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ROLE OF MARKETING STRATEGY IN LIBRARIES

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Abstract:

Libraries have been considered essential to educational and research endeavors & have relied on institutional financial support for their continuing operations. After introductory remarks on the definition of marketing, the origin & history of library and information science (LIS) marketing is explained. Marketing is the process of planning, pricing, promoting and distributing goods & services to create exchange that satisfy the library and the customer. The concepts of marketing is widely applicable in library and information environment. Marketing concepts itself is changing and has different meaning for different people. Now marketing is whole organization concept and organization wide philosophy, which requires year of continual work. Marketing concepts and techniques play a vital role in academic libraries because library and information centre and marketing both have same goal, "The right service to the right person at the right time" . As librarians we should be actively marketing and promoting our library services. This paper aims to explain the role & importance of marketing strategies for libraries.

KEY WORDS:

Marketing, Marketing Mix, Marketing Strategy, 7 Ps.

INTRODUCTION:

The challenges to library services from changes in educational approaches, the impact of technology, new methods of information provision and declining budgets have meant that marketing is now so essential that it cannot be considered a separate function. Recent technological developments are creating new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information by passing traditional institutional like libraries. Now, the real challenge for library & information professionals is not to manage the collection, staff and technology but to turn these resources into services.

Main function of any library is to provide right information to right users at right time and this function can be done through marketing. As in such an environment librarians are finding new ways of serving users or customers effectively & efficiently. The principles of marketing have gradually been accepted both as relevant and beneficial to the library environment. Many also thinks that marketing is a new issue for LIS, something that only emerged during the last three decades.

However what is true about marketing in general the confusion concerning the concept itself. Most people seem to see marketing only as the equivalents to advertising or promotion they do not see "What's below' the tip of the iceberg "to use this analogy, what is below the surface in marketing theory includes important strategies components such as evaluating the need of the customer, planning various elements of the mix in order to answer those needs and periodically evaluating the results

In designing the marketing mix and developing the marketing plan the so called 7 Ps have becomes central to libraries . Librarians are participating in this process of assesin their users' needs and

trying to fulfill them. Thus we are already marketing our library information skills. However in order to do this effectively librarians need to embrace the total marketing functions involving market research an analysis, service planning and promotion

III) WHAT MARKETING IS ALL ABOUT?

Marketing is a process which carries goods from producers to ultimate consumers. Marketing its broader sense, is the social instrument through which the material goods and culture of a society are transmitted to its members. Marketing in the library context, refers to those instruments through which information are transmitted to its members, there are much of confusion arises because the marketing concept has changed from selling concepts to product development and customer focused concepts. There are several different yet views to the concepts of marketing. They can be broadly divided into four types

Views of concept of Marketing

- Marketing as a set of technique
- Marketing as Philosophy
- Marketing as an approach
- Customer driven marketing

Definition of Marketing:

According to Kotler, "Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulation programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of target markets need and desires and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets"

Stanton has opined "Marketing is a total system of interacting business activities to plan, price, promote and distribute want satisfying products and services and present to potential customers"

Smith defines that " Marketing is a stance an an attitude that focuses on meeting the need of users. Marketing is a means of ensuring that libraries, librarians and librarianship are integrated into both todays and tomorrows emerging global culture. Marketing is not separate from good practice. It is good practice "(Krishan Kumar, 1985)

Marketing has been defined and explained in many ways by different marketing authors. Though the definitions given by American Marketing Association (AMA) and the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) have been widely accepted over the years but are redefined time & again.

IV) NEED OF MARKETING IN LIBRARIES:

Information professionals must understand that it is essential to actively market their services. Library marketing is critical for any information professional in order to spread the word about their library. It doesn't matter what library type, it doesn't matter how large or small the library is - you need to draw attention to your library, your services, your worth to your community, your administration, your staff and your users

This is first aspect of employing effective marketing in any kind of libraries. Many librarians correlate marketing with profit and consider that libraries are not for making profit. Basically because they were not taught marketing at library schools and do not see marketing to have anything to do with running a library. The interest in marketing has tremendously increased over the last two decades in almost all kind of libraries throughout the world.

