MARKETING LIBRARY SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A TOOL FOR SURVIVAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT
This article discusses the concept of marketing library and information services as an important library activity. It also stresses the need for librarians and information specialists especially those in academic libraries in developing countries to become proactive and to take marketing as a serious and obligatory library function. With the emergence of new information providers and diverse avenues that enable information users/seekers to access information even outside library premises, the authors argue that it is very likely librarians with lose potential clients. Marketing of library services is therefore considered to be a tool that can be used by librarians to fight and compete and also attract both new customers and old library users. The article also suggests a number of media that can be used to market library services in academic libraries.

INTRODUCTION
Marketing is a common term used among different people from all walks of life. Before the 1960's marketing was associated with the concept of selling of commodities in industrial and commercial sectors. Today, especially in developed countries, marketing is a philosophy and a fundamental aspect of management involving commercial, social, charitable organisations as well as service organisations.

Among the factors contributing to this include, economic reforms taking place in various sectors, IT development, globalisation, privatisation and competitiveness among organisations. These factors are forcing organisations and managers to use marketing as a survival strategy and a tool for improving

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their services and products so as to satisfy their customers, patrons and other stakeholders.

In library and information services the idea of marketing is not very new. Marketing of library services is well established in USA and Northern Europe where there are more libraries and library schools. Therefore, marketing of library services is deeply rooted in these countries.

In developing countries however, the concept of marketing, especially marketing service sectors such as library and information services, is still new. This paper attempts to highlight the importance of marketing of library and information services particularly in academic libraries in developing countries in the 21st century. The paper also highlights some of the media that can be used to market library services in academic libraries.

MARKETING

The concept of marketing is defined differently by scholars. For example, Epstein and Liebman (1986:138) define marketing as "...every thing that is done to get the product to the customer, but more specifically, not just selling but discovering and furnishing the customer wants and needs". Kotler (1975) defines it as "an effective management by an organisation of its exchange relation with its various publics". In Kotler's definition the emphasis is on the management process by which an organisation wants to pursue an effective exchange relations with its customer.

According to Dibb (1994:4), The UK Chartered Institute of Marketing defines marketing as "The management process responding for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer, requirement profitably". Dibb (ibid.) further quotes a definition by the American Market Board that defines Marketing as "The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchange that satisfy an organisation. In these two definitions, the emphasis is on planning process that intends to satisfy the customer. The main emphasis in marketing is on the of exchange relationship of products, services, ideas or any other form of item that can create mutual satisfaction between the supplier and the consumer, for the value of the exchange item.

While marketing serves both the supplier and the customer, essentially marketing functions towards the success of the supplier or an organisation. Therefore marketing:

- Enables an organisation to attract, create, win and retain customers.
- Enables an organisation to create, produce and deliver goods or services according to customers' needs
- Enables an organisation to communicate, review, and improve its services according to time.
- Helps to organise and reorganise a system so that its functions are geared to serve the clients and customers better.

Marketing in the Service sector

While in service organisations the idea of marketing library service is not new, however, it has not been fully explored as in business organisations. According to Kotler (1994) resistance for marketing in service sectors is strong because they think marketing their services is degrading. Cowell (1984) also pointed out that service dominant organisations are less market oriented compared to manufacturing firms. According to Cowell (1984) this is due to the:

- Intangible nature of service products that make them difficult to market
- High demand for their service,
- Monopoly of power enjoyed by some service organisation.

In library services, librarians and information specialists are reluctant in accepting the concept of marketing library services for a number of reasons. According to Bushing (1995), this is due to misunderstanding of the general concept of marketing to public relations and publicity. Hence Lawford (1995) argues that librarians and documentalists do not subscribe to the idea that information services should be "free". This is one of the reasons that inhibit librarians to become market oriented. Similarly, Tucci (1988) points out that many information professionals have not accepted marketing practices because they are "organisation-centred" than "customer-centred". The argument here is that librarians do not take the initiative to investigate their customers' actual needs.

