IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON MARKETING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

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Abstract

Libraries are like a "temple of knowledge" for the society. Today the user has many options with regard to accessing timely information. The rapid growth of internet has especially changed the information paradigm. To continue to remain relevant, libraries need to market their services as per the target market needs. Libraries need to treat their users as 'customer' and understand that they exist for their customers. Thus, a library that recognizes the marketing concept will be closest to its users. Marketing is an ongoing and dynamic strategy because needs and library products change with time. Marketing concept 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'.

Keywords : Marketing Trends in Modern Libraries, Marketing of LIS, IT based Library Products and Services, Modern Ways of Marketing Information Services, Information Marketing.

1.0 Introduction:

The concept of marketing for non-profit organizations was first introduced by Kotler and Levy in 1969. Later the book Marketing for Non-profit Organizations, Kotler (1982) elaborated the marketing strategies for organizations like libraries. According to him, a nonprofit organizations like Library is basically engaged in the production of services rather than goods. Services are distinct in nature primarily due to the characteristics of being intangible, inseparable and perishable. Thus there is also a need of different approach towards marketing of services vis-à-vis marketing of goods (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Berry 1985).

Library services have long been perceived as "free". But in today's modern economy, nothing comes free. Raina (1998)says, "the age-old concept of certain social services like health , education, justice etc being made available free is becoming irrelevant as the time goes by. This is true with library and information services also. The institution engaged in all such services are being asked to become self sufficient, if they are to survive in cost conscious and competition oriented social and environmental setups. Public funding for such purposes is being questioned." Libraries are in the business of providing information services to its clientele. Thus the libraries core activity resides in the intangible services of facilitating access to information and they seek to influence the use of their services (Mittermeyer, 2003). According to Kotler (1982), "Organizations become aware of marketing when their market undergoes a change. When buyers, members, funds, or other resources needed by the organization get scarce or harder to attract, the organization gets concerned, "Today libraries are facing a whole lot of problems; their funds are shrinking, costs of resources like journals, etc. are increasing rapidly and reading habits among peopled cling due to reasons such as onslaught of television and Internet. A study conducted by Oldman as early as in 1977 had identified some of the reasons why people do not use libraries those are as follows.

- Potential users are not aware of the library's facilities;
- Talking to people is regarded as preferable to reading books;
- Users have had bad experiences with past or present service;
- Individuals do not realize that they have an information problem;
- It is quicker to obtain information from sources other than the formal system.

Morgan and Noble (1992) advise that library survival is dependent on the acceptance of marketing as a fundamental management philosophy. 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. The basic philosophy underlying the need for LIS marketing can be summed up as;

1.1 To Improve the Image of the Library*:* Gone are the days when people used to consider libraries as store house of books and other materials. Today's libraries are dynamic organizations. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) make it possible for the libraries to reach out to their customers as never before. People's perception about libraries is fast changing. Marketing their services can help the libraries in reinventing themselves and finding their rightful place in the organization/society in which they operate.

1.2 To Focus on the Customer *:* As indicated above, today the customer has choices. Marketing makes the libraries realize and reaffirm who are their customers and what are their needs. Like any service organizational library exists for its customers. Thus marketing helps to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction. The increased customer satisfaction will result in the increased willingness to use and pay for the services offered.

1.3 To Build Relationship with the Corporate World : Libraries can play a crucial role in developing industry-institution interaction and building partnerships. Often, libraries are the first gateways for the corporate world coming to the academic world. Libraries can help their organization in strengthening the existing relationship and finding new partners.

1.4 Cost Recovery : The cost of the library resources both electronic and printed is increasing at a faster rate. Other operational costs, like maintain of books, furniture and other infrastructure, are also increasing. However, in most of the instances, the library budget is either reducing or remains constant. So there is a need for the libraries to earn revenue for re-investing in the resources. There is a large market for library and information products and services in this present knowledge economy. Effective marketing strategies will make possible for the libraries to create a market for their products and services.

2.0 Methods of Marketing

The marketing of information products and services helps library and information professionals as an aid improve the quality of existing services and enhance new services. The quality of any product or service depends on the appropriate marketing of the same. The awareness of any product or service is most important thing which could be only possible through effective marketing strategies and methods. Below mentioned methods for marketing of library and information products and services:

2.1 Initiation to Users: It is the prime responsibility of the library professionals of any library to provide information on the library facilities, resources and services available to the respective users. This programme should be a regular feature in all types of libraries and information centers for their new users who might have joined the organization recently.

2.2 Advertising/Publicity: Advertising is the most important par of marketing and publicizing the information products and services for any library and information centers. The best possible ways of advertising are display, distribution and organizing exhibition.

2.3 Personalized Service: The personalized assistance provided by the library professionals to the users to provide information service and to exploit the library resources is called as reference services it helps to make full use of library and information products and services available in the organization. Reference desk should be maintained to provide the reference service successfully to the respective users.

2.4 User Education Programme: User education programme should be conducted frequently to educate the users on the use pattern of all kinds of print and web resources available in the library and information centers. These programme should be a regular feature of the organization concerned. The users can be educated in small group from time to time by way of lectures, workshops, discussions, practical demonstrations and similar other instructional programmes.

2.5 Current Awareness Service: Various Current Awareness Service (CAS) in different subjects are being brought out by certain commercial organizations in different parts of the world. These services are of immense use to the researchers provided they aware of such services. Library can bring out its own in-house or local CAS such as Current Contents, New Additions to the Library, reproduction of table of contents of current e-journals etc. periodically for the use by the users in anticipation or demand.

2.6 Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI): In this service, the library staff keeps the record of the user profiles. The latest information sources should be scanned, sorted out, processed and provided by the library staff to users depending upon their requirements on individual basis. The selected users usually be provided the service in anticipation or demand.

