An investigation into the Marketing Policies of Local Authority Public Libraries within the Republic of Ireland

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research project aims to address the question of how Irish local authority public libraries market their products and services to residents of their respective local authority jurisdictions within the Republic of Ireland. The research is intended to analyse the potential room for improvement in the marketing practices of Irish public libraries. Analysis within this research project will result in mainly quantitative, and some qualitative data, that will enable the researcher to demonstrate the marketing opportunities, and logistical challenges, that exist for Irish public libraries. In order to explore avenues for future marketing activities, within Irish public libraries, the researcher will examine the current marketing trends and practices within the Irish local authority public library network.

1.2 CONTEXT BEHIND RESEARCH PROJECT

Public libraries in the Republic of Ireland are administered under the auspices of Irish local authorities known as county or city councils. The nature of local government in the Republic of Ireland dictates that jurisdictions are commonly governed according to the old Irish geographical county system. In some cases cities within certain counties also have their own designated council governance and authority. The Republic of Ireland has 26 County Councils, 3 City Councils and two combined City and County Councils amounting to 31 local authorities in total; however there are 30 local authority library services in the Irish State with Galway City and Galway County Councils' local authority areas operating under a unified library service.

In recent years Irish local government has had to adapt to changed economic and social realities in Ireland. In many cases this has led to a reduction, or stripping away, of some traditional services while recent government legislation has added a more business-oriented slant to the roles and functions of County and City Councils. In this context the Irish local government public library sector is also undergoing important
changes with many key areas for innovation and service expansion identified in the latest government library programme, 'Opportunities for All: A Strategy for Public Libraries 2013 - 2017'. Three important policy areas are identified in this policy document:

1. **Economic:** In a similar manner to the way the entire Irish local government sector has a new business promotion identity, Irish public libraries will also work to help nurture information learning and skills that will contribute towards economic recovery.

2. **Social:** The library location, both physically and online, will become an important element of the community and will help towards generating a sense of community solidarity and cohesion.

3. **Cultural:** Public libraries will continue to promote cultural development and identity in the community and foster a sense of "collective cultural experience". (LGMA, 2013)

A lot of work is currently being done within the Irish public library sector to roll out a new National Library Management System which it is hoped, at a governmental level, will provide huge benefits to the Irish public who will be able to access a national network of public libraries that will all utilise a common Library Management System. A lot of work is also being done on the role and function the public library environment plays in the type of services available to the Irish public; modern purpose-built library spaces, such as Dun Laoghaire Rathdown's Lexicon and the proposed new Dublin Central Library in Parnell Square, point towards a new era in Irish public libraries where physical location is a key element in how modern services are provided to visitors. Irish public libraries are also adapting to the provision of new technology based services with access to wi-fi in every public library one of the stated aims in 'Opportunities for All' (LGMA, 2013). These circumstances form the
context behind any investigation into the level of marketing of services in the Irish public library network.

1.3 **BACKGROUND HYPOTHESES FOR RESEARCH**

The overall hypotheses behind this research is the assertion that a level of disorganisation in marketing of services in Irish public libraries is due primarily to a lack of formal policy approach; this is principally demonstrated by the fact that dedicated marketing plans are not common across Irish public library authorities. Consequently, while Irish public libraries perform varying degrees of marketing, it remains to be investigated whether the lack of organised marketing policies is affecting the library services' ability to engage fully with their target audience.

1.4 **RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED RESEARCH**

The research is relevant because the Irish public library network has to ensure its relevance in an era when the role of libraries is increasingly being questioned in the context of new information seeking technologies that are cheaply, and now easily, available to the Irish general public. This research project will investigate the importance of marketing in fulfilling the future service objectives of Irish local authority libraries. It will also explore the service marketing opportunities that currently exist as well as potential and emerging marketing policies and activities that can help promote, and ensure the continuing relevance, of public libraries in the Republic of Ireland. This research is unique in the context of marketing in Irish public libraries and the research feedback will demonstrate the need for further continued study in this area of the Irish public library sector.
1.5 **RESEARCH AUDIENCE**

This research is primarily intended to provide Irish public libraries with a beneficial insight into the ways in which marketing is dealt with in the Irish public library network. The research is intended to provide a foundation of rich data for any library professional looking to address the current marketing landscape within the Irish public library network.

1.6 **RESEARCHER’S BACKGROUND**

The researcher works for Dublin City Council, the largest local authority in the Republic of Ireland. Dublin City Council is the local government body providing public services, such as motor tax, roads, parks and public libraries, to the citizens of Dublin city. This research will provide insight into the marketing landscape within which Irish public library authorities, such as Dublin City Public Libraries and Archives, currently operate.

1.7 **ORGANISATION OF DISSERTATION**

The dissertation is organised into six chapters including the Introduction. The remaining chapters include: a literature review, methodology, data analysis section, conclusion and a personal review of the findings that the researcher has come to arising out of the research.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Palmer argues that services create a ‘value in use’ for goods and that consequently goods become a ‘subsidising part of a service offer’ (Palmer, 2014, p.2). The thrust of this argument indicates the close links between established notions of marketing, i.e. promoting product, and an approach to promoting services. The question that needs to be looked at is what is the difference between traditional marketing and services marketing? Do these differences have implications on formulating a marketing plan for a service organisation?

Kotler and Armstrong assert that, unlike traditional external marketing, the four Ps approach to marketing is insufficient for marketing services; service marketing requires additional elements which, according to Kotler and Armstrong, are: internal marketing and interactive marketing.

- **Internal Marketing:** “orienting and motivating customer-contact employees and supporting service people to work as a team to provide customer satisfaction”

- **Interactive Marketing:** “training service employees in the fine art of interacting with customers to satisfy their needs” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p.264)

Kotler and Armstrong’s stance on service marketing can be defined as equating to traditional marketing combined with modern customer services. In summary an organisation promoting services needs to train its employees to function as brand ambassadors by implementing a modern customer services approach to its customer interactions.

Palmer (2014) argues that the consumers of service organisations in many cases buy into the ‘idea promoted by the service provider, or may identify with a cause that the provider promotes’ (Palmer, 2014, p. 3). It is evident that the customer services
approach, contained in Kotler and Armstrong’s internal marketing and interactive marketing, is key to attaining this customer buy-in from service providers.

The key motivation behind this ‘customer services’ approach to marketing by service providers is ensuring greater customer engagement through positive feedback; the importance of word-of-mouth in creating brand loyalty is a key aspect of Kotler and Armstrong’s ‘interactive marketing’ element in services marketing. Customer satisfaction leads to brand loyalty and raises product, or service, awareness amongst consumers which in turn leads to a greater improvement on the organisation’s profit generation or strategic aims (Pataria, 2014, p.31). In terms of services marketing, word-of-mouth also necessitates addressing online forms of customer engagement and feedback. Electronic Word-of-Mouth must be addressed as an important part of an organisation’s service marketing strategy. In a global study carried out by Nielsen, 83% of respondents indicated high levels of trust in recommendations given by friends and family; 66% of respondents in this survey indicated that they trusted consumer opinions that were posted online. (Nielsen, 2015). The advantage of word-of-mouth marketing is that it generates trust as customers receive the referral from a trusted source. Electronic word-of-mouth marketing is also beneficial from a budgetary perspective as it is low cost and helps to build the brand but it can also be difficult to track its impact on the business in addition to having to deal with the possibility of, sometimes unavoidable, negative word-of-mouth. It is argued by Chaffey and Smith that word-of-mouth is just one of two main forms of viral marketing with the other being defined as ‘word-of-mouse’. Both of these forms of viral marketing rely on external networks of people spreading the company’s message and it is for this reason that both are prominent on social networking platforms. (Chaffey and Smith, 2008, p.328)

The importance of electronic word-of-mouth in marketing is related to influence. Jalilvand et. al. (2011) argues that the “key WOM player is opinion leader”. An opinion leader is interested in particular product fields, makes an “effort to expose
themselves to mass media sources” and is “trusted by opinion seekers to provide knowledgeable advice”. (Jalilvand et. al.; 2011) The importance of the behaviour of these opinion leaders is justified due to their influence because they are effectively determining the behaviour of those who trust them. Jalilvand et. al.(2011) asserts that “consumers imitate each other following a social or vicarious learning paradigm”; in the context of libraries these consumers are the customers and users of the service who, it is argued, must be influenced in a similar vein.

Jalilvand’s assertions above, and the importance of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication in marketing, can be justified with reference to general consumer behaviour with the advance of the internet age. The growing relevance of electronic word-of-mouth marketing is linked to the emergence of Web 2.0. In addition to addressing the use of Web 2.0 within the library environment, library strategists must now accept that “more and more consumers use Web 2.0 tools (e.g., online discussion forums, consumer review sites, weblogs, social network sites, etc.) to exchange product information” (Lee, et. al. in Cheung and Thadani, 2010) Cheung and Thadani (2010) back this assertion up by stating that, according to a study by website eMarketer in February 2009, the number of online consumer reviews had reached 116 million. A more recent study indicates that in 2015 “more than two-thirds of US internet users trust businesses more because of positive online reviews” (eMarketer, 2015). As can be seen from the above information, if a library’s customers place greater trust in Jalilvand et. al’s “opinion leaders” it makes integrating eWOM in a library marketing plan a necessity.

Cheung & Thadani (2010) explains that electronic Word-of-Mouth communication takes many forms:

“Consumers can post their opinions, comments and reviews of products on weblogs (e.g. xanga.com), discussion forums (e.g. zyapak.com), review websites (e.g. Epinions.com), e-bulletin board systems, newsgroup, social networking sites (e.g. facebook.com).” (Cheung & Thadani, 2010, P.330)
There are critical differences between electronic word-of-mouth communications and traditional WOM.

**Key Differences between WOM and eWOM**

1. **Accessibility & Performance**
   Electronic Word-of-Mouth is commonly a permanent record on the internet that is archived and can be accessed quite easily.

2. **Measurement**
   Electronic Word-of-Mouth is more tangible than traditional word-of-mouth communication and is therefore more easily quantified. Traditionally the sources of WOM communication is known by those on the receiving end; on the other hand within electronic word-of-mouth communication there is a more limited capacity to judge the credibility of the source and his/her message.

3. **Scale and Audience**
   Unlike traditional Word-of-Mouth communication there is huge scalability and reach with electronic Word-of-Mouth communication. (Cheung and Thadani, 2010)

Cheung and Thadani, through highlighting the key differences between eWOM and traditional WOM communications, demonstrate the huge power of influence that this form of communication contains from a marketing perspective. In terms of accessibility and performance, eWOM is a permanent record and should therefore be approached by market strategists with regards to maintaining brand integrity. eWOM is highlighted as being more quantifiable with huger scalability and potential target audience than traditional WOM communications.

The advantage of electronic Word-of-Mouth communication for marketers is that it is much easier to identify and capture the information within “computer mediated
environments” than what would be the case with traditional word-of-mouth communication (Dellarocas in Koeck, 2013). Koeck (2013) makes particular reference to “Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn” when referring to social networking platforms. In referring to Facebook Koeck (2013) states that “according to Facebookstats (2012) there are 910 million users registered on this SNS, and over 70% of them are using this platform on a daily basis”. (P.4, Koeck, 2013); indeed Facebook now currently has nearly 1.75 billion users registered (Statista, 2016)

Any perceived challenges to an organisation’s pro-active engagement with electronic word-of-mouth and social networking are counter balanced by the positive aspiration of brand loyalty. According to Hur, et. al., cited in Pataria (2015, p.31), loyal ‘customers not only lead to profits but also ‘advocate positive word-of-mouth to leverage the brand from the competitors’.

Potter puts the above case forward strongly in the specific context of marketing for a library. The percentage of a library’s target audience, that is actively using at least one form of social media, is continually increasing. (Potter, 2012). According to Potter (2012) the arguments that have been highlighted above make sense; library customers trust their community and more people are turning to their social network for information:

“People turn to social media for information more frequently now than they did even a year ago, because every search engine brings back about a million hits too many to the queries we type in. So we ask our networks instead; we trust humans more than we trust algorithms. Libraries must be there, providing good quality information as we have always done, but across new platforms”. (Potter, 2012, p.117)

Libraries need to be adapting to this new reality and participating in these communities in order to maintain brand presence as the key stakeholders involved in knowledge management. By engaging in this manner, and employing Word-of-Mouth
Marketing (WOMM), libraries according to Potter can reach a greater target audience and attain successful community engagement.

