Marketing Concepts as Relevant Tools for Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services in a Changing World

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ABSTRACT

Marketing concepts are important for promoting library and information services in today's dynamic environment. Libraries can utilize these concepts as powerful tools to reach out to their target audience and communicate the value of their offerings. By understanding and implementing marketing strategies, libraries can effectively engage with their communities and stay relevant in a rapidly changing world. These concepts provide a framework for libraries to showcase their services, enhance user experience, and ultimately attract more patrons to use their resources. Overall, incorporating marketing principles into library practices can lead to increased visibility, usage, and impact in the digital age.

1. Introduction

The essential point of discourse is centered on marketing concepts as relevant tools for effective marketing of library and information services in a changing world. The take-off approach would therefore, be unravel the very essence of marketing concepts with a view to underpinning their relevance towards effective and efficient marketing of library and information services. First, what is "Marketing Concept"?

According to Chopra 2012, Marketing Concept is a philosophy which states that the key to achieving goals is to determine the needs of the target customers and to satisfy those needs more efficiently and effectively than competitors. The marketing concepts he maintains does not target to maximize profitable sales volumes but to generate profits through customer satisfaction. Therefore, the emphasis is not solely on selling products but on selling satisfaction (Chopra, 2012). it is the user satisfaction that is the hallmark of librarianship because every other activity is woven around and geared towards user satisfaction. Hence, Aliu and Igbafe (2000) posited that "the user-centered library and information service that should be our collective dream and aspiration is one that untimely leads to the achievement of the user satisfaction in all its ramification", this making the user's satisfaction the central focus of all library operations. The marketing concept resorts to marketing research, which defines the market segments, the size of segments, and the needs of the segments. In order to satisfy the needs of the target markets the marketing mix can be used to create a strategy (NetMBA, 2010).

Having defined "marketing concepts" it is considered germane to highlight some definitions of the word 'marketing' so that the discussion can continue to flow.

The definition of 'marketing' are many and varied as there are many authors on the subject, however a few would suffice as in-road into the heart of the matter.

Marketing according to American Marketing Association (AMA) and the chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) in conjunction with "The National Association of Marketing Teachers', a predecessor of the AMA is "the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer". this definition has sustained and widely accepted over many years. "Marketing consists of individual and organizational activities that facilitate and expedite exchange relationships in a dynamic environment through the creation, servicing, distribution, promotion and pricing of goods , services, and ideas". This definition was revised by AMA in 2004 to read: "Marketing is an organizational function and a set of process for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefits the organization and its stakeholders".

However, in 2004, where there is still an emphasis on process that is fundamental to marketing - one can transition in the focus areas: the use of the worlds "value", "managing customer relationships", and stakeholders" being brought to the center stage in the definition. Gupta (2006) contends that this definition sets many new dimensions to marketing concepts - the emphasis is on that:

✓ Marketing serves as the overriding philosophy in conducting marketing task in the organization as a whole.

✓ It is a set of processes involving interactions among people, technology methods, procedure, environment, and material

(information of information sources in case of libraries), by which any comes to the customer.

✓ Value is the basket of benefits or utilities which a user or customer get while using a product or service. Value is clearly communicated customers so that it can be understood easily.

It is considered necessary to throw some light on the historical antecedent of marketing as it relates to the library and information services. This is more so as marketing tends to be understood by layman as only to "buying and selling", whereas the entirety of library services are gratis non-profit oriented the world over. Marketing as a concept and a practice, still seems unknown to many library and information personnel. That is why some LIS professionals may feel that marketing is somehow inappropriate for a public service institution such as library and see no room foe such practice in a not-for-profit profession like Shripad and Meghana (2015).

In that regard Gupta and Savard (2010) remarked that "what is true about marketing in general is the confusion concerning the concept (marketing) itself, for most people seem to see marketing only as the equivalent to advertising or promotion: they do not see "what is below the trip of the iceberg", according to them what is below the surface is marketing theory includes important strategic components such as evaluating the needs of the customer; planning the various elements of the mix in order to answer those needs; periodically evaluating the results" all of these are geared towards satisfying the customer.

