The indication as Weinstein and Mcfarlane (2016) stated is that all libraries (public, private, educational, and corporate) must justify their value to society, communities, and their patrons.

In another scenario, Public Library Online (2020) reiterated that achieving excellent customer service requires a culture change in the library organization that is driven internally through the engagement and validation of staff. The good behavior and attitude of librarians do not change according to locations or persons being served. Whatever happens in the city can always be

replicated in the communities in the context of social inclusion and on the basis of equal learning and services with desired reference services. The 5 Star innovation as the current generation of libraries' services extend their mission and services well beyond the cities and storage of knowledge (Nikitin & Jackson, 2009). Through the social media and other online services, the unseen clients which include residents from the cities and the communities must be viewed as important personalities to be served with respect and dignity.

Delivering total quality library and information 5 star services

The competition in information business indicates that only the best and the most strategists get all the customers and acknowledgement. Across the globe, ingenuity is widely acclaimed while mediocrity is sent to the background. The invention of 5 Star customer services must not be waived or forgotten over the online engagement. The sharing of electronic resources, teaching, learning and facilitation of access to information, ICT skill and other ICT related skill acquisition (Anunobi & Edeka, 2010) must be applied with the rules of the etiquettes and the best practices of information service delivery. To buttress this, Edwards, Rauseo and Unger, (2013) separated library services into five very broad categories namely: (1) libraries as community builders, (2) libraries as community centers for diverse populations, (3) libraries as centers for the arts, (4) libraries as universities, and (5) libraries as champions of youth.

Since people are the face of the library, they must know the value of quality services even behind the technology. The fact remains that information service is practical oriented and can be measured immediately. The standard of services given is known and is measured as customers usually compare and contrast from the last services or from another establishment. So there is always something to weigh it with for decision taking. One never forgets a look, a body language, the

unspoken words, the expressions and the general demeanor when being served (Grant, 2020). This is where the test starts and decisions formed by the customers to like or dislike. The tangible service is of course, the last result that seal the decision of the customer. Thus, doing the right thing from the beginning determines how library and information services impacts on the people who need information.

It is pertinent to mention that there are tangible and intangible services which are all in the jurisdiction of librarians. Grönroos (2009) pointed out that there are three main features of services. The first feature is that services are processes that consist of a series of activities where different resources, such as humans, physical resources and systems are used, often in direct interaction with the customer, in a way that tries to create a solution to the customer's problem. Based on this, it is the tangible services that are most important to the customers as they appraise in details however, they are treated at every stage of the services. Again, the services of continuing education to recreation and how to reach out to homebound seniors, packed with ideas for films and music, computers and the Web, reminiscing programs, reading, using adaptive and assistive devices, and more are one-stop guide for inputting the customer services on the needs of the library users (Mates, 2003). Thus, libraries must relate with their customers in ways that delight, appeal and satisfy.

The way forward in 5 star customer services in the library and information centers

Real acknowledgement is earned and not demanded. Therefore, to live, breathe and navigate the 5 star customer services in the library and information centers, librarians must begin to apply the requisites quality services that add value. The services rendered to the users must be the best with initial mindset of effectiveness and efficiency, wholesome packages that aim to establish long lasting memories. It takes a good team work to actualize goals and innovate new ideas. Hence, there is need to involve everyone and ensure contributions and participations of all staff in the libraries for that quality services. The notion that 5 star customer service is expensive or is not in the domain of library and information services should be waived. It has been proven in the literature that some libraries can do it to revitalize users and services. Besides. Integrating 5 star customer services cost nothing but a shift from nomenclature to exciting demeanor and cordial relationship with the users of information.

Librarians need to learn and re-learn of the tactics that are really appealing to the people they engage with. The new era of information society requires well-tuned global 21st century current library services with all the quality assurances and ethics of information delivery. For instance, the reference librarian and all library staff must have to successfully meet the needs of their customers and communities through the services of phoning or emailing, designing friendly web pages, answering reference questions, searching for resources and feed-back mechanisms, good content development, physical engagement and attending to users' opinions. If small business owners can learn from big conglomerate on how to care for their customers, libraries can as well take the cue as they also have people they aim to impress with their services.

The institutions are poised with new innovations of information services, extending their mission well beyond the storage of knowledge. The professionals must become smarter with new learnings and new tools, devising spaces beyond the physical areas. Good customer value-based services will help libraries re-capture the total supports of users as well as maintain a formidable force in information dissemination both on online and offline contents.

Conclusion

Libraries both on and offline services must rise up to the challenges of impeccable services to their users. It is no longer acceptable to feel that everybody needs the library for their information. This is the main point of this paper to adopt the 5 star customer service trends in serving the people with information wherever they may be and whatever format they want it. The competition is fierce which necessitates that every user in every location must be made to feel the changing needs of the impacts of smart cities and communities. The knowledge that librarians are not only competing with the internet and technology but with other individuals who are also in the information business from other endeavors shows the imperativeness of embracing the 5 star customer services. Librarians must bring to the fore the trainings and the re-learning in the new order to remain relevant and champions of information generation and sharing. The time is now when technology is reshaping the information strategies and framework of meeting the clients' needs.

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