In particular reference to how libraries, through their community participation, engage with multicultural communities, Potter asserts that there is ‘very little advice and coverage already available’ on this subject. (Potter, 2012, P.146) However Potter (2012) citing Acevado does highlight some practical advice on how libraries can market to diverse communities. Libraries can engage in community radio interviews to discuss the service that is offered. Libraries can also be ‘pro-active in networking with the community’ and engage in medium term projects to effectively attain participation and raise awareness within multicultural communities. (Acevado cited in Potter, 2012, p.147)

Returning to Kotler and Armstrong’s assertion, at the beginning of the literature review, relating to service marketing, Palmer (2010) highlights the limitations of the 4Ps of the marketing mix for service marketing by asserting the necessity of the 7Ps model. The 4Ps model is limited for service marketing because:

- “The intangible nature of services is overlooked in most analysis of the mix

- The price element overlooks the fact that many services are produced by the public sector without a price being charged to the final consumer

- The promotion mix of the traditional 4Ps fails to recognise the promotion of services that takes place at the point of consumption by the production personnel”(Palmer, 2010, p. 33)

The second limitation listed above is of particular relevance to Irish Public Libraries’ service marketing situation and has to be looked at from non-monetary costs to its
customers. Hanlon (2014) defines this model as the ‘7Ps framework for the digital marketing mix’. A breakdown of these 7Ps is contained in the table below:

![Figure 1: 7 Ps of Marketing: Using the Internet to vary the marketing mix](image)

The ‘Process’ element of the 7Ps, and its emphasis on customer focus, is of particular relevance to marketing in the public sector.

**Library 2.0 and Participatory Library**

Libraries, and librarians, have historically controlled information; traditionally librarians controlled how information was selected, described and provided but in the internet age libraries have lost some of this control as more and more information is accessible online (Leeder and Frierson, 2014). Leeder and Frierson (2014) declare that the “library 2.0” movement, in place from 2000 onwards, has given way to a “broader concept of ‘Participatory Library’” (Leeder and Frierson, 2014 ,p.viii). Library 2.0 is a term used to define how libraries are changing the way they function and deliver services to library users in response to current trends in the sector with particular attention on technological developments; Library 2.0 seeks to move library services towards the provision of “digital and haptic environments” which enable users to obtain information. (Byrne, 2008 ,p. 366). Library 2.0 is a new type of library service that fully embraces the principles of library user participation in the library
environment (Nguyen et. al., 2012, p.3,) The “Participatory Library” seeks to prompt library users to “join librarians and library staff in shaping the library to meet their needs” (Leeder and Frierson, 2014).

The technologies linked with this inclusive ‘Participatory Library’ approach “include wikis, blogs, RSS and social networks” (Leeder and Frierson, 2014, p. 11,) ; the approach is centred on customer engagement to find out what customers (library members and potential members) want and helping to “make sure they got it” (Leeder and Frierson, 2014, p.11,).

“Ultimately, the Participatory Library is about a more equitable distribution of knowledge, experience, and opportunity, and about making sure people have as many choices available to them as possible” (Leeder and Frierson, 2014, p.12,)

Participatory Library, as put forward by Leeder and Frierson (2014) is an acknowledgement that modern library services must be designed using a collaborative approach between library service and user and that this will also ultimately facilitate a more effective modern marketing approach.

Buckland (1992) argued that the move towards the provision of an “Electronic Library” was necessary to reflect people’s behaviour outside the library environment; if library users’ had moved from a “personal computing environment for their work” then it was necessary for them to have access to an “Electronic Library” that could provide “access to electronic records”. Buckland’s Manifesto (1992), despite its age, is seen as a seminal document in the field of library service design. The core message from Buckland is that library services should adapt to reflect the technological realities of the time. In 1992, when speaking of the transition from an ‘Automated Library’ to an ‘Electronic Library’, Buckland asserted that it “should be associated with and paced by the parallel shift in the ‘task environment’ of the people that the library is to serve.
Leeder and Frierson (2014) identify some of the characteristics of Participatory Library as follows:

1. Access to latest virtual technologies where people can learn how they work.

2. Library embedded within the local community

The term “participatory library” was “first coined by Lambes and Silverstein” in 2006 and has “not yet been fully adopted into mainstream library discourse and practice, nor has it been discussed in empirical studies” (Nguyen et. al., 2012, p. 1).

The increasing participation of library users in the library environment, due to the prevalence of Web 2.0, has led to a perceived blurring of the lines between library users and librarian. Nguyen et. al. (2012) goes a step beyond Leeder and Frierson (2014) in declaring that library users can now do the job of librarians as a result of the availability of Web 2.0 and other social media software; the reference job of a librarian, it is argued by Nguyen et. al. (2012), can be carried out by library users advising other library users through a “diversity of tools like instant Messaging, Facebook, and Wikis” (Nguyen et. al., 2012, p. 4). Referencing is not the only area where some aspects of a libraries job are perceived as falling within the remit of library users due to the emergence of Web 2.0.

“With social bookmarking and tags, these users can see the library as more than just a building full of books. People are also enjoying the democratic nature of Web 2.0 and are no longer expecting to follow the rules of the experts to find the information they want. Therefore the, traditional metadata creator like the catalogue librarian should play the role of helper, not authoritarian.” (Steele in Nguyen et. al., 2012, p. 4)
The control library users now have is helping librarians to plan new library services; critical engagement with users through online reviews and feedback on social networking platforms is contributing towards this process. (Nguyen et. al. , 2012, p.6). Whilst associated with adapting to Web 2.0 some argue that the true nature of Library 2.0 is really more about library users than technologies; Brevik (2006) argues that Library 2.0 is defined as “the natural evolution of library services to a level where the library user is in control of how and when she gets access to the services she needs and wants”. Casey (2005) argues that “Library 2.0 is not about technology” but about using good ideas to improve library services and bring about change in library operations. Interestingly, highlighting the evolving development in tackling what is Library 2.0, Casey follows up with a somewhat evolved perspective on Library 2.0; Casey and Savastinuk (2007) assert that Library 2.0 is “not just about technology” and that technology is simply “a tool to better serve our users”. Maness (2006) states that Library 2.0 is a relatively new area with relatively little written on it by librarians. Miller (in Maness 2006) attributes the coining of the term “Library 2.0” to Michael Casey (see above). Maness (2006) , in contrast to Casey, firmly places the role of web-based technologies at the centre of what “Library 2.0” is trying to achieve; Library 2.0 is a socially rich “user-centred virtual community” (Maness, 2006).

Huvila et. al. (2013) argues that there is no “definitive definition” of what components are required for Library 2.0 but highlights user-friendly “interactivity” as a central component that happens to be “catalysed by social web technologies” (Huvila et. al. , 2013, p.10). There has been much discussion on how Library 2.0 should be defined but there is also difficulty in identifying what the physical aspects of it actually are. Huvila et. al. (2013) indicates that the focal aspect of Library 2.0 is “not the tangible in technologies, libraries (both as spaces and organisations), librarians’ competence or user centrum, but rather in the aspects the tangible can afford in activity”. (Huvila et. al. , 2013, p.10) In essence Huvila et. al. (2013) argues that Library 2.0 is about a change in how a library service interacts with its users and, despite being largely virtual in nature, the library environment and librarian can play a role in facilitating these activities.
3. **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher carried out an extensive study of reading material of relevance to marketing with particular attention to marketing in the library sector. The primary thrust of this dissertation is based on the ways Irish public libraries market their services and the importance, if any, given to social media within this marketing context; the researcher will be looking at the importance of online engagement and viral marketing to marketing public library services and the role an official marketing plan plays in forming a public library's marketing strategy. The importance of online marketing, in the context of Irish public libraries, will be discussed in the context of the role that online services play in the Irish public library network. Potter (2012) argues that:

> “Placement (or just ‘place’) refers to where and how the product is delivered and promoted. In libraries’ case this often means the internet – and often we don’t shout loudly enough about the fact that it is indeed we, the libraries, who have placed the product there” (Potter, 2012)

In the researcher’s initial assessment he looked to apply the 4Ps of marketing to this subject area; however upon reflection it is appropriate to instead take the more relevant 7Ps approach. The 7Ps of marketing is a newer approach that adequately addresses marketing services as opposed to the strictly traditional product centred approach of the 4Ps model. Irrespective of this fact the core tenet of the importance of online engagement to a marketing approach remains and will be a hugely important element of this dissertation, and how its subject content is addressed.

Viral marketing and social media platforms are a huge part of how Irish public libraries address where and how library services are delivered. Potter’s quote above explains this point by arguing that place is also seen as virtual and so applies to how online services are used by libraries to market their products; in the context of Irish
Public Libraries this marketing area is addressed through its online services and these will be examined to attempt to identify the role social media plays in its current marketing strategy.

The exact methodology that the researcher will be using for this research proposal is Saunder’s Research Onion model (Saunders, et.al, 2009, p.106). This is a layered process that, in graph format, resembles the various layers one would see when an onion is cut in two.

![Figure 2: Saunder’s Research Onion (applied to this research proposal)](image)

The researcher has highlighted the methodologies, from the research onion, that he will be using, in Figure 1 above and he will be explaining and discussing them in the following sections.
3.1 **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES/RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

“How are Irish local authority public libraries, within the Republic of Ireland, marketing their services to their customers?”

**Hypotheses**

1. Strategic documented marketing plans are not common in Irish public libraries.

2. Irish local authority libraries, with or without marketing plans, engage in regular marketing activities to promote their services.

3. Social media, and modern forms of online service marketing, are not given priority in the Irish local authority library network.

3.2 **RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

The researcher will be adopting a research strategy that is aimed at facilitating the work in addressing the previously listed Research Objectives. My research strategy is designed to help the researcher to answer the questions that are being raised and it will help to attain the data that is needed to adequately address the search objectives. The research design will provide a framework that will be used as a reference point during the research and study but it will also ensure that the ‘procedures undertaken are adequate to obtain valid, objective and accurate answers to the research questions’.

(Kumar, 2011, P.95)

Out of ten research philosophies given by Saunders in the outer layer of his research onion model (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 107), the researcher will be following the “pragmatism research philosophy” approach because it allows more freedom to use procedures associated with qualitative and quantitative research; the researcher is mindful that he is intends to carry out both quantitative and qualitative research.
which will be looked at later on. In considering some of the other potential philosophies it has been decided that pragmatism offers a middle ground between relying too heavily on an objective positivist position and a subjective stance attributed to an interpretivist approach. Irrespective of the arguments over which is the best philosophical approach, Kumar adequately reflects on the fact that the researcher should ‘adhere to certain values regarding the control of bias, and the maintenance of objectivity in terms of both the research process itself and the conclusions drawn’. (Kumar, 2011, P.15). This quite accurately reflects on the most important part of the process which is integrity and quality of data; the researcher has attempted here to justify why he feels that a pragmatic approach will suit my personality and research approach over other available options.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Moving on to the second layer of Saunder’s Research Onion a choice had to be made about whether the research is inductive or deductive. Whilst reference will be made to existing literature this research will be largely exploratory and will seek to establish the facts based on available data while making use of mainly quantitative data from the relevant stakeholders in the Irish public library network. Conclusions and summaries will be arrived at based on the blueprint of the research objectives and specific observations linked to these objectives will be provided at the end of the research. For this reason this research will be following an inductive approach.

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This research is particularly concerned with the marketing policies and activities of Irish public libraries. The nature of this means that the data will come from these organisation's internal resources. From the Research Onion (See Figure 1.) put forward by Saunders, there are various different research strategies that can be employed: experiment, survey, action research, and case study; in this case the research strategy will be a survey as it is concerned with the strategic concerns and
objectives of 30 organisations in the Irish public library network. A survey ordinarily has a quantitative element to it and this will certainly be the case with this research. A survey allows the ability to use a single source for data collection and the researcher will be collecting the data using an online survey programme called Survey Monkey. The research project included a month long subscription to a premium package of Survey Monkey that allowed for the number of survey participants identified.

3.4.1 SURVEY – IRISH PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK

The dissertation involved the collection of primarily quantitative data from the Irish local authority public libraries that participated; this process was achieved using a questionnaire based on questions relating to marketing in a public library service. 30 local authority public libraries were contacted to take part in the survey, which necessitated responding to 27 multiple choice questions with sections created to allow for the receipt of extra qualitative feedback.

Fowler Jr. (2014) notes that in terms of comprehensiveness a survey sample “can only be representative of the sample frame, that is, the population that actually had a chance to be selected”. In this respect the target sample frame identified 30 Irish public library authorities within the Republic of Ireland that would form the basis of the survey. The 30 respondents to the survey were identified as the county, or city, librarians of the respective public library authorities; the Irish public library network is organised, in most cases, according to the geographical boundaries of Irish local authorities such as county councils or city councils. For instance County Cork is administered by a city council for Cork City and a county council for the rest of County Cork; in this respect Cork has two separate county or city librarians who were contacted. In cases where the city, or county, librarian was not the person who completed the survey, this role was carried out by the designated senior executive librarian with responsibility for that library service's marketing strategies and activities.
3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The sampling method of this research gives an idea of where the data that has been referred to in this research methodology will come from. The researcher's primary objective is to carry out qualitative research and secondary research. From Saunder's Research Onion there are 3 listed types of research methodology that can be implemented in relation to how data is obtained: mono-method, mixed-methods, and multi-method.