In academic institution professors, lecturers and students are the major users of library information services, and are also their permanent customers. This is one of the major reasons why librarians are less market-oriented. This is also the reason why librarians are not motivated to assess information needs of their clients. The tendency for most librarians is to "sit back" in their offices waiting for clients. This is a wrong approach because despite having constant and reliable customers, librarians have to realise that these customers need to be given services that conform to their needs on time. In this respect, librarians in academic institutions have to provide services through systematic anticipation and research of the actual current and future information needs of their customers. Failure to do so results in potential customers thinking that the library is not important to them. Members of the academic institutions are also the major beneficiaries of information technology, Internet facilities and other kinds of information installed in their institutions. Nowadays at least every lecturer has a PC on his/her table. Computer Centres with Internet facilities are also common in many universities. Faculty and departmental libraries are also being established. All these provide alternatives for information access other than traditional libraries. These developments require that librarians to be more proactive towards this challenge.

Other factors according to Seetharama (1990) are:
- Conceptual confusion by librarians and information scientists that marketing is nothing but promotion and sells
- Inadequate user studies
- Lack of proper marketing research and segmentation
- Non teaching or the least emphasis put on marketing concepts in library schools' curriculum.

The reasons cited, which undermine marketing in library and information services, have to be seriously addressed by academic librarians and other information professionals in developing countries. These will enhance their role as information providers. Changes that are taking place in technology as well as clients demand require librarians and information scientists to accommodate these changes and to be ready to move with modern

trends. According to Tanui and Kitoi (1993) one of the major attitudinal changes expected from library managers is the ability to market their services. Philosophically and managerially the application of concept of marketing in library services results in improved services and consequently user satisfaction.

LIBRARY/INFORMATION SERVICES MARKETING AND THE 21ST CENTURY

Information technology has brought about diverse avenues to access and retrieval of information among users of library and information centres. With information technology, people can get information they require from their desks using various electronic devices. The traditional library functions referred to as "back office" functions can now be done electronically. What does this situation mean? It means that information users do not solely rely on libraries to get the information because there are other information providers. Therefore, in the 21st Century libraries and librarians are facing competition from other information providers for customers and information service provision.

In any competition in order to defeat your opponents, you have to prove that you are the best. This means you must demonstrate and prove that you have something extra or you can do something better than your competitor. Therefore, libraries and information centres should provide information services that reflect the needs and wants of their potential customers in an effective and efficient manner.

Another major challenge facing librarians in the 21st Century is to justify their existence and competence in the information business. In other words, librarian should be able to convince and attract their potential customers, earn their confidence and ensure they come for their services instead of seeking other alternatives. This is possible if librarians provide services that reflect needs and the wants of customers. Therefore librarians should improve the quality of services in response to the needs of customers and new technology. The tendency to "sit back" and wait for customers is old fashioned and may result in the marginalisation of librarians and library services.

Marginalisation occurs when the importance or significance of something is gradually diminished and sometimes pushed off the

side or to the margin (Park, 1992). Librarians should therefore not allow themselves to be marginalised nor should virtual libraries lead to the demise of the library or the extinction of librarianship. Librarians should combine both IT knowledge and their long time experience in information services to reach potential customers and provide information services to them. By virtual of their expertise librarians should adopt a proactive approach in marketing their services within the context of basic marketing principles (Nawe, 1993). Therefore in order to become more effective librarians need to do the following:

- Focus on accessing and delivering information to users.
- Become proactive participants in the scholarly and communication process
- Play an intermediary role and custodianship of advising information users on various information sources, software and database suitable for use.
- Improve proper selection, evaluation, control and dissemination of both printed and electronic information.

However, this requires proper application of marketing strategies. Librarians have to be aware of every trend-taking place in the information industry to be able to determine information needs interests and the requirements of their customers.

Marketing should therefore be viewed as a tool that is outward looking in providing information on changes in the external environment and its implication for an organisation. Marketing should also be viewed as a future oriented tool to make decisions for short, medium and long-term projections of organisations based on customer needs (Parkinson, 1987).