3.0 Implication of Information Technology as Marketing Tool in Library and Information Center:

Following are the ways through which library can market itself to the IT.

3.1 Internet Access: Internet is not only a medium for digital communication but also world's largest repository of information. However, under developed internet infrastructure in a country like India, poses a serious challenge to growth of ICT enabled services. Large segment of users groups may still be deprived of personal access to internet facility. Libraries, therefore, provide free or controlled access to internet and email. Depending upon the availability users can be given time slots for use of internet facility a few internet enabled terminals are provided in the library that can be used by the visitors for internet access and email etc.

3.2 Library Blogs : Blog is a web site, usually maintained by a individual, contains chronologically the brief entries of commentary, description of events, or other material like audio, graphics etc. Promoting Library's services, resources and programs online becomes a lot easier with the help of blog. Library blog can be very effective tools for reaching online. Below mentioned ways through library can market itself to the world using library blogs.

3.2.1 Promote Library Event : By creating a blog for promoting library events and programs. Reaching out beyond the visitors to library's regular web site. Library can setup an RSS feed for its blog and alert everyone in its community that they can include library headlines on their sites or can use a RSS newsreader to see what's up at the library. Libraries can put on email subscription form on the blog site encourage visitors to sign up. This will give library a chance to send library new straight to the user's inbox on a regular basis. It is an opportunity to invite visitors to come back to the library or its web site over and over again.

3.2.2 Engage the Library's Own Community : Post new book reviews and book award lists invite comments and suggestions. Create an online book discussion area by asking readers to recommend books to others.

3.2.3 Support the Community : Library can offer value added services to its community using blog. A local election news blog that posts announcements about candidate Web sites, nominations and meetings might be a natural project for libraries that are mandated to make local council minutes and agendas available to the public.

3.2.4 Support the Dedicated Users : An obvious hit with most library visitors is finding out what new books, videos, CDs or DVDs have been added to the collection. One should think about setting up topics on library blog for each genre : mysteries, horror, science fiction, science experiments and so on. In an academic library, one can prepare special alerts about new resources and Web sites for particular departments or colleges.

3.2.5 Building New Ties : The library also can try to reach a new area of its community. It can think about offering a blog in another language to provide short entries on upcoming programs and new resources. For example the library can try to reach out to teachers in order to market library services and to make sure that school visits work effectively for the library and the schools. It also can plan starting a blog-style newsletter just for teachers. It can focus on special services for teachers, programs for schools, new research resources, book lists and Web sites of interest. Some blogs also allow the library to have extended entries and include feature articles.

3.3 Mobile Marketing

Mobile Technology offers a cogent drift of traditional library services into mobile library information services. Library services that can be provided to patrons via mobile technology are-

3.3.1 Mobile Document Supply : The mobile environment and technology present new opportunities for sending document requests and scanned images and monitoring the use of collections as well as the automation of administrative operations. It can support electronic funds transfer supply chain management, e-marketing, online marketing, online transaction processing electronic data interchange and automated inventory management system.

3.3.2 SMS Notification Services : Libraries provide the alert on latest news, events and notices via SMS and MSM to users wherever they might be go. The users can get notified instantly with notice alert such as – alert on overdue books, outstanding fines, reminders to return library items, renew books, library events information etc.

3.3.3 Database Browsing : Users can search and browse database and electronic resources in an integrated environment. Libraries provide access to a variety of its resources and databases. The users can just enter search terms and see results that are designed specifically for mobile viewing. This service includes OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), integrated search and original document search.

3.3.4 e-Resources : Offers access to a variety of databases and digital resources such as e-Books, e-Journals, Web databases, dissertations, audio books, streaming music, films images and article databases which can be used on mobile. These collections can either be downloaded from the library websites on user's own mobile devices or libraries lend mobile devices with the collections already on them.

4.0 Marketing of IT Products and Services

In recent years, libraries in developing countries have taken initiatives to introduce Information Technology (IT) products and services to add value to their services. The advent of new technologies such as: dramatic increase of digital storage media; convergence of telecommunication and broadcasting, the availability of wealth of information resources accessible through the Internet and also increasing reduce cost of computers in the marketplace, make it possible for librarians to introduce IT products and services to fulfill information needs of their customers

IT products refer to sources of information and knowledge contents that are available in electronic forms such as CD-ROMs, interactive video, films, audio digital products, online publishing, public domain and commercial online databases available through Internet and other propriety databases available through various private network providers. In addition, there are cable and satellite TV programs with varieties of channels that provide information to masses. This fast development of Information Technologies has provided new possibilities for libraries to introduce IT products and services to its customers.

IT products and services must be made as an integral part of library services. Libraries that have introduced IT services should promote its use to the society. Libraries must have marketing strategies to connect libraries and communities through IT and services. Marketing strategies of IT products and services act as a driving force in achieving quality library services that meet information needs of the community. For quality marketing of IT products and services, it requires an integration of three marketing strategies, namely: forward marketing, internal marketing and reverse marketing (Jaafar, 1998).

In order to promote the use of IT products and services, libraries must develop Remote Access to Library Services; Online Community Information Services; One-stop Information Center for IT Products and Services; Packaging of Information; Hyperlinks with Specialized Information Services; Incubator and Secretarial Services; User Education programs; Forums and Seminars on IT and Consultancy/ Advisory Services.

5.0 Conclusion

The impact of information technology applications in libraries has been very profound. Computerization of library facilities, access to remote information sources and faster communication has augmented the use of libraries. It is easier and quicker to provide information services with 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 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 a impact on the users of the libraries. Therefore the information technology has both positive and negative influence on the marketing program. 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 need.

6.0 References

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