As indicated in its title, mono-method only uses one research strategy which is either quantitative or qualitative; in the case of this research it is not possible for this method to be applicable because the researcher intends to utilise both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather data. Multi-method research is apt for this research as sources of data are all similar in nature regardless of whether they are quantitative or qualitative. In the case of this research the sources of data that will be used in the quantitative research will not differ from the sources of data that will be used for the quantitative data. The detail of the sources of this data, will be elaborated below but for the purposes of identifying the methodology for this research it is necessary to indicate that this research will take a multi-methods approach which is highlighted in the internal layer of the research onion on Figure 1.

The advantage of a multi-methods approach is that it enables the researcher to obtain data of more than one single type so it removes a representative weakness that is inherent in a mono-method approach. A multi-methods approach also enables the researcher to obtain data from two types of research: quantitative and qualitative. It is obvious that the advantage of a mono-method approach involves less research and work involvement, which is suitable if the researcher is under pressures relating to time and deadline, but a multi-method approach offers greater opportunities for obtaining a richer and more varied amount of data. This was the case arising out of
the extra qualitative feedback obtained in some of the questions in the online survey questionnaire.

3.5.1 TIME HORIZONS?

The penultimate internal layer of Saunder's Research Onion relates to the time horizon, or window, in which the research can be carried out in. In its most simplistic description it is the part of the research onion concerned with dealing with time limitations. Whilst there are potential economic pressures on the researcher during the course of the research process, the most valuable resource a researcher has to manage is the time which is allowed to carry out the research. In the case of the researcher, the dissertation is a 12 week process, and this necessitates good preparation and organisation to ensure a successful research project.

This part of the onion contains two time horizon options: longitudinal and cross-sectional.

**Longitudinal vs Cross-Sectional**

In the case of this research the researcher will be examining aspects of Irish Public Libraries, how they conduct their marketing, and the policies and activities they have at one point in time; for this reason this research design is cross-sectional. A very similar approach to the longitudinal is the 'before and after' that measures from the start to the finish of a research period. Kumar (2011) refers to both the longitudinal approach and the "before-and-after study design" (Kumar, 2011, P.110) and it is generally accepted that they are methodologies that are more suited to a researcher that has a longer research period to deal with and who does not have time constraints such as was evident with this research project.

For the purposes of this research, and in reference to what is marked in Saunder’s Research Onion, the researcher has chosen a cross-sectional approach to the research
process. A cross-sectional design is suitable to describe this research because it is a research project examining a situation that exists at the time of the study:

“A cross-sectional study is extremely simple in design. You decide what you want to find out about, identify the study population, select a sample (if you need to) and contact your respondents to find out the required information” (Kumar, 2011, P.107)

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The researcher will tackle the final and central part of Saunder’s Research Onion (See Figure 1.) by addressing how the research data will be collected and then analysed. Data will be collected from a quantitative process, involving a questionnaire that will contain qualitative elements through subjective feedback. Some extra secondary data will be obtained that will back up the primary data obtained through the quantitative and qualitative processes. The secondary data will see the researcher analysing Irish local government and public library official documents such as the current Dublin City Public Library development plan entitled “What is the Stars? – A Development Plan for Dublin City Public Libraries 2012 – 2016” as well as annual reports and budgets and other official records.

Qualitative data will be obtained through participation in a 27 question online questionnaire as part of a survey of 30 Irish local authority public libraries. The quantitative data will be statistically compiled and analysed for trends while the qualitative feedback will be coded and compiled for similar trends and interpretations. Coding is simply interpreting and assigning the various elements of the subjective feedback data based on pre-determined subject categories and themes. Coding is a way of providing a form of analysis to qualitative data in a similar manner to the manner in which quantitative data can be statistically scrutinised (See Appendix A for Pros and Cons of coding). The researcher will make use of any computer software
aids that could enhance the process; Brinkmann & Kvale argue that any software used is just an aid to the researcher:

“The programs are aids for structuring the interview material for further analysis; the task and the responsibility of interpretation however, remain with the researcher.” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 226)

Finally the quantitative part of the research process will involve a survey that will be created using a questionnaire drawn up in a similar manner to the interview questions; questions will be based on addressing the research objective. The questionnaire will contain 27 questions designed to obtain the subject’s views on the marketing strategies and activities carried out by their public library service. The survey was distributed and collected over a 2 week period during the course of the research process. The researcher carried out the survey via an online service provider known as Survey Monkey and exported the data for coding upon conclusion of the survey submission period.

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

A research process, like the one highlighted above, involves dealing with several ethical issues and questions. In the first instance there is an endeavour, on the part of the researcher, to accumulate data that can be sensitive from a corporate perspective. However the main ethical aspect that needs to be addressed by a researcher is the notion of trust. The research process involved balancing the research objective requirements of the researcher with an ethical respect for the research subject’s professional and corporate integrity. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.20) The research in this dissertation was conducted in a responsible manner with a view to maintaining an ethical and moral approach to all interactions with data, data handlers, and data subjects.

A strategy to ensure the success of the research survey involved contacting the County or City Librarian, senior librarian responsible for marketing, of all the
participating local authority library services; as part of this attempt to gain trust, and ensure successful completion of the questionnaire, all local authority public library services contacted were guaranteed anonymity of the survey data.

The research process in this dissertation was:

- Carried out in an open and transparent manner
- Ensured data, whether obtained through qualitative, quantitative, or secondary means, was respected and handled in a professional manner
- Ensured that all interview and survey participants were respected and made aware of the reason for carrying out the research and purpose for the collection of data
- Avoided the input of bias on behalf of the researcher
- Respected the confidentiality of data subjects
- Initiated surveys with a welcome message thanking the participant for his/her involvement while disclosing the researcher’s name and motive for requesting the participant’s involvement in the research project.
4. SURVEY RESULTS & DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter sets out to document the survey results that have arisen following their completion by the participating Irish local authority public libraries. The relationship between the survey results and proposed hypotheses are discussed in this section and general trends and behaviours, amongst Irish public libraries, with regards to how they market their services, will also be explored.

4.2 Hypothesis 1: Strategic documented marketing plans are not common in Irish public libraries

To address this hypothesis, and to get a clear picture of the current positions of Irish public libraries regarding the adoption of formal policies on marketing, we began by addressing the nature of their strategic planning.

4.2.1 Q.1: Does your library service have a long term strategic plan in place?

![Survey Question 1 breakdown](image)

**Figure 3: Survey Question 1 breakdown**

The first question as part of the survey was whether the participatory library authority has a long term strategic plan in place. As part of their positions, within Irish local
government authorities, it would be expected that a public library service would be run according to policies and guidelines contained in an overarching strategic plan; at a national level strategic planning for public libraries is contained within the ‘A Strategy for Public Libraries 2013 – 2017’.

Five of the 30 local authority public library services indicated that they do not have a long term strategic plan in place; four of these five library authorities cover a rural geographic area while the fifth respondent covers a large urban centre within the Republic of Ireland.

4.2.2 Q.2: Is a marketing plan a part of your library's strategic plan?

![Survey Question 2 breakdown](image)

The survey participants were asked to indicate whether a distinct marketing plan is a part of their library service’s strategic plan. Six local authority library services indicated that their strategic plan contained no marketing plan while a further four indicated that it was not applicable as, following from data given in Question 1, their service had no long term strategic plan in place.
One of the library services that participated, which had previously indicated that it has a long term strategic plan in place (from data given in Question 1), selected ‘n/a’ to this question. Surprisingly, two of the library authorities that, in Question 1, indicated that they had no long term strategic plan in place indicated that a marketing plan was indeed part of their library’s strategic plan.

9 out of the 10 respondents, that did not indicate that a marketing plan is a part of a strategic plan (by selecting the options ‘No’ and ‘n/a’), cover rural geographic areas within the Republic of Ireland.

4.2.3 Q.3: How often does your library service formulate strategic plans?

![Figure 5: Survey Question 3 breakdown](image)

Before addressing the nature and range of marketing activities of the library authorities participating in the survey, the participants were asked how often their library service formulates strategic plans. The responses contrast with the answers provided in question 1 regarding whether or not a library service has a long term strategic plan in place. Following on from Question 1, none of the participants selected the ‘n/a’ option; this option is of most relevance to those participants (5 in
number) who, in question 1, indicated that their library service had no long term strategic plan in place.

Over half of the library authorities that responded (16 in total) indicated that their library service formulates new strategic plans every 5 years or more. A further 7 library authorities indicated that their strategic plans are formulated every 4 years. The trend that emerges is that Irish local authority public library services do not, in the overwhelmingly majority of cases, develop strategic plans with any degree of regularity.

4.2.4 Q.4: Does your library have a current official marketing plan?

![Figure 6: Survey Question 4 breakdown](image)

Question 4 is a direct request for a clear picture on the participating local authority library service’s position on a marketing plan. Responses given by survey participants, from questions 1-3, have largely been contradictory, indicating that there is a degree of uncertainty among participants on the position of marketing, and marketing plans, within their library authority’s strategic plan. 26 out of the 30 participants indicated that their local authority library service has no current official marketing plan in place. Only four library services indicated that they have a current official marketing plan.
This contrasts with the answer given by the survey participants during Question 2. In Question 2, 19 of the survey participants indicated that their library authority’s marketing plan was a part of their library’s strategic plan.
4.2.5 Q.5: Is your library's marketing plan available to download online?

As is the case with many Irish local government organisations, policies exist for a wide range of services and activities but in many cases these policies are not reflected in publically accessible documents. For instance, due to obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003, Irish local authorities must have a policy on how they carry out their duties and activities in the context of the Irish language; in the case of many Irish local authorities, Irish language plans are out of date, non-existent, and not available for public consumption online. In a similar sense this question follows on from Question 4’s request about the existence of a marketing plan; the logical progression is to establish whether the library authority has a marketing plan and whether it is available to download online?

Only one of the 30 library authorities that were surveyed indicated that they did indeed have a marketing plan that is available to download online. Further conveying the lack of logical consistency in survey responses, among the participating library authorities, it is interesting to note that, out of the 25 that indicated having no current official marketing plan in Question 4, only 17 selected the option ‘Our library has no...
marketing plan’ option while the remaining 11 participants opted for the ‘No’ option instead.

4.2.6 Q.6: Is your library’s marketing plan contained in a published document?

![Figure 8: Survey Question 6 breakdown](image)

In a similar vein to the previous question the survey participants are asked to clarify whether their library authority’s marketing plan is contained in a published document. The question seeks to establish the degree to which a marketing plan stands out on its own merits as a distinct published policy document and helps to gauge the importance given to the marketing plan by the library authority at a corporate level.

Further illustrating the shifting consistency level among the survey participants, whereas 17 participants indicated that their library service ‘has no marketing plan’ in Question 5, only 14 opted for the same choice in Question 6. Three library authorities, who indicated that their library service has no marketing plan in Question 5, did not opt to indicate that their library service has no marketing plan in Question 6. Out of these participants one respondent selected ‘No’ to indicate that their library’s marketing plan is not contained in a published document; it could be deduced that this was an oversight by this participant who could have overlooked the option ‘Our
library has no marketing plan’ but intended the same thing as this participant indicated that their library has no marketing plan in Question 4.

The same cannot be said for the remaining 2 participants who indicated that their library’s marketing plan is contained in a published document; both of these participants had previously indicated that their library ‘has no marketing plan’ in Question 5 and that their library service has ‘no marketing plan’ in Question 4.

4.2.7 Q.7: Did your library have a marketing plan before the current one?

The following question attempts to ascertain the participating library authority’s track record towards the marketing of its products and services. Indications of previous marketing plans, put in place by the library authority, highlight that marketing as a policy approach is not a relatively new phenomenon in the library authority’s operations.

In Question 4 the library authority’s were asked whether their library service had a current official marketing plan; 26 of the participants indicated that there was no such plan in place while only 4 could confirm the existence of a current official marketing plan.
13 survey participants indicated that their library service did not have a marketing plan prior to their current marketing plan. In the case of whether all 13 of these participants have a current marketing plan the correlation of response history indicates that only 3 have an active plan while the other 10 respondents have no current active marketing plan. In addition another 10 of the survey participants indicated, in response to this question, that the presence of a previous marketing plan was not applicable to their library authority.

