APPLICATION OF CONCEPT OF SERVICES MARKETING IN DIGITAL LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT:

This paper discusses the application of conventional concept of services marketing in digital library in modern era. The aim of this study to attempt to correlate marketing as a concept to the provision of digital library services. The unique characteristics of information products may demand a new approach to marketing defined as information marketing. In view of the social, economic and technological changes, Library and Information centers have begun to realize that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of administration. On account of information explosion, the technological revolution and escalating library costs are responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop a professional marketing approach in its operations and services. This paper discusses the concept of conventional services marketing system as they are affected in digital library services. The concept would help to provide right service at right time and the right price to right users in the right place with support of quality staffs. This paper provides useful information on the marketing of digital library and information services.

Keywords: Information Services, Marketing Strategy, Services Marketing, Information Marketing, Digital Library

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INTRODUCTION

With the increasing growth of digital environments, such as digital library and e-business, digital information is becoming ever more important in marketing processes. Digital information means delivery of the information products as e-journals, e-books, e-magazines, digital image, online article databases, digital audio, video, etc. The unique characteristics of information products may demand a new approach to marketing defined as information marketing.

Marketing a service-base business is different from marketing a product-base business. Services marketing is marketing based on relationship and value. Marketing services and other intangibles is considered as valid as the marketing of products and commodities, as the key future of the marketing model is its emphasis not on maximising profits, but on sensitively and satisfying human need (Kapoor,1988).Services marketing concepts and strategies have developed in response to the tremendous growth of service industries resulting in their increased importance to the U.S and world economies (Zeithaml, 2000). Services marketing is a comprehensive term that describes all the processes and interactions that result in satisfaction for customers and revenue for the organisation. As Kotler (1995) points out, organizations such as museums, universities, libraries, and charities need to market their causes and their products to gain political and social support as well as economic support.

Information explosion, technology revolution and escalating library costs are responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop a marketing approach for its products and services. Our society is moving towards a knowledge-based society for which information is primary important. In marketing communications, digital information is a rich resource for organizations, consumers and communities. To improve the user satisfaction

and promoting the use of services, marketing of information product and services is an integral part of libraries and information centers (Joseph and Parameswari, 2004).

The main aim of this study is to explained the concept of information marketing in digital library and how the library professionals to apply it in the present digital environment.

INFORMATION AS A PRODUCT

Products are the key components in the marketing exchange. Successful marketing rests on the ability of the product to deliver a solution to the customer's problem or to deliver the bundle of benefits that a customers seeks (Webster, 1994). Information can be produced and marketed as a product. This is essentially what schools and universities produce and distribute at a price to parents, students, and communities. The production, packaging and distribution of information is one of our society's major industries (Kotler, 2006). As the world's economy enters the Information Age, all types of information become more important to many aspects of business, to say nothing of daily life (Drucker, 1994; Naisbitt, 1982).

Information is the primary importance of the present society. Information production needs human efforts, investment of time, energy, cost etc. Information and decision making clearly has a cost, time personnel, money and other related factors. The fact of understanding the time spent for making lists, thinking, organizing and other related activities leads to conclude that information produced is available against money. The following factors information economy, industrial economy, service economy, and rising costs of information are strengthening to view information as commodity.

RELEVANCE OF MARKETING FOR DIGITAL LIBRARY

Digital library means "managed collection of information, with associated services, where the information is stored in digital formats and accessible over a network." The information

and communication technologies have brought in dramatic shifts and paradigm changes in the demand and supply chain of the information. The unique characteristics of information products may demand a new approach to marketing defined as information marketing. Library professionals, who deliver intangible information services through reference, and the provision of resources such as books, journals, electronic databases, e-books, e-journals etc. must contend with marketing their services at a time when the profession faces transformation as a result of technological change.

Marketing is not only for publicity or promotion; publicity and promotion are just one aspect of the marketing process. Marketing also includes product creation, pricing, and distribution. Marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and social needs. According Kotler & Armstrong (2001) "Marketing as a social and managerial process where by individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchange products and value with others".Marketing is the study of exchange processes especially those associated with the provision of goods and services (Adcock, 2001). According the British Chartered Institute of Marketing "Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer's requirements profitability (Adcock, 2001). Marketing people are mainly involved in marketing of goods, services, events, experiences, persons, places, properties, organizations, information, and ideas.

WHY MARKETING OF DIGITAL INFORMATION PRODUCT/SERVICES REQUIRED?