There are always need for LIS staff to develop a more responsible attitude towards their customers, ensure credibility and a positive attitude to face new challenges as well as opportunities. There is always a greater need for appreciation and good understanding for marketing concept among librarians as which it can do for them

V) ORIGIN & HISTORY OF LISMARKETING:

Historically one can easily find the roots of library marketing in the attempts to extend opening hours of libraries in the United States during the last quarter of 20th century & in efforts to make books available in locations outside the library building. Renborg (1997) considers that marketing is not need to

libraries it is as old as modern librarianship & the origin of marketing dates back in 1870s. The approaches of library experts like MelvilsDewey, SR Ranganathan& other were marketing oriented

However the concepts of marketing in libraries entered when Philip Kotler formally propagated the marketing concepts in non - profit organization in 1970s& the concept was sharpened in 1980s when the concept of services marketing emerged. Many concepts make marketing a library wide philosophy "&desire involvement of one and all from front line staff to broad members. So the marketing concepts has changed from selling concept to product developments & customer focused concept.

VI) INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL SCENARIO:

There is increasing interest of international and national professional association and organizations have been giving a wider coverage on marketing in its programmers and activities .It's management division gives training & published bibliographies on marketing time to time for example

S.N.	Name of Association	Role
1.	ASLIB	Published first authentic text on marketing of Library & inf. service Organizises short term courses for working libraries & Publishers
2.	ALA	Your library advocates campaign for the World's Libraries launched at IFLA at the 2001 Annual Conference in Bosten
3.	IFLA	Marketing & Management section is 1997 library professionals from all over the world
4.	IASLIC	Organized first national conference in 1988
5.	SIS	Organized conference on the theme Information marketing in 1995
6.	DESIDOC	Brought out special issues on marketing of library & information science twice 1998 & 2002

This clearly depicts that the interest of LIS professionals in marketing and makes it very clear that the discipline of marketing of library services must emerge as a new academic & research area in library and information sector.

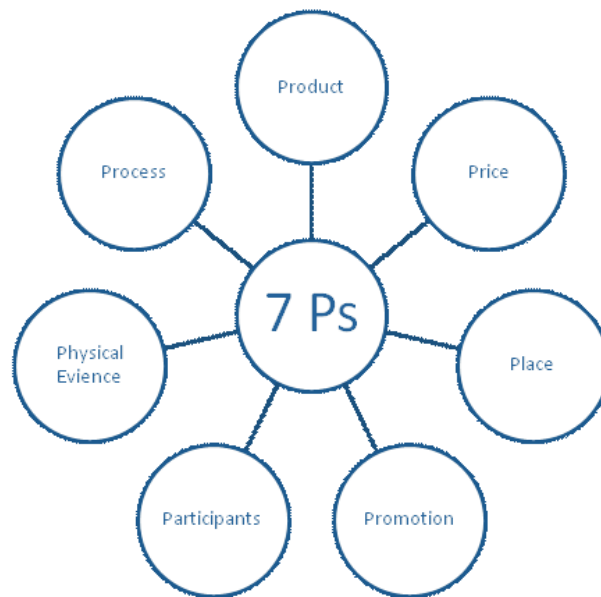
VII) MARKETING STRATEGIES :

Strategy is the key to successful marketing . Marketing is a management discipline and it is equally a part of organizational and management , Philosophy , reflected in attitudes and approaches across the whole organization. Marketing strategy is a process that can allow an organization to concentrate opportunities to increase sales & achieve a sustainable should be centred on the key purpose that in academic libraries user / customer satisfaction is the main goal.

The market a library resources and information services is not difficult. Wolf's (2005) observation " Library public relations, promotions and communications a how-to-do- its manual " is a very useful guide for library marketing.