6 of the survey respondents indicated that their library service did indeed have a previous plan in place prior to their current plan. 5 of these 6 participants had confirmed in previous questions that they had no active current marketing plan in place. The other participant out of the 6, an authority based in Munster, who indicated that they had a previous marketing plan, holds the sole distinction of being the only local authority library service in the Republic of Ireland to have a current marketing plan and a history of previous marketing plans as well.
4.2.8 Q.8: How often does your library revise/update its marketing plan?

Figure 10: Survey Question 8 breakdown

The information gleaned from the answers given by the participants in Question 7 highlight that there is only one confirmed library authority that has a current marketing plan as well as a history of at least one marketing plan previously. 5 library authorities, that do not have a current marketing plan, have indicated that they previously formulated marketing plans in the past.

Only 8 of the survey participants indicated that their library service never updates or revises its marketing plan while a further 10 selected the ‘Other’ option and provided some feedback on their position regarding the frequency of formulating marketing plans.

In most cases the comments highlighted that there was a difficulty in specifying how often a marketing plan was revised because the library authority either, had no identifiable marketing plan in place that was distinct from a development plan or was simply unspecified. Two library authorities indicated that they had no marketing plan in place but were currently working on their first marketing plan. Four of these
respondents indicated that the marketing plan, and how often it would be updated, was linked to its containment within a separate development plan. One plan, produced in 2009/10, was unpublished and marketing is mentioned in that library authority’s recently published new Development Plan. Another library authority stated that they had ‘devised a plan a number of years ago but due to resources we have been unable to update since’. In another library authority’s case it was indicated simply that ‘periodic marketing plans’ exist for ‘specific projects’ with no reference given to how often these plans are revised or updated. One respondent indicated that their library service has no marketing plan while another indicated that the question was ‘not applicable’ (due to having no plan) in their library’s case.

Of those library authorities that specified a specific time period in their answer, only 5 respondents indicated that their marketing plan is updated or revised every 1-2 years, while a further 2 update their marketing plan every 3-4 years. The final four library authorities indicated that their marketing plans are updated or revised every 5-10 years.

4.2.9 Hypothesis 1 – Conclusion

Findings

- The formulation of marketing plans in Irish public libraries is not common practice and local authority libraries often incorporate marketing policies, and activities, into larger strategic plans
- Marketing plans are not published regularly by Irish public libraries and are not made openly available for public access
- Marketing is not currently a core part of the strategic planning in Irish public libraries
4.3 **Hypothesis 2:** Irish local authority libraries, with or without marketing plans, engage in regular marketing activities to promote their services

This hypothesis asserts that Irish public library authorities are regularly engaging in marketing activities to promote their services. The argument is also made that marketing activities, and resources for marketing activities, exist in the Irish public library network despite the general absence of marketing plans.

4.3.1 Q.9: Does your library currently employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role?

![Survey Question 9 breakdown](image)

**Figure 11: Survey Question 9 breakdown**

The implementation of marketing activities and strategies in a local authority library service is a specialist area that can necessitate the development of official policies and an identified marketing plan.
Three quarters of the local authority public libraries in the Republic of Ireland do not currently employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role; this is highlighted in the 21 survey participants who indicated that they do not currently employ a staff member dedicated towards marketing activities.

9 of the 30 survey participants indicated that they do currently employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role. A breakdown of these 8 survey respondents is interesting as only 2 of these library authorities have a current marketing plan in place.

From information provided in the feedback sections of the survey, 2 of these 8 libraries, that happen to be library authorities covering large urban geographic locations, are currently working on formulating a marketing plan; in the case of at least one of these libraries the appointment of a dedicated staff member for marketing pre-empts the introduction of a future marketing plan.
4.3.2 Q.10: Is marketing currently a core part of your library's strategic plan?

![Survey Question 10 breakdown](image)

Question 10 is carefully positioned after the previous line of questioning relating to the role of strategic plans and marketing plans within Irish local authority public libraries.

Almost half (12 out of 30) of the library authorities that were surveyed indicated that marketing was currently not a core part of their library service’s strategic plan. The remaining 18 library authorities all indicated that marketing is currently a core part of their libraries’ strategic plan. Breaking this figure down it becomes apparent that three of these respondents indicated previously (Question 2) that a marketing plan was not a part of their library authority’s strategic plan. In addition, based on data from Question 4, it can be further highlighted that 14 out of the 18 library authorities, that assert that marketing is a core part of their library’s strategic plan, do not currently have an official marketing plan.
4.3.3 Q.12: In an average week how often does your library engage in the following marketing activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Activity</th>
<th>1-10 times weekly</th>
<th>10-20 times weekly</th>
<th>20-50 times weekly</th>
<th>50+ times weekly</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Marketing</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>25.33%</td>
<td>25.33%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>58.22%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>6.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>37.55%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Marketing</td>
<td>24.00%</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>4.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>64.00%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Newsletter (email)</td>
<td>48.18%</td>
<td>7.41%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter (hard copy)</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>76.17%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event invitations (email)</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>20.77%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal selling (1-1)</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>73.91%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Advertising</td>
<td>19.23%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>85.77%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion Forums (e.g., boards.ie)</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community radio interviews</td>
<td>80.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community events promotion (on site)</td>
<td>73.87%</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 13: Survey Question 12 breakdown**

Question 12 requested the library authority survey participant to give an idea of how often it engages in a selection of marketing activities; 11 types of marketing related activities were offered as options to the survey participants which, it was felt, covered the broad spectrum of possible marketing activities a local authority library service could engage in. In the event that a library authority engaged in a significant type of marketing activity, not covered by the 11 previously mentioned options, a final ‘Other (please specify)’ choice was made available however, none of the participants opted to select it.

Despite being completed by all participants none of the available individual question options had a 100% completion rate. The highest completion rate amongst the question choices was the first option for ‘social media marketing’ which was completed by 29 survey participants, followed closely by ‘Advertising’ which was completed by 28 participants. The marketing option with the least amount of
completions was ‘personal selling (1-1)’ that was selected by 23 participants followed by ‘Newsletter (hard copy)’ which was only completed by 24 of those who attempted this question.

This question gave a snapshot of the prevalence, and popularity, of different types of marketing activities within Irish local authority public libraries. Social media marketing, according to the data provided, is used by almost half of Irish public libraries at least 1-10 times per week while almost one third of the library authorities use it in excess of 20 times weekly. This information, and the data gleaned from the question that follows (Question 13), provides a contextual background to the discussion about the role social media plays in Irish public libraries and the importance given to the phenomenon of electronic word-of-mouth marketing. In this regard the results from another option in Question 12 are illuminating; over two thirds of Irish public libraries do not engage in online discussion forums with only 6 making use of them up to 1-10 times in a given week. Online discussion forums are a new marketing reality in the corporate world, with many companies utilising them to engage with current and potential clients.

17 Irish public library authorities use advertising to market themselves at least 1-10 times per week while another 11 indicated that it was ‘not applicable’ in their case.

Almost half of the survey participants (13) indicated that ‘digital newsletters (email)’ are used at least 1-10 times weekly but only 5 selected the same option for hard copy newsletters; based on the figures given by the participants it is evident that Irish public libraries are twice as likely to be using digital newsletters over their hard copy printed equivalents which demonstrates the impact of evolving technology on the types of marketing tools used in the local authority library sector. However, it must be borne in mind that almost half of the surveyed library authorities (12) indicated that ‘digital newsletters (email)’ were ‘not applicable’ in their case while almost two thirds selected the same option for the ‘newsletter (hard copy)’ option.
Two thirds of survey participants indicated that their library service engaged in community radio interviews at least 1-10 times weekly while just over two thirds indicated that their library service participated in on site ‘community events promotions’ up to 1-10 times weekly. The above selections represent the highest response rate of all the options made available in Question 12 which highlights that community engagement is prioritised as a marketing approach in at least two thirds of Irish local authority libraries.

It is hard to avoid a possible coincidental trend in the response behaviour of the survey participants to Question 12. The percentages of responses in the ‘not applicable’ options in Question 12 are quite high on average. However, in all bar the ‘social media marketing’ option, most responses given that are applicable to the participant’s library, and relating to frequency of activity, remain in the ‘1-10 times weekly’ bracket with the other frequency options remaining unselected by any participants in most cases; the trend highlights that, in most cases, even when marketing activities are engaged in by Irish public libraries, they are not used to a high level of regularity.

4.3.4 Hypothesis 2 – Conclusion

Findings

- Marketing is not currently a core part of the strategic planning in Irish public libraries

- The majority of Irish local authority libraries do not employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role

- Irish local authority libraries engage in regular marketing activities to promote their services; however, the frequency of regular activity, and range of activities, could be improved
This assertion in this hypothesis has been found to be true despite the fact that a question mark remains about the amount of regularity that Irish local authority libraries dedicate to marketing their services. In addition the argument has been proven that Irish public libraries do not employ dedicated staff for marketing services and do not currently treat marketing as a core strategic area. Despite these points the hypothesis assertion is true and forms the basis for further service marketing improvements in the Irish public library network.

PROVEN
4.4 Hypothesis 3: Social Media, and modern forms of online service marketing, are not given priority in the Irish local authority library network

4.4.1 Q.13: In an average week how often does your library engage in the following Social Media activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-10 times weekly</th>
<th>11-26 times weekly</th>
<th>20-56 times weekly</th>
<th>Less than once every week</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>60+ times weekly</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked in</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>31.32%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>69.90%</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>40.67%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>20.67%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>30.30%</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>10.66%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.90%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>13.64%</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>12.54%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<td>63.64%</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.94%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>50.52%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>65.22%</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>17.36%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>60.87%</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>66.16%</td>
<td>5.14%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 14: Survey Question 13 breakdown*

From the data given by Irish local authority public libraries in Question 12 it is proven that social media marketing is engaged in by almost all participants at varying degrees of regularity; no participants elected for the option indicating that social media marketing is not applicable in their library’s marketing outlook while only one participant did not select this option. It is therefore appropriate that Question 13 gives the participating Irish public library authorities the opportunity to provide data giving greater scrutiny on the breakdown of this social media activity.

The results of the responses given to Question 13 are revealing because they highlight that, despite the assertions about frequency of engagement with social media given in the responses in Question 12, the types of social media platforms engaged in are patchy and have limited variety.
4.4.2  Q.21: Does your library have a dedicated social media manager or staff member responsible for social media engagement?

It has already been revealed from the data provided in previous questions, and in comments provided by survey participants, that many Irish public library authorities do not have enough staff members to focus properly on how they market their library services. To further explore this issue survey participants were asked to indicate whether they had a dedicated social media manager or staff member responsible for social media engagement; it is worth bearing in mind here that Irish public libraries also staff non professional grades, and in many cases clerical public servant grades work alongside professional librarians, and this question is worded in such a way to allow for this fact.

From the data it can be confirmed that over two thirds of Irish public libraries, accounting for 22 library authorities, have a dedicated staff member responsible for social media engagement. 8 of the survey participants indicated that their library service has no staff member dedicated towards social media engagement.

4.4.3  Q.22: Does your library service have a dedicated social media librarian?

In question 21, survey participants were asked about a dedicated staff member for social media engagement with no specific reference made towards the professional status of that staff member. From the survey data given in Question 22, it is evident that 7 Irish public library authorities confirm having a dedicated social media librarian; this figure accounts for a third of the number of public library authorities that confirmed in Question 21 to having staff members dedicated towards social media engagement.
4.4.4 Q.15: Does your library have a dedicated Facebook page?

Facebook is currently the most prolific global media platform with an average “1.13 billion daily active users”. (Facebook Newsroom, 2016) It is thus natural to identify Facebook as the primary individual social media platform to address when surveying Irish local authority public libraries on their use of social media to market their services. It has also been shown, from Question 13, that Facebook is the most commonly used social media website by Irish public libraries so this question serves to capture an accurate picture of the level to which Irish public libraries fully engage with their public audience on Facebook.

The aim of the question is to determine whether Irish public library services make use of their parent local authorities’ Facebook website or whether they have a dedicated Facebook page specifically for their library service. All participants responded to this question and all indicated that their library service has its own dedicated Facebook page. The significance of this, as opposed to contributing to a local authority FB page, is that the library can interact directly with its audience and can accurately measure
its marketing success from those interactions because the data on the page, including measurements, is only related to library services and customer interactions of relevance to the library service.

4.4.5 Q.16: How many Facebook posts are produced weekly by your library service?

An option regarding Facebook in Question 13 gave survey participants the opportunity to indicate how often their library service engaged with Facebook. Question 16 is a related question as it delves further into the actual quantitative activity that library authorities apply to their Facebook engagement.