Many library professional are feeling that library is a non-profit organization. Marketing concept is not required for libraries and information centers. But in modern world, marketing of digital information product/services is very essential for library to survive. The information and communication technologies have brought in dramatic shifts and paradigm

changes in the demand and supply chain of the information. According to Kotler (1995) points out, organizations such as museums, universities, libraries, and charities need to market their causes and their products to gain political and social support as well as economic support. The following factors are responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop a marketing approach in its operations and services.

i.   Each institution wishes to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction

ii.   Each wants to enhance the perceived value of their services

iii.   Each institution wants to insure the survival

Morgan & Noble (1992) advise that library survival is dependent on the acceptance of marketing as a fundamental management philosophy. Weingand (1995) points to the social & technological changes of our age as reasons for the need to focus on the customer and argues that marketing and planning are a natural partnership. Due to information explosion, technology revolution and escalating library costs, library professionals have begun to realize that marketing is the integral part of administration, especially as a means for improving user satisfaction and promoting the use of services by current and potential users (Joseph, 2004).

MARKETING CONCEPT IN RELATION TO DIGITAL LIBRARY

Marketing is principally necessary in libraries of all kinds due to the sophisticated nature of the market, i.e. the users, services, and the competition posed by other alternative source of information service. The public-that is the consumers and sponsors of the library service-must be satisfied that they are getting the value for the money spent on the service. Library users seek the service because they derive benefit and satisfaction from using it.

According kotler, marketing concept states that the societal marketing concept is customer oriented backed by integrated marketing aimed at generating customer satisfaction

and long term consumer welfare as the key to organizational goal (Kotler cited in Ojiambo, 1994). As per the above definition, we could derive that concept of marketing revolves on three pillars namely

i.   Customer orientation: Offering a product or a service which people's real needs

ii.   Integrated marketing: Coordinating within every function or organization, also known as market process

iii.   Customer Satisfaction and long run consumer welfare: Working towards the interests of consumer, not only in the short run but in the long run too.

Marketing research in library service may help to identify strategies and concomitant course of action to take in order to satisfy the needs of the consumers and sponsors. On the whole, the application of the marketing concept to libraries does provide a wholesome view without exception of the entire range of library marketing mix. Marketing enables library professionals to look critically at the strength and weaknesses of the library service as an enterprise.

Library staff must be educated in the purpose and effectiveness of marketing. To give it meaning and momentum, a full-time professional to deal with marketing in the library is recommended. Marketing ideas should also be made clear to the higher authority of organization. The support of the powerful higher authority must be sought if meaningful progress is expected. In academic library, the academicians have also a key role to play in library policy formulation. Their views are important in determining key policies, which are crucial for library development and survival.

It will be seen that marketing concept is only worthwhile if the product and service match the users' needs and goals. The product and service must be convincing to both the

marketer and the user. Reasonable investment must be made in the service (product) in order to make it attractive and beneficial to the user. The objectives of developing and financing library services need to be justified.

APPLICATION OF MARKETING APPROACH TO DIGITAL LIBRARY SERVICES/PRODUCT

Marketing approach in digital library has mainly consisted of market segmentation, marketing position, marketing mix and marketing audit.

MARKET SEGMENTATION, TARGETING AND POSITION

The purpose of segmentation is to identify customer/user groups that have as much similarity as possible within group, but dissimilarity with other groups with respect to the relevant characteristics. And deciding which group or groups of customers/users the organization is equipped to serve and can do so profitably.(Haksever, 2000)

The selection of market segmentation strategy is very important for marketing any product and services. Marketing segmentation helps planning of other elements of marketing mix more meaning fully and effectively. Identifying the customers and groups are on the basis of demographic, socio economic, geographic, and psycho-graphic. Library as a non-business organization serves many diverse groups. This is particularly determined by the type and objective of library. A target market is broadly defined as a collective of individuals who have an interest in or concern about an organization, a product or a social cause.(Adeyoyin, 2005)

The organization/institution should decide how to position its services in the minds of its current and potential customer/users. It should be recalled that an organization develops a service strategy to differentiate itself and its services from the competition. Positioning is a very important step in service/product design and development. Positioning

can be used for reemphasizing the position of an old product or to move it to new position as well as new products.

MARKETING MIX

The marketing mix is the planned package of elements that makes up the product or service offered to the market. It is aimed at supporting the library and information service to reach target markets and specified objectives. The marketing mix helps to position the library or information service very firmly in the perceptions of their communities served. According Kotler (2006) the marketing mix consists of four elements Product, Price, Place, Promotion.

