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Marketing of Library & Information Products and Services

An Overview

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Abstract : *In Today's information and Technological explosion era , where information is an essential aspect to survive in the present knowledge based society and Technologies are increasing day by day, in this changing environment Libraries are playing an important role to collect, organize and disseminate information in any packaged form with in the society. In recent years, with the advent of new information technologies, demand for information is widely increasing. So the users want different type of information from different ways i.e. print or electronic form which are easily available and save their time. Libraries are providing information product like books, journals, research reports, current content files, compilation of abstract, indexes and need based bibliographies, online database and Information services like Data base search service, CAS,SDI, Inter Library Loan, Document delivery services, web based services etc to the users according to their needs and satisfying them by their services. Promoting the use of services, use of library collections and enhancing the user satisfaction , marketing of product and services is an integral part of Libraries and information centers.*

With the changing demands of society, libraries have to improve their situation by promoting their product and services with different advertising or marketing techniques for the optimum use of the recourses. It is required to user awareness and gain profit. There is a need to market library resources which possess by the libraries and library professionals should establish a marketing plan for effectively utilization of information product and services in limited budgetary provision which can help to make an image and status of libraries before the society. This paper enumerates the concept, Need and Purpose of Marketing of Library products and services, role of Library professionals, Promotional Practices etc.

Key Words : *Concept of Marketing, Information products, Library services, Advertizing and Promotional Practices.*

1. Introduction

Marketing of information products and services in any library is most significant in a competitive environment and the librarians and information professionals are responsible for enhancing the use of their resources and services. Libraries are a place where users come and access the relevant information for their purpose. Here the role of librarians in libraries is to teach users to identify credible resources in the library and from library website. They play a role of a teacher or a guide to help the users. Dissemination of library products and services should be based on marketing methods, strategies to satisfy the informer (library users). Libraries have to use every possible means to market library services to attract the customers to the library and also create a perfect environment to build scholarly activities.

2. Marketing Concepts in Relation to Library

The essence of Marketing involves finding out what the users want then setting out to meet those needs. It is a total system of interacting activities designed to place, price, promote and distribute, want satisfying products and services to present and potential customers. Marketing can be defined in many ways such as:

- Finding out what the customers want and needs and changing when necessary to meet their needs.
- It is the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably.
- Marketing is planning which focuses on products, place or mode of delivery, adjustment of cost/price to the market and promotion to specifically targeted segments of the special librarians market.
- Marketing enables library professionals to look critically at the strengths and weaknesses of the library services as an enterprise.

3. Definitions of Marketing

According to American Marketing Association “Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchange that satisfy individual and organization goals”.

According to British Chartered Institute of marketing “Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer’s requirements profitably.”

4. Need of Library Marketing

Library Users do not aware the resources available in the libraries so it is the prime responsibility of the information officer that how it would be accessible and disseminated to the users of the library. Now a days libraries are investing huge amount to purchase reading material and subscription to periodicals and online databases to fulfill the needs of their users like students, faculty members and research scholars. Investing such amount for the resources, the usage of these resources should also increase. Libraries should think and work out the cost benefit analysis of this investment. The need for promoting and marketing of Information and services are:

- To promote the use of available reading material in the library and create awareness among the users.
- To optimize the use of information with in limited resources and manpower.
- Limited Budget for library needs to market services and generate funds for library.
- To improve the status and image of the library.
- Due to information explosion, readers require precise and correct information for their research and study.
- Increasing cost of information, resource constraints, public sponsorship, National and international level databases in all disciplines.
- Generating revenue to ensure and sustain the growth and development of Libraries and Information Centers.

5. Library and Information Products

Libraries have the collection of books, periodicals, microform publications, manuscripts, research papers, and non-book materials (audio cassettes, filmstrips, slides, and audio/visuals), acquisition lists, bibliographies, printed indexes, directories, newsletters, reviews, content page bulletins, chapter headings and web services and home page designing. Web-based information products are playing vital role in libraries nowadays and the library users should have awareness about these products and services.

6. Marketing of Library Services

Libraries provides the different type of services to the users like Reference services, Bibliographic and literature search services, Translation services, Abstracting services, Indexing services, Inter Library Loan services, Current awareness services, Reprography services, Referral services, Selective Dissemination of Information, Document Delivery Services (DDS), Digital Library Services, Internet related services, Database search services etc to enhance the use for marketing.

7. Role of Libraries and Library Professionals in Marketing

- Library personnel should be made aware of the concepts and principles of modern marketing. This can be performed through the holding of workshops, seminars, short-term courses, and other related programmes on the subject.
- Library personnel must convince of the profit and cost recovery potentials from the library and information services. There are many opportunities to implement fee based services in the library.
- Librarians should also be made aware of competitors who can be a challenge for survival of the library. Strategies should be introduced to win the competitive advantages in the library sector.
- Library service planning should be based on an integrated and corporate manner because, being isolated they cannot surpass or survive in the competition.
- Libraries should take the advantage of modern information technology for the augmentation and innovation of library services significantly.
- Libraries should apply the marketing mix for effective marketing.
- Professionals should establish good public relation with user community and provide carrier guidance and counseling services to users.
- Libraries must conduct surveys of the users to know their needs, requirements from the library and improve the services and research products as per the requirements.
- Library Professionals must be aware of and sensitive to marketing in every aspects of acquisition, digitization, sharing of resources, access and delivery and services to the users.

8. Professionals Skills required for marketing library & Information services.

- Perception of user's needs, knowledge of conducting users' surveys etc.
- Ability to obtain feedback from users and skill to analyze the feedback.
- Taking right decision at right time.
- Technical knowledge such as use of internet, web page design, and product design.
- Knowledge of various marketing strategies, Marketing Mix.

9. Advertizing and Promotional Practices for Marketing

The basic purpose behind promotion is to educate the users in how to use the library and its resources and also to upkeep their knowledge by providing information appended in various sources available in the library. To attract more and more users to the library, Library staff needs to extend promotion and cooperation to users and marketing their services.

The purpose of advertising in the library context is to develop the awareness of users, increase the use of services, and intensify the image of the library. Library promotes its services through extension services such as library visits, ceremonies, seminars, book exhibitions, displays of new arrivals, book reviews, book fair, contests, rewarding functions, get-togethers, and sponsorship programmes. User education and current awareness services play the role of advertising and personal selling. Personal selling involves the presentation of conference papers, seminars, lectures, demonstrations, exhibitions, and other presentations. Library can communicate through various modes of messaging – oral, written, electronic, or implied. Relationship with media is an important vehicle for the publicity of library product and services. Orientation programmes conducted for new students in the library premises or in respective departments at the beginning of semesters have to provide attractive information about library services and library materials to encourage more users to the library.

Library websites are important means of marketing library services. It can act as a portal introducing the users to new services and products. Information can also be effectively displayed at main access points to attract user's attention.

Conclusion

Libraries do not work in isolation. They collaborate with consortia, other libraries and their users. Libraries must be familiar with their users and know their needs in advance. Libraries have very less attention for the promotion of library services. They used general and traditional mechanisms such as current awareness activities, displays and exhibitions, extension services for the promotion of services. Most of Library personnel have not aware of promotional activities, while some have no understanding of promotion and publicity for the library services. So Libraries should make strong their marketing communication, training of staff, good investment, technology etc for handling effective markets.

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