The statistics from the responses given to Question 16 demonstrate that just over half of Irish public libraries create between 1-10 weekly Facebook posts. The rest of the Irish public library authorities, amounting to 12 library jurisdictions, generate between 10-50 posts on Facebook in an average week with one remaining library authority completing the picture by creating in excess of 50 Facebook posts per week.
The key observation from the data given to this question is that none of the Irish public library authorities indicated that they create no Facebook posts in an average week.

![Comparison of FB engagement and activity from Q.13 & Q.16](image)

**Figure 17**: Comparison of Facebook engagement and activity by Irish public libraries (from Q.13 & Q.16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.16. How many FB posts are produced weekly by your library service?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.13. How often does you engage with FB weekly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 18**: Table – Comparison of Facebook engagement and activity by Irish public libraries (from Q.13 & Q.16)

The data gathered on engagement with Facebook by Irish public libraries, and the actual posts generated by them, is compared in the figures 17 & 18 above; the table in figure 17 above compares the data on Facebook engagement in Question 13 with the information discussed above in Question 16. The main outcome from this comparison is that there is an obvious level of consistency in responses to these questions by the survey participants which is a positive outcome. 23 of the 30 survey participants gave responses that matched the same frequency of FB engagement, given in Question 13, to the amount of posts generated weekly that they indicated in Question 16; for
instance 13 public libraries indicated that they engaged with Facebook ‘1-10 times weekly’ and in doing so generated ‘1-10’ posts per week.

5 of the respondents who gave answers that did not match, between Question 13 and Question 16, indicated through their responses that they created less weekly posts than the frequency of how often they actually engaged with Facebook in a standard week. In a similar fashion two of those public library authorities surveyed indicated, through their response history, that they actually created more Facebook posts than the frequency with which they actually engaged with the social media platform. It can be interpreted that in these situations some libraries created more posts, and generated more content and audience engagement, per individual session on Facebook than other library services who engaged more with a lower level of productivity and content generation.

4.4.6 Q.17: Does your library have a dedicated Twitter account?

Question 17 is similar to Question 15 in that, instead of focusing on Facebook, it seeks to establish the number of Irish local authority libraries that have a dedicated Twitter account. Twitter, like Facebook, is another large global social networking site with an estimated ‘310 million active users’ (Wikipedia, 2016); Twitter does not have the same volume of active daily users as Facebook has but it is a prominent social media network particularly in Ireland. The question was formulated to enable a direct comparison between how Irish public libraries engage with Facebook and Twitter. As indicated in the data obtained in Question 15, all Irish public libraries have a dedicated Facebook page.

27 Irish public library authorities currently have a dedicated Twitter account based on the responses submitted to Question 17. Three of the survey respondents indicated that their public library service does not have a Twitter account which accounts for 10% of the Irish public library network.
4.4.7 Q.18: How many tweets are produced weekly by your library service?

Question 18 seeks to scrutinise the activity of Irish public libraries in the context of the responses given in Question 17. The comparison between the responses given to these two questions highlight a consistency among the survey participants; just as three library authorities indicated that they have no dedicated Twitter account in Question 17, the same number of survey participants indicated that they generate no tweets in Twitter in the responses to Question 18.

The usage trends of Twitter by Irish public libraries are very similar to the level of Facebook activity based off the data arising out of the survey responses. For instance 14 out of 27 Irish public library services (46.67%) who use Twitter create an average '1-10' tweets per week; in Question 16 it was demonstrated that 16 out of 30 (53.33%) Irish public libraries, who indicated that they have a dedicated Facebook account, create between '1-10' Facebook posts per week. The above data confirms that roughly half of Irish public libraries engage with the top social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, but do so with relatively low levels of weekly activity.

![FIGURE 19: Comparison of average weekly Facebook posts and Twitter tweets by Irish public libraries (based on data taken from Q.16 & Q.18)
13 of the Irish public libraries indicated that their library service creates more than 10 tweets on average per week; three of these libraries, accounting for 10% of the Irish public library network, create more than 50 tweets in an average week.

4.4.8 Q.26: Is viral marketing a part of your library's marketing plan?

Viral marketing is a form of marketing relying on a marketing message being passed on to others by individuals who are unconnected and external to the company that is creating the marketing message. Viral marketing strategies take advantage of the fact that others, outside of the company, can do a percentage of the marketing work on behalf of the company; the company's marketing message can be spread and rapidly multiplied by being delivered potentially to thousands, or even millions, of people from a much smaller initial audience.

Wilson (2012) asserts that when not online “viral marketing has been referred to as 'word-of-mouth', 'creating a buzz', 'leveraging the media', 'network marketing'. But on the internet, for better or worse, it's called 'viral marketing’”. Viral marketing also incorporates electronic word-of-mouth strategies that are often closely associated with how a company, or public library, utilises social media to spread its message. Following data from previous questions it has been demonstrated that all Irish public libraries have a dedicated Facebook page while all bar 2 have a dedicated Twitter account; based on data acquired in these questions, and others based on social media activity, it has been demonstrated that Irish public libraries engage in social media activities to market their services to a moderate level on average.

In the context of the above assertions the responses to whether Irish public libraries use viral marketing as part of a marketing plan gives an interesting insight into the level of awareness about word-of-mouth strategies and how they are used in the Irish public library network. Just under two thirds of Irish public libraries authorities (accounting for 63.33%) do not have viral marketing as part of their library's marketing strategy while a further 6 (20%) are unsure whether it is contained in their
marketing plan. Only 5 (16.67%) Irish public library authorities claim to have a viral marketing strategy as part of their marketing plan.

4.4.9 Q.27: How would you rate the usefulness of social media in marketing your library?

The survey concludes with a final question asking the county librarian, or librarian in charge of marketing in the respective public library authority, to select the degree to which they agree or disagree with 5 statements relating to social media and marketing. The results are as follows:

(i) Social media is more useful than traditional forms of marketing library services

| Strong Disagree | 0 |
| Disagree        | 5 |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 9 |
| Agree           | 11 |
| Strongly Agree  | 5 |

Figure 20: Question 27 (i) – How would you rate the usefulness of social media in marketing your Library?

(ii) Social media is integral to marketing local authority public library services

| Strong Disagree | 0 |
| Disagree        | 0 |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 1 |
| Agree           | 12 |
| Strongly Agree  | 17 |

Figure 21: Question 27 (ii) – Social Media is integral to marketing local authority public library services

(iii) Social media allows library users to create, connect, contribute and share information with their public library service

| Strong Disagree | 0 |
| Disagree        | 0 |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 2 |
| Agree           | 12 |
| Strongly Agree  | 16 |

Figure 22: Question 27 (iii) – Social Media allows library users to create, connect, contribute and share information with their public library service
(iv) Social media helps public library users to access and locate library resources

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 23: Question 27 (iv) – Social Media helps public library users to access and locate library resources

(v) Social media helps local authority libraries to gain more potential library users than traditional library marketing techniques

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24: Question 27 (v) – Social Media helps local authority libraries to gain more potential library users than traditional library marketing techniques.

The results of the survey participant’s responses to Question 27 indicate that the overwhelming majority of County Librarians, and librarians responsible for marketing in Irish public libraries, are in agreement with the 5 statements on the role of social media in public libraries.

Just over 50% (16 out of 30) of the respondents agreed, or strongly agreed, that social media is more useful than traditional forms of marketing while almost all (96%) indicated that social media is integral to marketing local authority public library services.

The third statement is broad and touches on viral marketing with the assertion that social media allows library users to contribute and share information with their public library service; 28 of the 30 survey respondents either agreed, or strongly agreed, with the assertion that social media allows library users to create, connect, contribute and share information with their public library service.
The trend of agreement continued with the fourth statement whereby 27 of the 30 library authority respondents (90%) indicated that they agreed, or strongly agreed, with the statement that social media helps public library users to access and locate library resources. An element of scepticism was shown by about one third of the survey participants towards the final statement, perhaps indicating that there is still ground to be covered in terms of acknowledging the growing importance of social media in the marketing landscape of public libraries. One participant disagreed with the statement that social media helps local authority libraries to gain more potential library users than traditional library marketing techniques while a further 8 cautiously chose to 'neither agree nor disagree' with the statement. The remaining 21 respondents either agreed, or strongly agreed, with the statement.

4.4.10 Hypothesis 3 – Conclusion

Findings

- Some types of social media are not prioritised in Irish public libraries
- Electronic Word-of-Mouth is not prioritised as a key part of how Irish public libraries market themselves online
- Priority is not given to employing dedicated staff for dealing with social media in Irish public libraries
4.5 General Results & Feedback from Research Survey

4.5.1 Q.19: How many languages does your library service use to promote its activities online?

The Republic of Ireland is increasingly becoming a more diverse state following several years of large scale immigration of people from different countries and continents who have different cultural backgrounds and information sharing needs; there are now new communities in Ireland who regularly speak in languages other than English. In addition the official language of the Irish State is the Irish language. As official public bodies the Irish public library network is obliged to cater for the Irish language in many of its service outputs. There is also a growing need in many Irish government, and local government, bodies to provide some information and services in languages other than Irish and English.

The question is formulated to attempt to extract a picture of the level to which public library authorities attempt to market their online services to minority groups; this area is also covered in the next question which deals with marketing services to community groups. The results of the responses given to this question by the survey participants are quite illuminating and provide useful data on the level to which Irish public libraries market their online services in Irish and other languages in an online capacity.

None of the Irish public libraries in the Republic of Ireland market themselves online in languages other than Irish and English. Perhaps surprisingly, for Irish public service bodies, almost two thirds of Irish public library authorities only promote their services online in English while 11 out of the 30 public libraries (36.67%) in the Republic of Ireland promote themselves in an online capacity through both English and Irish.
4.5.2 Q.20: Does your library spend time and resources focusing marketing activities on specific groups in the community?

The Irish local authority library network, as a public service, is required to cater for all segments of society and provide information based services that promote and encourage social inclusion and community participation of people of all interests in addition to minority groups. The question was formulated with this theme in mind and encouraged survey participants to express the ways in which their library service spends its time and resources marketing its activities on specific groups in the community.

5 of the Irish public library services, accounting for a sixth of Irish public library authorities in the Republic of Ireland, indicated they were unsure whether their library spends time and resources focusing marketing activities on specific groups in the community. A further 7 library authorities, representing almost a quarter of the Irish public library network, indicated that their library service did not spend time and resources focusing marketing activities on specific groups in the community.

17 of the 30 survey participants, accounting for almost two thirds of the Irish public library network, confirmed that their library service did indeed spend time and resources focusing marketing activities on specific groups in the community. The respondents that answered 'Yes' to this question were asked to specify the ways in which they marketed to these groups. The feedback given has been compiled below and shows the number of different types of groups mentioned by the survey respondents and the frequency with which they were mentioned by differing participating library authorities:
One respondent who answered this question simply provided further feedback as 'sometimes' while some of the general feedback is outlined in the statements below:

“We direct mail and 'tag' specific community groups and organisations”

“Some sponsored Facebook posts target specific audiences”

“Using a targeted approach to event programmes in terms of focusing on relevant groups”

“When staffing levels permit we market events for special groups...”

The feedback given above confirms that when Irish public library authorities are targeting specific groups, to market services to, they are primarily concentrating on age-related groups. 10 different survey participants indicated they specifically market
towards children with one library indicating that this is carried out through school visits. On the other end of the age spectrum, 8 Irish local authority libraries specifically make strides to market services towards the older age community with one library making specific reference to 'retired' and another stating they target 'Over 55s'.

The rest of the groups highlighted above in Figure 19 were only mentioned a few times at most in the feedback given by the public library service participants. Local History groups, including historians, were mentioned three times while the business community was mentioned twice. Ethnic minority groups were mentioned as being specifically targeted for marketing twice with one library authority referring to marketing services towards 'immigrants' and another mentioning 'New Irish'. Finally it is noteworthy that one Irish public library authority, from the data provided, markets its services towards 'Traveller Groups'.

4.5.3 Q.24: Does your library send representatives to visit local schools to market its products and activities?

Public libraries are increasingly taking on services and responsibilities that relate to the promotion of business and engagement with groups promoting the economy and economic growth. Following the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Irish local authorities have been moving towards the adoption of roles and responsibilities that can help local businesses and promote business start ups.