Marketing as one would think is not alien to librarianship - something that only emerged during the last three decades. Although marketing was more formally introduced in the profession after 1970s, it is interesting to note that North America, librarians adopted marketing techniques as early as 1876 segmenting and targeting users using probability, direct mail, streetcar signs, telephone solicitation, banners etc. The twentieth century library, the progressive library threw its doors open to all and encouraged them to come in and join in the building of a community cultural center (Kleindl, 2007).

It is within above background of marketing in a generalization context that marketing in LIS is considered different in the context of library, as it is considered "the art and science of finding and keeping readers and users of the library and information centre". This concept was first introduced by Kotler and Levy in 1969. In 1982 he again elaborated on the marketing strategies for non-profit organizations like libraries. According to him, non-profit organization like library is basically engaged in the production of services rather than goods, services are distinct I nature primarily due to the characteristics of being intangible, inseparable, variable and perishable. Thus, there is need for different approach towards marketing of services vis-a-vis marketing of goods. Withing different kind of services.

Information service is not only considered as valuable commodity but also as marketable commodity (Eagleton, 1992). Information products/services, like any other commodity, are demanded in the market and the demand is affected by factors like price, reference, income, expectations, populations, seasons, technology, and price of other goods. Marketing intended for not-for-profit organization such as librarian is referred to as "societal marketing" (Adeleye, 2003). The above definition call for analyzing various activities in marketing, they are:

✧ Marketing Research and customers' analysis
✧ Development of new services
✧ Pricing
✧ Distribution
✧ Promotion
✧ Evaluation of services

All the above mentioned activities of marketing as applied to other industrial sectors are equally applicable in the area of information products and services. Whether it is for profit or non-profit sector, methods remain the same while the policy varies. Thus one way meaning of marketing is building customer relationships, branding and corporate identity, marketing communications, price and pricing policy, collecting marketing data and marketing strategy and planning.

While not losing focus on the kernel of the discourse (marketing concepts relevant tools for effective marketing of library and information services) it is only important to emphasize that library and information service professionals should realize that the delivery of effective and efficient library services must be based on strategic planning which has to do among others with the ability of the professionals to promote their services or make potential users aware of their products which would spell the difference between success and extinction. Kotler (1997).

In order to achieve this, there has to be right thinking, strategic outlook and operational tactics. Thus as part of the marketing concepts relevant for effective marketing of library and information services has to span through simple advertising, promotion, or public relations part of marketing. In all, marketing in modern sense is considered as the management which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiency.

Before an in-depth analysis of marketing concepts as relevant tools for effective and efficient marketing of library and information services, lets x-ray the reasons for marketing of library and information services.

The society in which we live is dynamic so there has to be occasional change in the way we conduct our affairs, therefore librarianship in the scheme of human interaction has to experience change. It is this change mantra that has occasioned various internal as well as external factors reshaping the role of libraries to thinker with the idea of marketing for the information sector. Such factors responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop a marketing approach in its operations and services according to Shripad and Meghana (2015) are as follows:

i. The information explosion (rapid growth of reading material)
ii. The technology revolution
iii. Escalating library costs/budget cuts
iv. Increase of user based services
v. Networking demands/complexity in information requirements
vi. Competition by database vendors
vii. Reading habits among people declining due to reasons such as onslaught of television and internet.

Having laid the platform for the discourse; marketing concepts essential for effective marketing of library and information services would henceforth be x-rayed. Marketing concept as a philosophy has earlier on in this paper be defined as key to achieving goals, determine the needs of the target customers and satisfy these needs more efficiently and effectively than one's competitors known or perceived. To achieve success in this regard the following steps must be taken:

Marketing Research: According to Chopra (2012), marketing research is a method of obtaining a wide range of information and activities necessary to run a business. He further stated that marketing research covers gathering , recording, and analysis of information about transfer and sale of goods and services from producer to customer. Bakewell (1997) reinforced this position by remarking that "it is dangerous to make the assumption that the products of an information or library service (ILS) do not need marketing, again another common assumption is that libraries have the product and simply need to market it, there is a deal of market research to get the right product. So marketing should not just be of the service that exists, as some form of evaluation is needed to estimate how effective the service is, and if it is the

right product to meet market demand. Therefore there should be a move from supplying services that it is thought that users need to supplying services that are what they want. On the whole, it could be seen that for effective and efficient marketing concepts is of great relevance in the scheme of things as it will help to offer analyzed facts and knowledge in order to overcome problems and to make the right marketing decision at a right time.