We can apply the 7P's(Koontz and Rockwoods 4 Ps plus Rafic& Ahmad's 3 Ps) of marketing mix. Which is defined by Koontz & Rockwood (2001). They suggested that marketing strategy is a comprehensive integrated & coordinated plan.

7 Ps of Marketing Strategies of Libraries



Promotion is essentially the means of informing to users what you do and what you can do. The benefits for those who promote their library services include increased usage, increased value in the organization, education of users and changed perceptions. The promotional plans emerges from the marketing plan. It is do with how to achieve the objectives that have been forecast.

Promotional activities can take many forms and promotional media will depend on the nature of the target audience and on promotional objectives

1. **Personal skills** : You need to be professional and use quality procedures but you need to smile and establish a personal relationship with as many of your users as possible
2. **Email** : Where a large proportion of the users are on email, it is an easy way of reaching them quickly and cheaply.
3. **The internet** : The internet has the power to improve the library's image and to allow the library to offer enhance services. although it takes time to set up and maintain services on the internet , it can reach rewards in terms of user satisfaction & recognition.
4. **News letters and Leaflets** :News letters and leaflets are both a mean of delivering information.

Thus marketing strategy is the key to the successful proliferation , under a strategy where we incorporate all the important points like identifying organizational goal, customer analysis, competitors analysis, plan for specific product/ service etc.

VIII) CHALLENGES FACED BY LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS :

There are some challenges and difficulties faced by users but it is also very important to consider the challenges to library professionals. There are some major challenges are as follows:

1. Create Positive Image :

One of the biggest challenges faced by librarians is to create a positive image as most users hold negative attitudes towards librarians. for decades people thought of librarians as 'trained' and 'skilled' but not necessarily as 'Professionals' and have no idea about the qualifications or training requirements (Ajileye - Laogun , 2004).Therefore librarians need to demonstrate that they have got both qualifications and a variety of skills

2. Be Positive :

Language problems may hinder users from seeking assistance offered by the library (Patton 2002). All professionals librarians have have got to communicate with users about their services because exchanges between the services agent (librarians) and the customer (users) can elicit information about

customer requirement and also permit the services agent to explain the organization product and how these can meet the customer needs (Rowley 1998)

3. Build good Relationship :

There is no real shortcut to providing good information services to users. According (Curry & Copeman 2005) quality reference service involves a relationship between the users & librarians within a cycle of Dimensions of services.

4. Create a Welcoming Environment :

Librarians need to develop the ability to create a welcoming environment be patients and build confidence with the users. When librarians are friendly and welcoming and helpful , users are encouraged into the library. It is reported that the personality of the librarian determines the rate of utilization of the library by it's users.

5. Know how to communicate well with users from different cultures. Librarians need to learn ways of styles because the way people communicate varies widely between one aspects of communication style is language usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways.

6. Respect for cultural differences :

One of the significant barriers in cross -cultural communication is the use of language. As librarians become more ware of cultural differences, they will become better listeners and communicators and could communicate better with users from different cultural background.

IX) CONCLUSION :

Marketing approaches are providing to be effective in assisting academic libraries to adjust to change in it's client base and will ensure that services delivered continue to fit the needs. Marketing strategy is the key to the successful proliferation, under a strategy where we incorporate all the important points like identifying organizational goal, customer analysis, competitor analysis, plan for specific product , services etc. If the libraries fail to catch hold of the opportunities, the scence will be captured by the commercial vendors, We know that the users do not mind paying for the services if they are useful and available at reasonable price. Therefore the marketing policy of libraries needs careful planning, structuring, execution and evaluation with regular review.

Librarians and information professionals must encourage & develop a marketing culture in their libraries and information centres and be prepared to market their own very significant talents, experience and skills. Marketing needs human as well as financial resources and it need teamwork for a successful implementation. The investment needs to be serious and rewards are immense. So marketing strategy is important for every library and information product manager and service provider for success in the market.

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