Almost two thirds of Irish public libraries indicate that they do not send representatives to visit local businesses within the community. 12 Irish public library services, accounting for 40% of the Irish public library network, indicated that they do send representatives to visit local businesses in the community. The feedback from these libraries reveals that these visits were carried out to promote services or events with one library authority indicating that it sends staff to attend trade shows.
Three of the 12 respondents who indicated they visit local businesses indicated that they visit businesses as a networking exercise while a further three library authorities indicated that they carry out visits as part of involvement in business and employment schemes. Only one of the survey respondents made reference to engagement with a Local Enterprise Office:

“We have begun the process of linking in with LEO and developing a much more targeted approach to ensuring local businesses are aware of the services their library provides”

4.5.4 Q.25: Does your library market its products and services to the business community?

Following on from the business oriented approach to marketing in Question 24, the survey participants were asked to divulge whether their library markets its products and services to members of the business community. Ten Irish public library authorities indicated that they do not do any marketing of products or services to the business community; this figure accounts for a third of the Irish public library network. The other 20 public library services indicated that they do provide products and services to the business community.

The ways in which these libraries market services to the business community are outlined below; this data is compiled from the feedback given and the number of times each type of marketing activity was mentioned in the feedback is highlighted in the table in Figure 20 below:
The aim of Local Enterprise Offices is to “promote entrepreneurship, foster businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high quality supports” for businesses (LEO, 2014). Irish public libraries are increasingly being expected to take on services related to the promotion of businesses and thus working in conjunction with LEOs is increasingly expected; it is therefore appropriate that LEOs come up on top of the recorded mentions in the feedback provided by survey participants whose public library service markets its products and services to the business community.

4.5.5 Q.11: If you would like to comment on your library service's approach to developing a marketing plan please comment below (Optional)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 26: Methods & Frequency of Marketing Services aimed at Business Community based on feedback from Survey Question 25

Table: Methods & Frequency of Marketing Services to Business Community (Based on Feedback from Q. 25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Enterprise Office</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Employment Scheme</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet Drop (Information Dissemination)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks given to organisations &amp; people interested in business</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking &amp; Engagement w. business</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised Business Library</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 27: Breakdown of responses to Survey Question 11 on library approaches to developing a marketing plan.
Following a group of questions targeting the participating local authorities’ positions on marketing, in the context of strategic plans and marketing plans, the participants were offered an opportunity to flesh out what their own library’s position was on marketing. The question specifically asked participants whether they would like to comment on their library service’s approach to developing a marketing plan. This question, like a number in the survey, was optional to allow for participants who were unlikely to be able to dedicate further time to the survey’s completion; several participants had indicated prior to the survey’s creation that they were doubtful they would be able to complete it due to time constraints attributed to their library’s continuing involvement in a new Library Management System project that is ongoing at a national level in the Republic of Ireland.

Two thirds of the participants in the survey elected to provide further details on this area while 9 skipped this question.

**Summary of Qualitative Feedback from Q.11**

The feedback provided by those participants who responded to Question 11 highlights a few common trends among local authority library services regarding the marketing of services and formulation of marketing plans.

Several participants, whose library authority has no current official marketing plan, indicated that it was something that was being currently looked at and would be formulated in the near future. It is evident from the variety of responses that there is no consistency in approach to the formulation of marketing strategies or plans at a national level. Some libraries respond that their marketing plan is actually a part of a strategic plan. Other libraries indicated that they had a library marketing plan in the past that is now out of date or was never fully realised due to factors such as staffing levels or resources. A library service based in Ulster, when discussing the fact that a plan that was being worked on was never realised, attributed this to simply becoming ‘bogged down’.
A number of those libraries that responded to Question 11 did appear to admit to having no organised marketing approach but defended their position by listing a number of marketing activities that they engage in. Three common marketing activities were listed in a number of these cases: Facebook and Twitter social media promotion in addition to service promotion using the library’s own dedicated website.

Staffing is a major factor in developing a marketing approach, and formulating a marketing plan, based on some of the data provided by the survey participants in Question 11. One library authority had to employ ‘professional assistance’ a number of years ago to assist with training on how to prepare a marketing plan; in this library’s case the marketing plan never materialised.

“We believe strongly in marketing and promotion of library services but don’t have a dedicated budget for it so at times we end up doing things on a bit of a shoestring!” - Munster based Library Authority

One local authority library service, based in Leinster, indicated a desire to have a dedicated staff member for Marketing & Communications; a number of staff members “fill the gaps” in promoting and marketing the library’s services. This library authority, it was asserted, facilitates “excellent events” but “has no staff to promote them in a truly strategic manner”.

Two Leinster based participants, and one based in Munster, indicated that marketing activities in these library authorities was carried out as extra work by existing library staff members. The two libraries based in Leinster have no marketing plan and the staff help carry out additional duties on the library authorities’ social media accounts. Finally, in feedback from one Connacht based local authority library service, it was indicated that they did not have enough staff for a dedicated marketing staff member further highlighting the wide range of approaches and perspectives to the question of
employing a dedicated staff member to look after marketing library services within the Irish local authority national library network.

A full summary list of the responses given as feedback to Question 11, regarding approaches to marketing by individual public library authorities, is contained in Appendix D.

4.5.6 Q.14: If you would like to add more detail to the types of marketing and social media activities mentioned above, that your library engages in, please comment here (Optional)

Question 14 was an optional question which encouraged survey participants to provide further details about the types of social media and marketing activities they engage in. Less than one third of the survey participants responded to this question and a lot of the data that was given backed up some of the responses previously given by survey participants.

The first trend among the participants who responded was an admission by some participants that their library service had no marketing plan accompanied by an explanation or indication of what the future action would be on marketing within that library service. Some of the comments received in this manner are documented below:

“We do not have an official marketing plan. However, we do market our services through our library website, social media (Facebook, Twitter and blogs), monthly newsletters and local newspaper and radio”

“XXX Library Development Plan 2016-2021... ’XXX Library will revise and further develop templates for an ongoing marketing strategy’”

“Marketing (Promoting Library use) is an integral part of the Library Strategic Plan and is planned accordingly rather than as a separate exercise”

“There’s no marketing plan but we do use Twitter and FB. We have blogs on our library website, and we do use local newspapers and local blogs and radio to advertise local events and services such as ebooks and our summer reading programme and exhibitions”
“Is part of business plan and will be achieved in the next year”

“Marketing is part of our development Plan. We do not have enough staff to have someone dedicated to marketing”

“Under the Graduate Placement Programme we have a specific member of staff dedicated to Marketing and Communications and we are currently working on a marketing strategy”

The feedback above confirms the data regarding the variety of stances and official positions on marketing among Irish public library bodies. In many cases marketing is not fully catered for with its own marketing plan and is dealt with, to varying degrees of thoroughness, in a broader strategic or development plan. Adopting new marketing strategies or plans is something that some of the survey participants specifically refer to in the feedback provided in Question 14. The last two statements from the feedback above also highlight the important role resources, and lack of human resources, can play on the discussion about the priority marketing is given within a library service.

Perhaps the following two separate quotes from the feedback, on the role budgetary and human resources concerns play on the marketing question, highlight the dilemma Irish public libraries currently face:

**Budgetary**

“We believe strongly in marketing and promotion of library services but don’t have a dedicated budget for it so at times we end up doing things on a bit of a shoe string!”

**Human Resources/Staffing/Manpower**

“I would like to see a dedicated member of staff dealing with Marketing and Communications to make the most of what we have programmed. It is a hit and miss effort otherwise with a number of staff trying to promote and fill gaps but not addressing core marketing needs. We have excellent events but no staff to promote them in a truly strategic manner”
4.5.7 Q.23: Does your library send representatives to visit local schools to market its products and activities?

From data given in responses to Question 20 it was confirmed that 10 Irish public library authorities spend time marketing their services at children. In this question the survey participants indicate whether their library service sends representatives to visit local schools in the community in order to market their services and in what ways they do this; 28 Irish public library authorities confirm that they send representatives to visit schools in this capacity while just two indicated that this is not something that is done by their library services.

The 28 survey participants who confirmed that their library service sends representatives to visit schools provided further feedback data on this subject. In most cases it was indicated that library staff are sent to local schools to promote events, acquire new members or participate in library initiatives; 4 library authorities indicated that they visit schools as part of the Summer Reading Challenge promotion.

1 public library authority indicated that they only visit schools if they are requested to do so while a further 3 stated that visiting schools was something that was carried out occasionally. Only 2 of the public library authorities, who responded 'Yes' to Question 23, indicated that they sent a specialised 'schools' or 'children's' librarian to visit schools with a further 5 indicating that they sent 'branch staff', which could include librarians, out to schools.

“Where resources allow our branch staff engage with their local schools”

“We used to do this extensively but not currently due to staff levels”

“When resources allow but not currently”

“Staffing is tight so can be difficult to visit schools”
4 of the 28 libraries that indicated they send staff to visit schools indicated that resources and staffing were issues in this area. Some of the feedback from these libraries is contained in the quotes above and demonstrate that, despite indicating that they visit schools in the question, some of these public library authorities are not currently doing this.
5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 **Conclusion**

In conclusion it has been demonstrated that there is a lack of coherent marketing approaches when looking at the local authority public libraries in the Republic of Ireland. The data arising from this research does not however lead us to also conclude that the lack of coherency, to marketing across the Irish public library network, also equates to little or no marketing activities by these libraries.

A large number of public library authorities in the Republic of Ireland have strategic plans in place with two thirds indicating that they have some form of marketing plan as part of these policy documents. Almost 60% of Irish public library services only update these strategic plans every 5 years or more while 26 out of the 30 public library authorities indicate having no current official marketing plan. It is evident that, while most public library services are addressing marketing in some form it is not carried out in a consistent manner, and in most cases it is not seen as something that necessitates its own official approach through separate policy formulation and individual official documentation. This assertion is proven from the data obtained, in particular from Question 5 and Question 6, whereby we learn that only a small number of Irish public libraries publish a library marketing plan as an official document; the data also reveals that only one library authority went on record indicating it has a copy of a library marketing plan available for download online. In the Irish local government sector the true importance placed on a subject, service or scheme can be determined based on whether it is disseminated in an official policy document or scheme. The data reveals that the majority of Irish public libraries have no official marketing plan while just as many of the remaining number of library authorities publish theirs as the number who indicate it is not something they do. The data reveals that there is no common marketing culture among Irish public libraries and this is demonstrated by the huge differences in approaches to formulating
strategic and marketing plans in addition to making them openly available to the public.

Based on the data we can conclude that exactly two thirds of Irish public library authorities indicate that their marketing plan is incorporated into their organisation’s strategic plan. When we explore just how much attention is given to marketing in the strategic planning process we can conclude, based on the data, that marketing is not currently a core part of the strategic planning of Irish public libraries. This body of research reveals that 21 out of 30 Irish public library authorities do not currently employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role; the data helps to establish the level of commitment towards marketing within Irish public libraries and whether marketing plans woven into strategic plans are indicative of prioritisation, or lack thereof, of marketing by the management of library authorities. Whereas two thirds of Irish public libraries have no dedicated staff member, the same number, based on responses to Question 10 of the survey, indicate that marketing is currently a core part of their library’s strategic plan.

The contention that social media is not prioritised as a form of marketing in Irish public libraries is debunked from the data obtained in the research survey. Social media is at the top of the list of marketing activities that Irish public libraries engage in during an average week; based on the data from Question 12 we can see that all Irish public libraries engage with social media as a form of marketing at least 1-10 times weekly with one third indicating that they engage with this medium over 20 times per week on average. Current research does however demonstrate that, while social media is engaged with to varying degrees by different public library services in Ireland, the types of platforms is quite small and limited in nature (See examples in Appendix C). Data highlights that the two most popular global social networking platforms, Facebook and Twitter, are rightly prioritised by Irish public libraries. The research data does highlight that activity, by Irish public library services, in other
social media platforms is quite sparse and infrequent showing little adventure or creativity in exploring these resources potential marketing outlets.

This research process looked into the importance of electronic word-of-mouth and participatory library in the context of social media platforms with particular reference to Facebook. The leverage of using Facebook to market a public library service is reflected in the feedback given to a number of the survey questions by the participating public library authorities. All participants in the survey indicated that their library service has a dedicated Facebook page; upon further research by myself it is evident that all except one public library service in the Republic of Ireland has a current dedicated Facebook page.