It should be emphasized here that "marketing concepts" resorts to marketing research, which defines the market segments the size of segments, and the needs of the segments. Therefore in order to satisfy the needs of the target markets the marketing mix can be used to create a strategy (NetMBA, 2010).

The Marketing Mix: Traditionally, the Marketing Mix includes the 4 P's which are product, place, price, and promotion. The concepts of marketing mix is the set of tools that can be used to impact sales. For effective and efficient marketing of library and information services in this globalized world of information explosion those tools are of utmost relevance. The impact of marketing product in efficient service delivery in LIS has been copiously explained above. However marketing product cannot be done in a vacuum, so it leads us to talk of 'place' as yet a relevant tool among the marketing concepts.

Product: This represent an item of service designed to satisfy customer needs and wants. To effectively market a product or service, its also important to determine if other products or services can be marketed in conjunction with it.

Place: Blakewell (1997) argues that it is not enough to keep things within the ILS itself; the services should be extended and promoted extremely if existing markets are to be retained and new markets are to be attracted, while advising that the importance of internal communication should not be overlooked.

Price: In the context of effective and efficient marketing of library and information services the idea of price can pose some difficulties, but not if price is equated with value. It is not in doubt that almost all library services are usually free. This does not negate the fact that such services have some utility value. It is for this reason that Sirkin (1991) suggest that "one way of overcoming the impression of 'free' must equal 'shoddy' is to put a price on free leaflets to convey their value the effect of this, is however doubtful and scary as nothing should be produced that could be remotely regarded as shoddy because shoddy productions will not promote a service. If it is not a quality production it should not be produced. Secondly, seeing a price on something is enough to make users to be discouraged in its use. Again, viewing this price issue in bigger perspective one would discover that most ILS have parent body who would frown at price tags, budget allocated and in terms of the value of the services provided especially in a country where education is not free. So the issue of price in efficient service delivery in LIS is an area where library management has to tread with caution.

Promotion: Promotion includes the means taken to inform the customers of the products and services provided, including personal selling, advertising, sales promotions, and public relations. It is said that a product is completed when customers know it exists, know its quality and features, react to it positively, and buy it. Without knowledge there cannot be demand. Promotion enables product awareness, positive attitudes and buying decisions (Anttilla et al., 1993).

Promotion is the final element and can only be successful if the other elements of the mix have been considered. Unfortunately, it seems to be the one element that is used indiscriminately. Many services use all kinds of promotional techniques without any forethought, so that very view people are hit with the right information.

Market segmentation is the process of looking at the user community and breaking it down into more manageable homogeneous groups; this then makes it easier to ascertain the requirements of each group and to tailor services to meet requirements. A segment is defined by the principal benefit it is seeking (Cronin, 1992). The most popular kind of market research for ILS is therefore, community profiling to ascertain what additional services a library desire conjecture, or assumption should not be made about it , rather a market research should be conducted to find out:

- ✧ What the demand for library services
- ✧ What facilities would be required
- ✧ What location would maximize use
- ✧ How the library should operate when opened
- ✧ What is effect would be on existing libraries in the area

2.Conclusion

As a way of rounding-off this discussion, it must be remarked that marketing concepts are merely means to an end in effective and efficient marketing of library and information services and not end in themselves. Also librarians should come to terms with modern development as regard the dynamic nature of the profession to the realization that the era of arm -chair librarianship is far spent where marketing of information and library services was not the norm. Market yourselves, market your product (information as a commodity) or else go into extinction like the old-fashioned.

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