Essentially, marketing involves finding out what the user wants and setting out how those needs can be met. In order to do this effectively marketing survey has to be undertaken. These include market research, market analysis, service planning and promotion. Marketing research involves systematic gathering, recording and analysis of data relating to demands for a service. The information gathered through market research provides the basis for making market decisions while the conclusions drawn from market research are used as the basis for the actual market plan (Katz, 1988).

After establishing user needs, future trends and necessary resources, it is possible to plan marketing objectives and strategies to be used to achieve them.

Promotion and Marketing Medium

Promotion is the means of informing users what an organisation is doing and what it can do. Promotion enables the client to be aware of the services available. The main purpose of promotion is to attract attention to the services provided and motivating users to use them. According to Seetharama (1990) the purpose of promotional activities is to communicate, convince and to compete, and therefore any promotional activity designed by the library should meet these objectives. The benefits of promoting library services include increased usage, increased value in the organisation, education of users and changed perception (Nicholas: 1998).

Promotion can be undertaken in a number of forms and media depending on the nature of the target audience and promotion objectives. Some of the media that have been brought about by the emergency of IT are new to some libraries. However, others are common and have been in use in various organisations although they are not used in some libraries. A newsletter for example, is common in many organisations but it is also true that there are some libraries that do not have their own newsletter. So there is a need to encourage libraries to use as many media as possible to reach potential clients. The following methods can be used to market and promote library services: IT instructional programmes, Newsletter, E-mail, Physical visits, Personal skills, The Internet and book fairs.

IT literacy instructional programmes

Librarians/information specialists are the most suitable people for teaching information literacy skills. These include basic computer skills, Search techniques and Database management.

Newsletter Publications

A newsletter can be a very useful tool for marketing and promoting library services and products. Very often libraries receive different varieties of information and materials that are not known to their

users. It is therefore not uncommon to hear some library users saying to librarians "I never knew this is available in this library". Such a sentiment is a clear sign for librarian's failure to communicate and disseminate information to their users. A newsletter can therefore be used to do the following:

- Introduce important relevant web sites
- Publicise library holdings and library facilities e.g. CD-ROM and new software including online services and
- Any other interesting developments or acquisitions in the library.

E – mail alert services

The E-mail can be used in the same way as a newsletter in promoting and marketing library services. E-mail has the following advantages.

- Easy distribution
- Inexpensive direct delivery to users
- Delivers "just-in-time" marketing

By maintaining up-to-date address lists of library users messages can easily be sent and responded to.

Physical Visits

Visiting potential clientele in their work places, offices, classes, and seminar rooms is of the most effective forms of marketing library services and products.

Personal Skills

Inter personal skills are important tools for establishing strong personal relationships with customers. The manner in which library staff attend to customers in person or on the telephone has great impact on the way customers perceive the library, and librarians. Smiling and positive reactions to customers can encourage people to be positive to you and therefore disclose to libraries some information that otherwise could not be disclosed.

The Internet

Many libraries are now connected to the Internet. The Internet is capable of improving library's image and allows the library to offer

enhanced services. Setting up of a library web page can serve as a useful promotional tool for advertising in-house library services and electronic information resources on the web. The Internet also facilitates easy and fast access to information stored in international databases and the sharing of information between scientists and scholars.

Leaflets and Guides
Leaflets and guides can be useful in promoting library services. These can be handed out and displayed on permanent notice boards in the library.

CONCLUSION
In the 21st century, marketing is an important activity, which should be taken seriously by librarians. This century which continues to be dominated by new and sophisticated information technologies requires librarians to become proactive and to respond to new needs and to the influence of technology. In this era of modern information delivery and competition librarians cannot afford to sit back waiting for customers to come to them. This method of working has been overtaken by events, as it can no longer sustain librarians to remain on the centre stage of information services delivery as active and effective participants.

Marketing therefore should be used to reach all potential library users in order to inform them about librarians and what they can offer and provide at the same time seeking to know their actual needs. In this way librarians can put themselves in a better position to give services according to actual needs of their clients in terms of time and requirements.

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