The survey data has demonstrated that, while Irish public libraries engage with social media such as Facebook, the level of engagement is not as strong as it could be; the data shows that only 40% of Irish public libraries create more than 10 Facebook posts a week. True lack of any exploitation of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) techniques such as Facebook is demonstrated in the statistical indicators of Facebook page likes that Irish public libraries currently have. Public library services, with far higher population bases, demonstrate less regular Facebook engagement than some smaller more rural library authorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Authority (Area)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No. of Facebook Likes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN (All 4 authorities)</td>
<td>1,345,402</td>
<td>9942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City</td>
<td>553,165</td>
<td>2792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun Laoghaire Rathdown</td>
<td>217,274</td>
<td>2382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal</td>
<td>296,214</td>
<td>2880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dublin</td>
<td>278,749</td>
<td>1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork (County &amp; City)</td>
<td>542,196</td>
<td>4566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>258,552</td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>149,605</td>
<td>3385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 27: Selection of Irish Local Authority Public Library Services’ Facebook page ‘Likes’

Figure 28: Comparison of selected Irish Public Library Services population bases and number of Facebook followers.
For instance, as can be seen in Figure 27, the highest individually liked Facebook page, run by a public library authority in the Republic of Ireland, is run by Wexford Library Services. Wexford’s library authority covers an administrative area with a population of 149,605 and its page is liked by 3385 people. In contrast the 3 major population centres in the Republic of Ireland all have far larger populations with less signs of social media engagement, demonstrated by page likes, on their respective Facebook pages. In the context of Nguyen et. al’s (2012) assertion that the true nature of Library 2.0 is more about library users than technologies, and Maness’ (2006) view that it is a socially rich “user centred virtual community”, it is apt to highlight here the scope for improvement with how Irish public libraries engage with their users particularly through online social media platforms. In total Irish public library Facebook pages are ‘liked’ a total of 43,576 times by Facebook users putting the average of followers per page at 1,556; this figure is quite low considering the population of the Republic of Ireland and is indicative of the need for Irish public library services to more pro-actively, and positively, engage with their users through online social media platforms such as Facebook.

The research provides some surprising insights into the level and type of marketing that Irish public libraries aim at minority groups. Irish public libraries are not fully embracing the notion of ‘participatory library’ in how they are engaging with the public online. Even in the cases of urban library services, with large ethnic minority groups, there is little emphasis placed on online marketing in target languages while almost two thirds in the Irish public library network avoid marketing online services in the official national language. State bodies and service can play their part in promoting, or marginalising the Irish language, and this question is part of a larger language question but the research data shows that there are gaps in approaches to online marketing towards minorities in the Irish public library network. Five Irish public library authorities demonstrate a lack of certainty towards the question of their library service spending time and resources marketing activities on specific groups in
the community while a further 7 indicate that this is not something that their library service does. The data shows that only just over half of the Irish public library network is able to indicate that it spends time and resources marketing activities on specific groups in the community.

Youth groups, and senior citizens groups, feature prominently in the marketing activities of Irish public libraries but more work needs to be done on marketing towards ethnic minorities, particularly in large urban areas where few indicated doing so; perhaps highlighting the lack of common approach, or consistency, in this area we have seen that only 1 Irish public library authority indicated marketing its services to members of the travelling community. The above summary of feedback data demonstrates an oversight in the public service role and responsibility of Irish public libraries on how they promote their services to all groups in the community.

In recent years a greater focus on business has become an area of importance for the Irish local government sector. The 2014 Local Government Act has led to the transfer of certain business related functions to Irish local authorities who are now responsible for working closely with local business groups to promote entrepreneurship and local industry. Irish public libraries, as part of the local government sector, are obliged to adapt to this new business reality. Some Irish public libraries have already begun to work closely with Local Enterprise Offices to maximise their library’s importance to the local business community. However the research feedback highlights that, like marketing generally, there is no consistency of approach among the Irish public library network; almost two thirds of Irish public libraries do not send library representatives to visit local businesses within the community while only 4 Irish public libraries indicated having any relationship with a Local Enterprise Office. While a number of Irish public libraries engage to some degree with the business sector, a larger number simply do nothing which is inconsistent with the strategic objectives of Irish local government policy at a national level.
The main area of interest for this research work centres on how local authority public libraries are marketing services online with particular emphasis on social media engagement and exploiting newer forms of interaction with library customers. Computer mediated environments now pose huge questions of public library services and the research has demonstrated that this area is not being completely ignored by Irish public library authorities; most are marketing themselves to some degree online while all are active on social media platforms. However in order to avoid merely being seen to be paying lip service to the potential to exploit online marketing avenues, Irish public library authorities must begin to aggressively, and creatively, explore the potential to reach library users online. The scalability and reach of electronic word-of-mouth communication (Cheung and Thadani, 2010) is of huge potential to Irish public libraries yet the research data indicates this resource is not being fully exploited. Libraries can only remain relevant by adapting to the new online participatory library reality yet two thirds of Irish public libraries currently do not employ staff with a dedicated marketing role and just under a third do not have a dedicated social media manager, or staff member responsible for dealing with social media, in their library service.

The research data also demonstrates that those Irish public libraries that do concentrate on social media are not doing so effectively; most Irish public libraries, as shown through the survey data, do not create a lot of content or engagement on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in an average week. In this context it is pertinent to note that in contacting Irish public library authorities, relating to doing my dissertation survey, one library authority indicated that the question (Q.16) on average weekly Facebook posts would be easier answered if the option was ‘monthly’ instead because they would regularly go through a week without generating content on this social media platform. With this in mind, and analysing the data in the two most popular social media platforms, Facebook & Twitter, we can see that Irish public libraries are not fully convinced, or indeed capable due to lack of resources, of exploiting this new form of customer engagement. The fact that 20% of Irish public
library services are unsure whether they use viral marketing as part of a marketing plan, while a further 63% confirm not using viral marketing, reinforces the assertion that there is much work to do to get the Irish public library network to effectively engage with social media, electronic word-of-mouth marketing and a fully integrated collaboration with Irish library users online.
5.2 **Recommendations**

The following research is exploring a relatively new aspect of marketing in the Irish local authority public library sector. As a new and evolving area, particularly with regards to the online elements of marketing that have been explored, there is a lot of scope for further study and research over the coming years. For instance there is an opportunity to explore in detail the process that Irish public library authorities go through to draw up a marketing plan; it is recommended that, in light of the fact that Irish public libraries are part of the Irish local government infrastructure, they should all be approaching marketing of services under a common policy framework. This makes sense due to its potential to reduce the work involved across multiple different public library authorities.

In many cases the marketing expertise, for formulating marketing plans and activities, does not exist in some Irish public library authorities. The research data demonstrated gaps in potential marketing activities in some library services while in some cases the survey respondents were unsure of the range of activities that can be marketed and the role that activities such as viral marketing played, if any, in their library authorities’ marketing plan. A specific marketing plan for libraries distinct from the national strategy for libraries, could remedy this issue by formulating a unified national approach to marketing in the Irish public library network. This research shows that regardless of whether it is included in its own marketing plan, or is a part of a greater organisational strategic plan, the approach to efficiently marketed services cannot succeed without the designated specialised human resources. Two thirds of Irish public library authorities currently need to employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role while one third need to appoint a staff member with a dedicated role for social media engagement; in addition only 7 Irish public library authorities have a dedicated social media librarian. These details demonstrate that one area in which improvements can be made in public library marketing relates to
staffing which requires an input from a strategic management level and sectoral management at a national level.

The activities of Irish public libraries relating to social media engagement have already been well documented; this research shows that Irish public libraries are actively engaging with social media platforms but that the range of platforms needs to be broadened and the engagement with library users on platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, needs to be more regular and focused to fully promote the libraries’ services.

In a similar fashion the level of engagement by Irish public libraries with the business sector needs to be increased to reflect the changed landscape in the Irish local government sector since the introduction of the Irish Local Government (Reform) Act in 2014. Some public library services are adapting to this new reality with a number offering dedicated business library services.

The engagement with minority groups by Irish local authority public libraries is inconsistent, and contains gaps, leading to some members of the community being ignored in terms of co-ordinated marketing campaigns. Social inclusion is the benefit of a renewed focus on broadening marketing activities beyond age related interest groups to include ethnic minorities and new cultural groups as well as members of the Traveller Community. Online activity is the new norm for carrying out business yet two thirds of Irish public libraries indicate that they do not promote their activities online through the Irish language; irrespective of personal approaches to this question, there is a statutory requirement to treat the Irish language as a national language and its omission by 19 Irish public library authorities is a form of social exclusion that could easily be avoided. Perhaps the real concern here is that, as is the case in so many of the responses, the rest of the survey respondents gave the exact opposite response to these 19 library authorities thus demonstrating the common trend of
inconsistency in approach to online marketing practices across the Irish public library network.

The inconsistency in approach to social media, and online marketing, should be addressed as a priority and indeed centrally at a national level. The fact that 21 out of 30 survey participants agree, that social media helps local authority libraries to gain more potential library users than traditional library marketing techniques, is a positive start to any discussion of this subject at a national level but the real challenge is changing the majority opinion into a consistent unified and active social media policy across all the Irish local authority public library services.
6. SELF REFLECTION

6.1 Reflection on personal learning and research performance

This project is my second dissertation following the completion of a minor dissertation in Italian literature in 2003. However there were a number of differences between the two projects which contributed to two wholly different experiences. While the study of Renaissance literature is rich in intrigue and narrative the current research project was grounded in a more practical scientific area involving a deeper scrutiny of quantitative and qualitative data. This project was, without doubt, a lot more challenging and is the largest written project that I have ever engaged in; the research project has been invaluable to me and has provided me with useful academic skills and thought processes that I hope to bring to my professional life in the future.

The project has required a high degree of patience and discipline to achieve the outlined research objectives. I felt most comfortable with the literature research process which provided unbridled scope to read and write freely on a multitude of closely related subject areas. I was frankly most at ease, and relaxed, looking for academic information and simply writing freely based on acquired knowledge. The area that challenged me the most was the period prior to the final selection of a research topic whereby a number of weeks were spent fine-tuning the precise final subject area while under deadline.

The process of topic selection was illuminating and helped direct the topic towards an area of practical relevance to the Irish public library network. After passing the topic selection process the next challenge involved the research survey formulation which involved a number of consultations with my dissertation supervisor; with the focus of the questionnaire aligned to my research objectives I began the process of identifying the survey participants and attaining feedback.
The survey population for my dissertation was small with only 30 local authority public library services taking part. A strategy was taken not to avail of an offer of contacting survey recipients by email via the Library Association of Ireland. I decided to directly identify the senior marketing officials, and in most cases County Librarians, of the public library authorities taking part in the survey in order to make contact and impart the importance of completing the survey. This process involved over 70 phone calls and over 40 emails, many during lunchtime while at work, but ensured a successful survey process with an appropriate return of both quantitative and qualitative data.

I then compiled the survey data and, through coding and quantitative analysis, I was able to arrive at the research conclusions. Despite having previously worked, in my job, on quantitative reports on customer services social media engagement I felt that this research exercise was something that I was doing on a completely different level. The survey was conducted on a one month subscription of Survey Monkey and was carried out over a period of two weeks; the deadline involved, and the period leading up to topic selection, proved to be the most pressurised elements of the entire dissertation process. This section of the dissertation was hugely interesting and enjoyable and I found that, while in some areas the results were predictable, the survey data helped to establish more rounded findings on marketing in Irish public libraries.

Finally I began the full writing process which was only challenging in so far as the number of times I decided to rewrite certain passages of the research findings.

I view this dissertation process as a form of reawakening that has rekindled an interest in the academic side of reading and literature. It has been a challenging experience, requiring dedication and discipline while balancing work commitments and personal obligations as well as regular trips abroad on personal business.
However I feel it has initiated a desire to recommence further academic studies with a return to literature and languages at the forefront of my thoughts.
APPENDIX A

Pros & Cons of Coding

Brinkmann & Kvale elaborate on some of the perceived pros and cons of coding as follows:

**Pros**
- Meticulous coding forces researchers to get acquainted with every possible detail in the materials
- Gives a very helpful overview of the material covered
- Is very easy to break down into steps

**Cons**
- “Reinforces a representational epistemology that reduces polyphonic meanings to what can be captured by a single category” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 228)
- Offends by positioning the analyst at arms length from the data
- According to MacLure, cited in Scott (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 228) it undermines the ethics of responsibility because “researchers code; others get coded”. Coding makes everything that falls within its confines “explicable”, states MacLure, which, from a postculturalist perspective, betrays the ineffable nature of reality”.

## APPENDIX B

### Irish public library marketing research Survey Summary

**Question 1**

Does your library service have a long term strategic plan in place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
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<td>83.3%</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
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answered question 30
skipped question 0

**Question 2**

Is a marketing plan a part of your library’s strategic plan?

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<th>Response Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
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answered question 30
skipped question 0

**Question 3**

How often does your library service formulate strategic plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Every year</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 2-3 years</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
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<td>Every 4 years</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
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answered question 30
skipped question 0
**Question 4**

Does your library have a current official marketing plan?

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<th>Response Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>26</td>
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answered question 30  
skipped question 0

**Question 5**

Is your library's marketing plan available to download online?

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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our library has no marketing plan</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>17</td>
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answered question 30  
skipped question 0

**Question 6**

Is your library's marketing plan contained in a published document?

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<th>Answer Options</th>
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</thead>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our library has no marketing plan</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
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answered question 30  
skipped question 0

**Question 7**

Did your library have a marketing plan before the current one?