I. PRODUCT :

A product is anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a want or need. Products that are marketed include physical goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information, and ideas. (Kotler, 2006)

Services and products offered must present value to the user, over and above actual cost. The design and quality of services are manifest in tangible factorssuch as timely, up-to-date, appropriate formats, and implicit in intangibles such as staff motivation and training, effective use of resources, and knowledge of user and client needs. The product line can be offered differently from different market segments.

The library and information centers should be considered following parameters for planning, designing and development of product/services: (Seetharama,1990)

- The target user groups and the appropriate product mix to be developed should be decided

- The existing infrastructure facilities available for the creation of the products has to be examined

- Planning individual information services/products taking into consideration the various parameters, including packaging/repackaging and naming of the product

Product refers to the services, which the library generally offers to its clienteles and prospective users.

II. PLACE :

Place is usually translated into 'Distribution' in a commercial marketing mix, but for libraries and information services, it refers to dissemination means where and how a service is made available to the users and clients. Saracevic and Wood (1981) have identified the following major channels for dissemination:

- Interpersonal delivery – Products specially delivered either on request or in anticipation of a need.

- Group Personal delivery- products delivered to a whole group of users as at meetings, conferences, seminars, demonstration etc.

- Strategic location- Product placed at strategic location

- In-House dissemination- Reference and referral services

- Dissemination through news papers, professional journal, magazines

- Broadcasting through Radio and television

- Telecommunication and Computer Network

III. PROMOTION:

Promotion involves mechanisms by which the target groups are informed about the resources available, services and products offered by library and information center. In the information technology era, increased the level of competition. So library and information center needs to be improve their promotional activities. Generally the library and information centers are using traditional systems such as display book jacket, windows

display, book exhibition, posters, and advertisement to promote their products/services. The traditional approach is no longer tenable in this present era. Aggressive marketing of library services is required if the significance of the library's contribution to the development of the intellectual world in particular and economic in general is ever to be acknowledge, appreciated and reciprocated. In modern world, Internet, email etc. is the main source of advertising

IV. PRICING

Price is the element of the marketing mix which for many in the library profession will be the most difficult to consider. Pricing of information services and products is relatively a new concept. Mostly library and information centers are providing services on free of cost to their users. Pricing has not considered seriously for library products/services. But due to increased emphasis on accountability and self-sufficiency in relation to resources it has become necessary to cost the various activities and to recover costs as much as possible. Pricing of products should be based on costs incurred in the generation of a product or a service.

MARKETING AUDIT

The final element in any marketing plan should be the marketing audit. This is basically an evaluation of the success or failure of a specific marketing campaign, especially promotions. It is therefore essential that identifiable, and preferably quantifiable, objectives are set for a promotional campaign. It is difficult to measure the success of any promotion, but the intangible nature of most library services complicates matters still further. However, by targeting promotion campaigns towards a specific audience it should be easier to measure

any increase in the use of the service by members of that particular group--perhaps by carrying out a post-implementation customer survey.

MARKETING AND LIBRARIANSHIP

All too often the concept of marketing leaves a bad taste in the mouths of librarians. In profit institutions, the process of making money for making money's sake, and the efforts to convince people to use unneeded services or products. This is the "hard sell" concept of marketing. The more "soft sell" approach puts the emphasis on customer satisfaction and meeting the expectations of customers. We are often seen from reference desk that the patron does not always know what they want nor can articulate their information need. This directly contradictions idea of "the customer is always right." As librarians of the future we must learn to balance our professional ethics and teachings with the cultural environment in which we work -- an environment of consumerism -- or the environment in which we work will work against us. (Morgan, 1998)

CONCLUSION

Digital Library and information professionals are grasping a marketing approach, as it is an essential weapon in the competition age. With the entry of business organizations in the market, libraries are facing serious competition from the profit-making information industry, which has seen the potential of an ever-increasing information service. Libraries can improve their situation by promoting themselves with the same marketing and advertising techniques used by successful business organization. Marketing of information is not just disseminating information; it includes the optimum use of resources of the library. The library can be called 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 endeavor to nurture culture of customer service to enhance its image in the eyes of the users. Adoption of marketing approach that will help libraries not only in their own sustenance, but also in the sustenance and self-sufficiency of their digital information products/services.

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