



THE USE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN MARKETING OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT: *The marketing concept of today's library and information centers covers various topics such as management of libraries and commitment to. This paper discussed marketing and its current approach to library and information services in the 21st century and the 4ps (product, price, place and promotion) of marketing mix. In modern age, the library and information services (LIS) are customer (user) oriented. Therefore, users' priorities, expectations and needs are taken into account. The services should be value added according to the current requirement of the users. The study also examines the 21st century demand for marketing, library customer/users and library and information professionals. The use of social media was x-rayed and librarians are to understand the nature of information, needs of users, and the transfer between people and information. For the library in the 21st century to remain competitive, and relevant, it has to change its image to a user-oriented service organization with knowledge-based social structure.*

KEYWORDS: Information Product, Information Technology, Library Services, Library Customer/Users, Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Marketing of information products and services is very vital in the present information society. Of late, marketing of information services has emerged as an indispensable tool in the library and information service industry. Libraries around the world are facing rising cost and dwindling budgets due to technological advances and today's dynamic economic activities. As a result, marketing concepts are increasingly adapted within the library environment. Marketing as a business activity exist to satisfy human needs. And one of the greatest needs of any organization such as the library is to understand and develop marketing programs for their product and services. The American marketing association defines "marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals". One of the goals of library and information centers is to satisfy their users. In order to achieve this aim, library and information centers need to know what the needs of their users are, and how best to meet those needs. The importance of marketing information services for the purpose of effective utilization of resources among library and information professionals is sometimes overlooked. A possible reason for this oversight is the assumption that users would seek for information when such information is needed, forgetting the need to create awareness among users. The trend is that many users are not aware of the services and resources available for their use in libraries and information centers. Thus, it is important for the 21st century library and information professionals to find



out the information needs and/or behavior of users of library and information centers in different contexts. There is a new meaning of marketing in library and information sector. There is still considerable misunderstanding in most of the library and information sector as to what constitutes effective marketing. To some, it is still primarily equated with selling and the pursuit of sales, rather than customer satisfaction (Gupta, 2003). Many libraries are still reluctant to make the change necessary to focus on the marketplace, even when the need for more active marketing is generally agreed. An Information Professional (IP) strategically uses information in his/her job to advance the mission of the organization. The IP accomplishes this through the development, deployment, and management of information resources and services. The IP harnesses technology as a critical tool to accomplish goals. IPs include, but are not limited to librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, web developers, information brokers, and consultants. The 21st Century falls within the epoch called the Information Age. The concept of the Information Age/Society epitomizes the changes brought about by technological advances and globalization (Dike, 2007; Oladele, 2008; Ogunsola, 2005) toward the end of the 20th Century. This epoch is characterized by speed and precision in the production, transfer, access, and use of knowledge (Chakrabarti, 2001). The information society, as a concept, "sums up the new world order where the position of nations, their power, wealth and influence, increasingly depends on their access to and ability to use information." (Dike, 2007). In fact, for any individual or group to navigate well in this increasingly complex age, information is essential. (Kochen and Donohue, 1976). It has been established that information is an economic resource and a powerful saleable commodity almost identified as the fifth need of man after air, water, food and shelter. In this 21st Century, where a paradigm shift in communicating library services to users is evident, a modern and contemporary tool would be needed to promote library and information resources services.

What the 21st Century Library Users (Customer) Want

Library clients want basic services. They want competence, reliability, responsiveness, timeliness, honesty and a caring approach. They want everything to work properly and they want assistance to use both of the library and of the resources. They want promises made to them to be kept and they want what they need, when they need it. Customers want information content for assignments, research support or knowledge acquisition. They want e-books and e-journals and real books and real journal articles. They want training and motivation in resource discovery, IT skills and equitable service delivery. They want instant gratification. 21st century customers are in a hurry and they want everything now. For instance, Students see the Library as an icon, a haven within an alien world and tend to be crisis-driven in their approach to the Library. Library and information professionals should strive hard to gain a far vision of 'who our customers are', 'what they want', and 'what are their social characters, values, desires, and aspiration'. The advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has enabled education and technology in self-help and do-it-yourself activities in libraries. The 21st century customer is a global citizen who is more demanding and individualistic, seeking change and high value conscious on self-reliance, adaptability and survival under difficult conditions and the ability to do things of his/her own.