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<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>33.3%</td>
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answered question 30  
skipped question 0
Question 8

How often does your library revise/update its marketing plan?

<table>
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<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0

Question 9

Does your library currently employ a staff member with a dedicated marketing role?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0

Question 10

Is marketing currently a core part of your library's strategic plan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0

Question 11

If you would like to comment on your library service's approach to developing a marketing plan please comment below (Optional):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 21
skipped question 9
Question 12

In an average week how often does your library engage in the following marketing activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>1-10 times weekly</th>
<th>10-20 times weekly</th>
<th>20-50 times weekly</th>
<th>50+ times weekly</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Marketing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Marketing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Newsletter (email)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter (hard copy)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event invitations (email)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal selling (1-1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Advertising</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion Forums (e.g. boards.ie)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community radio interviews</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community events promotion (on site)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your library engages in other forms of marketing please specify here</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0
Question 13

In an average week how often does your library engage in the following Social Media activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>1-10 times weekly</th>
<th>11-20 times weekly</th>
<th>20-50 times weekly</th>
<th>Less than once every week</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>50+ times weekly</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linked In</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0
**Question 14**

If you would like to add more detail to the types of marketing and social media activities mentioned above, that your library engages in, please comment here (Optional)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 15**

Does your library have a dedicated Facebook page?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 16**

How many Facebook posts are produced weekly by your library service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 17**

Does your library have a dedicated Twitter account?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0
Question 18

How many tweets are produced weekly by your library service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30

skipped question 0

Question 19

How many languages does your library service use to promote its activities online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One (English)</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two (English and Irish)</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two (English and 1 foreign language)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three + (English, Irish, and 1+ foreign languages)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30

skipped question 0

Question 20

Does your library spend time and resources focusing marketing activities on specific groups in the community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (please specify in what ways)</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30

skipped question 0

Question 21

Does your library have a dedicated social media manager or staff member responsible for social media engagement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30

skipped question 0
**Question 22**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your library service have a dedicated social media librarian?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30  
skipped question: 0

**Question 23**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your library send representatives to visit local schools to market its products and activities?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (please give more details)</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30  
skipped question: 0

**Question 24**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your library send representatives to visit local businesses in the community?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (please give more details)</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30  
skipped question: 0

**Question 25**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your library market its products and services to the business community?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (please give more details)</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30  
skipped question: 0
Is Viral Marketing a part of your library's marketing plan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 30
skipped question 0
**Question 27**

**How would you rate the usefulness of social media in marketing your library?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media is more useful than traditional forms of marketing library services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media is integral to marketing local authority public library services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media allows library users to create, connect, contribute and share information with their public library service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media helps public library users to access and locate library resources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media helps local authority libraries to gain more potential library users than traditional library marketing techniques</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 30

skipped question: 0
APPENDIX C

Q. 13 Survey Analysis: Social Media engaged in by Irish public libraries

Linked In

13 out of 21 participants who selected ‘Linked In’ indicated that it is ‘not applicable’ while 7 indicated that it is ‘never’ used by their library service; perhaps naturally this platform has limited scope for an Irish public library service yet 1 library authority did indicate that they use it up to ‘1-10 times weekly’.

Facebook

Facebook, based on the responses to this question, is the most commonly used social media platform used by Irish public libraries. 30 participants (out of a potential 30) provided answers to this question. 14 out of the 29 respondents (48.28%) use it ‘1-10 times weekly’, 6 out of 29 (20.69%) use it ‘11-20 times weekly’ and a further 8 (27.59%) participants use it between ‘20-50 times weekly’; two library authorities quite impressively indicated that they use Facebook over 50 times weekly thus completing a picture highlighting how prominent it is as a marketing tool for Irish public libraries.

Twitter

30 participants provided feedback on the question option relating to the average weekly frequency of library engagement with Twitter. None of those library authorities that responded indicated that they never engage with Twitter in an average week while only 3 respondents indicated that the question relating to Twitter was ‘not applicable’ in their circumstances.

13 Irish public library authorities use Twitter between ‘1-10 times weekly’ which accounts for 44.83% of the number of participants that responded to this part of the question. A further 5 libraries (17.24%) indicated that they engage with Twitter between ‘11-20 times weekly’ while 6 library bodies engage with this social media platform between ‘20-50 times weekly’ (20.69%). 3 Irish public library services engage with Twitter in excess of 50 times weekly on average. The data provided by the survey respondents demonstrates that Twitter, in a similar fashion to Facebook, is one of the top social media marketing tools engaged in by Irish public library services.
**Youtube**

The data provided by the participants of the survey demonstrate that Youtube is not used, in any meaningful way, by the majority of Irish public libraries to market their products and services. The response rate to this part of the question was almost one third below the response rates to the more popular social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). 15 of those that responded (65.22%) indicated that the choice of Youtube as a regular social media activity was ‘not applicable’ in their libraries’ case while a further 3 (13.04%) of survey responses indicated that Youtube is never used by their library authority.

The responses from the survey participants demonstrates that Youtube is only used by 5 Irish public library authorities; considering that 3 out of these 5 library services indicated that it would only be used by them ‘less than once every week’ it is demonstrable that it is not a popular or common social media activity in the Irish public library network.

**Google+**

Only 20 survey participants answered Question 13 and opted to give data on their library’s usage of Google+. 15 of the participants, amounting to 75% of those who gave data, indicated that the question of weekly engagement with Google+ was ‘not applicable’ in their library authority’s case. Another three survey participants indicated that their library never used Google+ while one participant indicated that their library service only used Google+ ‘less than once every week’. The data reveals that only one Irish local authority library service makes use of Google+ with any degree of regularity and even at that the frequency of usage selected was the lowest option available at between ‘1-10 times weekly’.

**Instagram & Flickr**

The use of image based social media platforms by Irish public libraries is revealed in the data given about frequency of usage of Flickr and Instagram (two of the largest image based global social media sites currently available) in Question 13.

Over half of those library authorities that responded to these options indicated that the question, in the context of Flickr and Instagram, was ‘not applicable; in their library’s case.

The most common usage option selected by participants to these two options in Question 13 was the minimal ‘1-10 times weekly’ ; 3 Irish public library services
(13.64%) indicated that they make use of Instagram between ‘1-10 times weekly’ while six (26.09%) similarly engaged with Flickr at the same level of regularity. The data from participants on engagement with these two image based social media platforms indicate that Flickr is used twice as much as Instagram by Irish public libraries. The data however also reveals that image based social media platforms, such as Flickr, are marginalised in the majority of cases when Irish public libraries devote resources and time towards social media marketing.
APPENDIX D – Survey Question 11 Feedback

Individual feedback from survey participants to Survey Question 11 – “If you would like to comment on your library service’s approach to developing a marketing plan please comment below”

“We do not have an official marketing plan. However, we do market our services through our library website, social media (facebook, twitter and blogs), monthly newsletter and local newspaper and radio”

“XXXXX Library Development Plan 2016 – 2021 Core objective 6: Co-operation, partnerships and promotion Aims: “XXXXX Library will revise and further develop templates for an ongoing marketing strategy"

“Marketing (Promoting Library use) is an integral part of the Library Strategic Plan and is planned accordingly rather than as a separate exercise.”

“There is no marketing plan but we do use Twitter and Facebook. We have blogs on our library website, and we do use local newspapers and local blogs and radio to advertise local events and services such as ebooks and our summer reading programme and exhibitions”

“Is part of business plan and will be achieved in the next year”

“Marketing is part of our development Plan. We do not have enough staff to have someone dedicated to marketing”

“We have a very brief marketing plan and a dedicated staff member; we also have guidelines for frequency and content of social media and print media posts & articles”

“Under the Graduate Placement Programme we have a specific member of staff dedicated to Marketing and Communications and we are currently working on a marketing strategy”

“Marketing is mainly through social media and a number of staff have this duty as an additional role”

“Promotion and marketing is integrated into XXXX Co Library’s Development Plan, PERSPECTIVES and is available on our website. Promotion/marketing forms part of the duties of two members of staff as well as part of the Children’s librarian’s duties. Branch and department managers also perform some marketing at a local level.”
“We are working on a marketing plan for our strategic plans e.g. To publish our Development Plan. Local press are regularly utilised by our libraries but not in a co-ordinated way.”

“We formulated a marketing plan as part of our library development plan. It is currently expired and needs to be revisited in tandem with the Library Development plan due this year.”

“Two grade 6 librarians and one grade 5 are in charge of maintaining a social media presence for the library service. Individually the librarians are in charge of branches are responsible for marketing their own events and the Grade 6’s who look after social media are also in charge of promotion through the library website.”

“Our marketing plan is published in house.”

“We approach this informally based as resources both staffing and other have been so limited over the past 5 years.”

“The marketing plan focuses on e services”

“I would like to see a dedicated member of staff dealing with Marketing and Communications to make the most of what we have programmed. It is a hit and miss effort otherwise with a number of staff trying to promote and fill gaps but not addressing core marketing needs. We have excellent events but no staff to promote them in a truly strategic manner.”

“We made an attempt at drawing up a plan some years ago and had some professional assistance in terms of training as to how to prepare said plan. However we got bogged down in it and are making a new attempt now at a co-ordinated approach to marketing, including the development of a marketing plan. We work well already with the Council’s Communications Office and will develop this relationship further very shortly.”

“We believe strongly in marketing and promotion of library services but don’t have a dedicated budget for it so at times we end up doing things on a bit of a shoe string!”

“We are about to commence our 5 year development plan, which will include an element specifically on marketing”
APPENDIX E – Literature Review: Supplementary material

Engagement with social media

Marketers are able to engage in social networks either by joining up with pre-existing web communities or by simply creating communities of their own. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p.539) Kotler and Armstrong argue that challenges exist in participating successfully in existing online social networks. While they rightfully point out that the results of social network engagement can be hard to measure, allusions are made to ephemeral challenges such as earning ‘the right to be there’ and not ‘intruding’ in online social conversations; however the implementation of a corporate approach to an online social networking presence is an exercise in common sense and the type of social intrusion referred to is anathema to the concept of allowing an organisation’s customers spread the word on the organisation’s behalf which is the key strength of a social networking presence in the first place.

Types of new Library Technology Options

Technological advances have led to a growth in the options available to a library service in the types of service it can provide. Library services have moved from being solely facilitators of its own technology services to facilitating the use of technology options brought into the library space by its customers. Watson (2013) argues that libraries that are ‘technology-rich’ have widespread networking services that are not just wired but also wireless. Previously all of these technology services would be the sole preserve and property of the library space provider but current trends dictate a necessity to adhere to greater strategic synergies such as the ones espoused by Watson in figure 7.1 above. The library service provider can now trade on direct technology provision in favour of a form of technology service that is reliant primarily on the library space itself. Watson (2013) argues that this ‘Bring your own device (BYOD) trend’, that is relevant to public libraries such as in the Irish public library network, is beneficial because it allows customers to bring their own personal smart-technology devices into the library space as opposed to relying on the library’s often outdated hard-wired personal computer services.

Calhoun (2014) argues that there is a hierarchy of importance in the characteristics of digital libraries beginning as follows: “the social roles they play; the communities they serve; the collections they gather for those communities; and the enabling technologies that support them.”(Calhoun, 2014, p.18/19) Out of this hierarchy Calhoun asserts that the social roles and communities are largely fixed in nature whilst the collections and enabling technologies are more likely to change with the progression of time. What Calhoun asserts is largely sensible in the context of
approaching a strategy for the development of a new library environment. The above stance from Calhoun does make specific reference to a ‘digital library’ which creates a specific distinction with the traditional library service such as an Irish public service local authority library. The concept of a distinction between traditional and digital libraries is becoming increasingly redundant; Calhoun (2014) argues that with the aggressive growth of online content in library collections, the “concepts of ‘digital libraries’ and ‘libraries’ are less distinguishable than they were in the 1990s, when digital libraries began to emerge”. (Calhoun, 2014, P.25)

**Self Service in Participatory Library**

Leeder and Frierson (2014) are clearly influenced greatly by Buckland (1992) and make reference to him in introducing an approach to future library planning. Self-service technology, as predicted by Buckland (1992), is widespread in modern library service environments, and clearly endorsed by Leeder and Frierson (2014) and their peers; repetitive tasks, carried out by library staff members, are now being “delegated to machinery” (Leeder and Frierson, 2014, p.118,). Buckland (1992) viewed the key challenge facing library planners as being an ability to shift from direct provision of one-on-one library services to the provision of “library services intended for self-service”; this shift was deemed inevitable and the Participatory Library philosophy, espoused by Leeder and Frierson (2014), is a natural evolution of this.
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