

Barriers to Marketing of Information Products and Services in University Libraries

Gopal. G
Department of LIS
S.V. University, Tirupati-517502
Andhra Pradesh, India

Raiah. I
Department of LIS
S.V.University, Tirupati-517502
Andhra Pradesh, India

Lakshmipathi. L
Department of LIS
Annamalai University
Annamalai Nagar – 608002, India

ABSTRACT: *In the present information age, wherein information and knowledge are key to societal development, libraries and information centres are potential source of revenue generation if the resources of the libraries and information centres are marketed. Ever since the concept of marketing was introduced to libraries, certain barriers have prevented the libraries in implementing marketing programmes. This paper attempts to look at the barriers that impede the libraries and information centres from adopting marketing.*

Keywords: Information Marketing, Information Centers, Information Services Marketing

Received: 28 October 2019, Revised 9 January 2019, Accepted 20 January 2019

DOI: 10.6025/ijis/2019/11/3/76-79

© 2019 DLINE. All Rights Reserved

1. Introduction

Information is recognised as a national product and it contributes a substantial share to the income of the nation. It is considered as an essential tool in the hands of decision makers. The right information to the right person assists in improving the ability of an individual, a business firm, a government agency or any other kind of similar institution to take the right decision which assists in achieving the aim of the organisation. The slogan ‘Information is power’ proves that without information contrivances a developed country cannot develop or stay developed for a long time. Information has been described as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food, and shelter. The library and information center is very important in any educational institution as it is a hub of vast learning and a great resource of teaching materials. The library has been a great resource achieving and sharing information. If we see the little backward in history we find the librarians in a very basic stage and as a small service provider. In old days the only source of information was written books and some the daily newspapers. In that era it was easy job to handle the library with little capacity for the librarian as the books were easy to keep as well as to handle also.

Technologies changed with time so do the users and also the institutions had to change accordingly.

The concept of marketing is equally applicable to non-profit organisations. Marketing activities of non-profit organisations are referred as social marketing. The basic concepts of conventional marketing and non-profit or social marketing do not differ. The only difference is that non-profit or social marketing; the objective is not profit in terms of money. The marketing of non-profit organisations is the concept of sensitivity serving and human needs. Among non-profit organizations education, research and development institutions have been the subject of the some of the most serious attempts to apply the concept of marketing.

Libraries and information centres have began to realise that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of administration and management, especially as a means for improving user satisfaction and promoting the use of services, by existing and potential users. The main factors, namely, the information explosion, technology revolution, escalating library costs, shrinking library budget and the need to be self-sufficient financially are responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop a marketing approach in its operations and services. Marketing helps in gaining new users and serve better its existing users by developing new services, and maximise the use of library and information products and services.

2. Information Marketing in University Libraries

The concept of information marketing can be still in a state of infancy in university libraries. Factors which characterize the difficulties of information marketing are:

- (a) Lack of proper assessment of requirements wants and needs of the users.
- (b) Casual approach in supplying information to the potential users.
- (c) Lack of perception of how much information services and products can contribute to boost research and development activity.
- (d) Lack of perception of the economic aspect of buying information on the part of the user of information¹.

The recognition of information as a commodity or organizational resource in a developing country like India. In the university environment, it still sounds strange to think of information as a marketable commodity. In the university, the main objective is the growth of knowledge and stimulation of research while in a market, the main objective is profile making. To accelerate the pace of research and development, it looks imperative to find a confluence point of the academic and business approach to strike a balance between the two, so that the users can get the needy information for a payment an without wasting much of their precious time.

2.1. Benefits of marketing of library information Products

A well-developed marketing of library information products programme will bring in the following benefits: Improved satisfaction of the users.

- ▲ Extension of service to potential users and thereby enlargement of the user's circle.
- ▲ Efficient use of marketing resources.
- ▲ Improved resources attraction to the organization².

Enables clear analysis of the user groups and their needs.

2.2. Barriers in Marketing Information Products and Services

Rao³ also discusses four broad barriers to the adoption of the marketing approach in libraries and information centres. The four barriers are:

2.2.1 Attitude wise

Information professionals, like many other professionals, have been inward looking—happy with satisfying a limited clientele,

that too when asked for, and happy with jealously guarding their importance. To be outward looking, from the client's point of view would require them to make a 180 degrees turn around.

2.2.2 Structure wise

The staff which comes into contact with the public or clients are the counter clerks and less frequently, the reference librarian and the librarian. As a result, there is no staff to reach out and capture the point of view of the client. To introduce any such layer would be resisted from the existing staff and the turf holders. Moreover, the libraries and information centres are a part of a large organization which does not follow the marketing approach as well. Also, traditional security of the job, common to public institutions, and lack of involvement of professionals in the management of the library or the information centre, in developing countries, is conducive to a no-change syndrome.