Information Technology (IT) and the Library

Information Technology is a generic term used to denote all activities connected with computer-based processing, storage and transfer of information. It covers all aspects of arts, or science of processing data, storing and dissemination with the assistance of a computer, electronic media, satellites, and telecommunications to produce information. Marshall (1984), defined Information Technology (IT) as the coming together of computing and telecommunications for the purpose of handling information; the application of technologies to information handling; including generation, storage, processing, retrieval and dissemination. Information is a dynamic and unending resource that affects all disciplines and all walks of life as it supports education, research and development. Information, whether economic, social, scientific or technological covering all facets of human life and activities is a key resource to the achievement of national development and its importance is universally recognized (Gelfand, 1971). It is indisputable that no research and advance studies can successfully be carried out without using appropriate information resources/materials. The necessity of the application of new technologies in these libraries is strongly required for satisfying the demands of their clientele. With the introduction of new technology, libraries are expected to use various types of technology to provide information, more quickly and in greater volume than before. These technologies have the potentials to develop “virtual campuses” and “virtual libraries” thus, increasing students’ access and participation (Ogunsola, 2004). According to Daniel (2000), Nancy Schiller was one of the first writers to use the expression “virtual library” which she defined in 1992, simply as “libraries in which computer and telecommunications technologies make access to wide range of information resources possible”. Today, the concept is referred to variously as “digital library”, “electronic library”, “community network”, or simply “library without walls” (Ogunsola, 2004). Libraries can be transformed into a new information services unit, providing electronic cataloguing, Circulation, Serials and User Services, Online Public Access Communication (OPAC), electronics acquisition/serials control, electronic inter-library loan and calculation functions (Ogunsola, 2004). IT is applied to the operation of libraries and information centres to ensure that information delivered is timely, accurate, precise and relevant (Madu, 2002).

Challenges to Information Services

- **Lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Tools and Compliance.** Apart from the fact that many library and information professionals, support staff and users lack ICT compliance and ICT education, many library and information systems lack ICT devices and tools. This is due to largely to poor funding, arising partly from lack of appreciation of libraries and librarians.
- This state of affairs has given rise to the lack of technologically-driven library and information services, resulting in the prevalent inefficient and outdated library and information resources and services.
- **Poor information literacy and Negative Disposition of User Communities.** Another major challenge to the provision of library and information services is the negative disposition of the information user communities themselves toward library and information services. Poor information literacy culture among the user communities in various respects include:



- i. Lack of awareness of information needs,
- ii. Lack of awareness of information systems,
- iii. Lack of knowledge or skills to exploit the information systems,
- iv. Inability to evaluate accurately the information at hand, and
- v. Poor knowledge of ICT infrastructure and utilization.

Definition of Marketing

Let us try to search answers to the following questions? What is marketing? What does it mean? Why is it so important in the current scenario? How does marketing relate to information service? Kotler (1994), a professor of marketing, adopted the following definition of marketing:

"Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of the target market's needs and desires and as using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate and serve the markets."

There are 7 major points to be emphasized in the above definition:

- Marketing is a managerial process involving analysis, planning, implementation and control.
- Marketing is concerned with carefully formulated programmes - not random actions - designed to achieve desired responses.
- Marketing seeks to bring about voluntary exchange.
- Marketing selects target markets and does not seek to be all people.
- Marketing is directly correlated to the achievement of organizational objectives.
- Marketing place emphasis on the target market's (consumer's) needs and desire rather than on the producer's preferences.

Marketing basically starts with the market research, identifying the consumer needs and demands, their pricing and promoting them to the appropriate consumers.

Marketing Library and Information Service

There are many services offered by the library as there are many information services. Library and information services refer to those facilities, which are provided by libraries and information centers for the use of books and dissemination of information. In so doing, users' needs are met. The well-known existing library services are cataloguing, classification, circulation services, reservation, renewal, new arrivals, current contents, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, indexing and abstracting, reference service, document delivery, inter library loan, externally purchased database, CD-ROM databases, access to other library catalogues, access to online databases, internally published newsletters, reports and journals, bibliographic services, and so on. All these services have



changed their modes to an extent, taking the dynamic web environment into account. Marketing approaches are proving to be effective in assisting libraries to adjust to changes in their client base and will ensure that services delivered continue to fit the needs.

A Marketing Information System (MIS) is a set of procedures and methods designed to generate, analyze, disseminate, and store anticipated marketing decision information on a regular, continuous basis. An information system can be used operationally, managerially, and strategically for several aspects of marketing.

Reasons for Marketing Library and Information Services

The main purpose of marketing is to attract and retain a growing base of satisfied customer.

Adekunmisi and Sowemimo (2013), gave the following reasons why libraries and information professionals must learn to effectively market and advertise their services:

- Libraries are no longer the only information services industries. The mega-bookstores, online book dealers, information consultants, the internet services providers, free web access providers and individual customers will not hesitate to market potential library customers or users.
- Libraries of all type have to compete with other organizations or department for funds. Marketing library services and products benefits as libraries are able to get supports from patrons and others. For instance, academic libraries have to compete with faculties and other institution units and projects for funds, so also special libraries find their allocation decreasing when the parent organization budgets are cut.
- Libraries have to market their services because of the need to maintain relevance and remain connected to the communities they serve and have some bearing on the present days event and real-world issues.
- Librarians have to market their services and products and change the perception of users in order to improve the image of their Libraries and themselves.

Marketing Mix for Library and Information Technology

Marketing today embraces an integrated value proposition. To a customer, value is the benefits received from the burden endured. Benefits may be product quality, personal service and convenience. Shapiro, (1981) Noted that, there are four key business concepts that provide the basis for marketing thought and action in the nonprofit environment. Librarians are to take the 4P's (product, price, place and promotion) of the traditional external marketing mix and use them to paint a more accessible service-oriented picture of library offerings for their customers. The 4p`s are: product, price, place and promotion.

Product: Information resources and research services offered to the market for exchange of consumption. It is tangible (which can be seen and touched) while service is intangible.

Price: is the major factor affecting total revenue. Generally, higher prices mean lower volume and vice-versa. However, business can often command higher prices due to the personalized services they can offer.



Promotion: This is the marketing decision medium by which users or customer gets to know the available products or services. Marketing approach to library and information services is an endeavor to accelerate the services to the community. Kotler (1995) points out promotion in general, involves one or more, or all of the following methods to reach the client: direct marketing, public relations, advertising, sales promotion and personal selling. Other promotion areas include: Internal bulletins, e-mails, the company internet, the library web site, newsletters and poster campaigns are all effective promotional vehicles for highlighting new tools and advertising events products and services.

Place: it is the channel that links product and consumers. It's not necessarily a physical location anymore but a matter of access. A strong web presence is necessary. Libraries are virtual as well as physical spaces now and the possibilities in both these worlds are endless.

What Products and Services can Library Market?