2.2.3 System wise

Libraries and information centres, so far, have been more storage, security, and audit conscious. They do not allow the client or the client's point of view inside the system. Guarding or protecting the information is more important than utilizing it for the satisfaction of its clientele. Therefore, any changes in the system to make it more client or service oriented would be to ask for both attitudinal as well as structural changes.

2.2.4 Environment wise

The culture, especially in the developing countries, still believes that information should be free and should be sought by clients themselves. Dependence on government and private largesse in many areas is taken for granted. There is no attempt at seeking out clients. Marketing and payment for a variety of services, like education or information, is considered infra-dig both for the giver and the taker.

2.3 Challenges of Marketing in Libraries

Lack of funds is often used as a reason not to market. However, marketing library services is not simply a matter of spending money on promotion and advertising. Marketing is also a matter of improving to lack of training and knowledge of marketing tools and techniques. Despite the growing literature on library marketing, there remains a lack of familiarity with the total marketing concept among librarians. There is confusion about what the term marketing means. Much of this has to do with the interchangeability of terms such as 'promotion', 'public relations', 'publicity' and 'marketing'. There is also confusion about marketing libraries; the perception is that marketing is a business tool and not applicable to library setting, exists in this context. Marketing is a complicated problem for libraries because of their wide range of products and services from books to internet access, and an extremely diverse audience that ranges from children to seniors, public officials to business people, students to faculty, and so on. Rather than selling the library on its value and let the people to know what the library or information center offers, librarians often wait for users to come to them. Rather than pushing out responses to anticipated information needs users, librarians wait for users to stop by the facility or stumble or across the library web site⁴.

3. Impact of IT on Marketing

The impact of IT applications in libraries has been very profound. Computerisation of library facilities, access to remote information sources and faster communication have augmented the use of libraries. It is easier and quicker to provide information services with the help of computers. At the same time, users also now have access to computers and internet. This will enable the user to go global from behind his desk for the best performance in reliability, ease and timeliness and the lowest price. The user can obtain information directly from publishers and database hosts rather than obtaining the same from the libraries. This will have an impact on the users of the libraries. Therefore, the IT has both a positive and negative influence on the marketing programme. To bring the users back to the libraries and retain them, libraries have to produce innovative products and services that are designed to meet customer's needs.

4. Conclusion

The library can be called an information market and the library user is a consumer of information. Information is a vital resource for national development. Increasing realization of the role of information has resulted in the establishment of information systems to provide a variety of information services and products. It is an essential step in the planning, designing, and use of such services and products for optimal use of information. Library acquisition, organization and dissemination must be based on the modern concept of marketing to achieve reader satisfaction. It must endeavour to nurture culture of customer service to

enhance its image in the eyes of the users.

References

- [1] Kaur, Amritapal. (1999). Information marketing in university libraries in India: Problems and Perspectives, *Library vision 2010: Indian Libraries and Librarianship 3 in retrospect and prospect*, ILA seminar papers 45th All India Library Conference, 23-26 December, Hisar. p.493-500.
- [2] Narayana, G. T. (1992). *Marketing, Library and information management*, New Delhi, Prentice Hall of India, New York. p.174-188.
- [3] Rao, S. S. (1999). Introduction to marketing of information products and services. *In Marketing Information Products and Services: A Primer for Librarians and Information Professionals*, edited by Abhinandan K. Jain *et al.* Tata McGraw-Hill, Delhi, 1-19.
- [4] Bhat, M. Ishwara. (1998) Marketing of library and information services at British Council Library Network in India, *DESIDOC Bulletin of information technology*, 18 (3) 29-33.
- [5] Waaijers, Leo. (1994). End-user's hopes and expectations. *Interlending and Document Supply*, 22 (1) 7-14.
- [6] Kotler, Philip. (1994). *Marketing for Non-profit organizations*. 8th ed., *Prentice Hall of India*, New Delhi, p.32.
- [7] Hiremath, C. V., Karisiddappa, C. R. (1997). Marketing of library and information services and products. Some through on designing and development of economic models, *Electronic library*, *Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd.*, New Delhi. p.176-86.
- [8] Kanaujia, S. (2004). Marketing of information products and services in Indian R&D library and information centers, *library management*, 25 (8-9) 350-360.
- [9] Kumar, S. (2009). Marketing of library/information products and services, *Library Herald*. 36 (3) 178-184.