The library has many products and services that it can market. Each library needs to identify what it wishes to market and how. Marketing is not just about developing and promoting new services and products but about bringing awareness to clients of existing services and products and determining their appropriateness. (Janine Schmidt 2005) Library can market its collections particular, new acquisitions like a new online patent database or a set of medical electronic journals, must be communicated to clients who need them. Donations of large research collections of potential use to particular disciplinary areas must be publicized. There is an enormous responsibility to ensure that value is received for the significant resource expenditure being made on many of these areas. New services like online versions of examination papers, the development of an e-print archive of institutional research papers, the use of plagiarism detection software and online thesis submission must all be publicized to potential users. Library and librarians using social media can promote library resources and services they offer like lending Services, referral services, reference services, technical services, indexing, abstracting, user education etc or library resources such as books, CD, VCD, journals newspapers, yearbooks, maps, dictionaries, internet- based resources etc. to their users.

Medium for Effective Marketing Library Services in the 21st Century

With an increasing number of users not physically entering a library, getting the message across is harder. Flexibility is essential and on occasion using all media to communicate to the clients is the best technique. Print and online means, broadcast emails, direct emails and personal letters are all important. Mobile information services are not entirely new in librarianship. The first project designed to deliver handheld mobile access to library patrons began in 1993, the time of mainframe computers and Gopher. Globally, digital technology is providing faster access to information and challenging the libraries to rethink and remodel their services by intelligently adopting and adapting to technological changes. The challenge for libraries will be to create compelling information services and to make digital content available in a way that the user community will find not only acceptable, but tailored to their needs. Students of nowadays are commonly referred to as millennial students because they grow up with mobile devices which is influencing the way they seek and use information. Saxena and Yadav (2013), observe that in this changing scenario, mobile technology will be of great help to libraries towards strengthening their relationship and providing enhanced



user-oriented services to existing users as well as reach out to remote users who are considered unlikely to connect because of absence of a medium.

On such information services that can be rendered using mobile devices, Saxena and Yadav (2013), identify MMS and SMS notification services; library virtual/audio tours; Quick Response (QR) codes on mobiles; text reference service, mobile document supply; library guide; database browsing; e-resource with mobile interfaces; formal education, distance learning and e-learning as some of the library services that can be provided to patrons via mobile technology. Other mobile based library services include; OPAC on mobile phones; sending and receiving e-mail messages; searching databases of scholarly information; due date reminder and renewal services; preview and reservation service of new titles; voice and video calls; online in-house library bulletins; helpdesk services/Ask-a-librarian; online textbooks, databases and useful resources links; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ); providing links to internet resources; online current awareness services; online list of new arrivals; etc Hiremath, B. K. and Kenchakkanavar (2015).

Libraries, according to Ezeani (2011), should make social networking sites on the internet widely known to patrons and encourage library patrons to use them so as to promote library and information resources and services. Social media is a product of web-based or internet technologies and they depend on these online and mobile technologies to operate. A good website is an effective marketing tool in itself. As use of the internet and electronic resources becomes commonplace (Coombs, M. 1999) the web becomes an essential medium for marketing and promoting services and resources.

The different types of social media which libraries should adopt for effective service delivery includes: Facebook, blogs, microblogging, YouTube, twitter, Wikis, Mash Up, Digg, Delicious Second Life, Flickr, Picasa, amongst others. Hence, librarians in the 21st century are expected to exploit the opportunities brought about by ICT. to ensure that libraries are repositioned to be 21st century compliant and remain the hub of information provision, generation and dissemination.

CONCLUSION

For the library to remain competitive, or even more fundamentally to remain relevant, it has to change its image. The new-age library ought to be a true service organization, a group of professionals who quickly identify in the vast ocean of knowledge the kind of information that different customers need and help them access it with the least waste of time and effort. Marketing is essential in making the proper planning, designing and use of such services and products for the better and optimal use of information. The library and information services should be user (customer) oriented in order to satisfy their information needs effectively. Marketing of library and information services includes customer (users) priorities, expectations, individuality, responsiveness, relationship, quality of services, professional skills and competencies, value-added services, etc. The ultimate aim of marketing here is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time. Mobile information services are highly relevant for libraries to meet up to global standard of information services delivery in the 21st century. A library that can survive and thrive in the Internet age is a knowledge-based social structure.



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