MARKETING STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING LIBRARY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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Abstract

The researcher reviewed several literature. Marketing of products in industries is very much essential to increase sale and consequently to gain the profit, however in library environment promotion and marketing of library and information sector is required to create awareness of the library services. Several marketing techniques to promote the usage of library resources and services have been highlighted in the literature. It is seen that majority of libraries do not have a marketing culture. It is recognized that libraries need to formulate marketing plan along with financial budget on a yearly basis so that library resources can be utilized optimally. Libraries in developing countries have been struggling to conduct outreach programmes to market their resources and services. Latest technologies have opened up new avenues to do marketing effectively. Therefore, libraries should apply the latest technologies in marketing of library products and services. This paper reviews literature on marketing of library products and services, and discusses various ways and means for the same.

Keywords: Marketing , Library product and Services, Promotion and Strategy

Introduction

Library's products and services in a multiplicity of formats have made libraries and information centres to publicize the arrival and existence of some of their resources to clientele. Kotler (1995) pointed out that organizations such as museums, universities, libraries and charities need to market their causes and their products to gain political, social as well as economic support. Libraries and information centers have begun to realize that by using marketing principles and techniques, they can understand better their users' needs, justify funding, communicate more effectively with a variety of external audiences and achieve greater efficiency and optimal result in delivering product and services that meet the identified needs of their clients.

Marketing and promotion is vital for libraries to enhance their reputation and usage. Library professionals' positive attitude towards marketing is a prerequisite for a successful plan and execution to market library products and services. The methods of marketing have changed from print media to social media. For example, Wiki, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Flicker, YouTube, instant messaging, etc., can be used to foster the usage of library sources and services. Libraries are under tremendous pressure to cope with users' demands, and it is the need of the hour that the libraries adopt tools and techniques for marketing to satisfy the diverse user groups. Non-print materials are more prevalent and digitized material is the new trend. Tools and techniques have given an opportunity to promote effective use of library resources.

Review of Related Literature

Marketing in promoting Library products and Services

Marketing covers those activities that connect the organization to those parts of its outside world that use, buy, sell or influence the outputs it produces and the benefits and services it offers (Jestin & Parameswari, 2002). Ekart (2014) Marketing Guru has defined marketing "as social and Managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they: need and want through creating, offering and exchanging product of value and others ". In view of the above definition, library activities are a team work or the efforts of group working in library. To attract more and more users to the library, Library staff needs to extend promotion and cooperation to users and marketing their services. Like Companies promotion and marketing concept, library promotion and marketing services are different.

The primary purpose of marketing of company products is to increase sales and ultimately to gain the more profit from it. The libraries are non-profit organizations; it is a social organization and service centre.

For libraries, marketing is about a set of activities including understanding client needs, determining market niches, identifying products and services, building client relationships and creating '*marketing mix*' (De Saez, 2002;; Rowley, 2003; Welch, 2006;Potter, 2012). Unlike traditional marketing that is organization-focused and for a specific product, libraries and information agencies are client-focused organizations focusing on clients and meeting their needs, and need to adopt services marketing (Welch, 2006). Services are the intangible products that libraries now have to promote in order to compete with external competitors. Libraries face numerous challenges such as restricted funding and increasing user expectations, as they identify, develop, deliver and monitor service offerings that are superior to their competitors. However, these challenges offer opportunities to provide better services for users by redefining customer relationships through the use of marketing strategies to build and strengthen ongoing relationships with customers (Rowley, 2003).

The purpose of any marketing plan in the library is to increase the number of users, develop favorable mindsets, and convincing the users about the benefits of accepting the library services and products. Therefore, in such an environment, user-centric approach in delivering the information becomes market driven. However, library professionals have been slow in adopting a marketing attitude. Hence, an urgent need is felt to get rid of complacency to face the challenges assertively. Each library should follow the defined marketing strategies so that expectations of the users can be matched with library products and services. She recommended that, to increase user awareness about library sources and services, the financial support of the respective organization is essential. Librarians must be careful in deciding charges of selective services to recover the cost so that services can be popular among the user group. A wrong decision to recover the cost of service may fade the reputation of the library. Kaur & Rani (2008) advocated that library and information centers ought to have the mission to do marketing of library products and services. Researchers expressed their disappointment, during surveys in Punjab and Chandigarh regions in India that no library is found with own logo, mission statement and a professional designated to perform the marketing of resources. A successful marketing plan should include librarians, faculty members, and students.

A variety of techniques has been used to promote library services and resources. Nkanga (2002) found that promotional techniques such as personal contacts, circulars, memos, telephone calls, meetings, direct mailing, displays, talks, newsletters, library tours and leaflets were widely used. He outlined the marketing approaches used in the British Council Network in India and found that techniques such as mail outs, personal visits, presentation at institutions, brochures, leaflets, newsletters, extension activities, cultivating the press and media advertisements were used to promote library and information services in order to increase the customer base. Jackson (2001) considered how to promote the interfaces, how to choose the right time to promote the service, and found that a variety of promotional methods such as business cards, leaflets, e-mails, letters, newsletters, personal contact, meetings, phone calls and interactive presentation were used to attract users. Ashcroft (2003) examined the promotion and evaluation of electronic journals in academic library collection and found that the methods of promoting e-journals included seminars for students, A-Z list of e-journal titles shown on the library web pages, leaflets, advertisements, and e-mail alerts. Adeloye (2003) presented a number of practical ideas such as the use of promotional techniques including brochures, library guides and exhibitions. The internet was used to promote library services and the techniques used to promote library Website were circulation expire alert, live digital reference desk, cross search and library portals (Ju, 2006).

To keep pace with evolving information technologies, librarians use a group of software applications including blogs, wikis and podcasting, media-sharing tools such as YouTube and Flickr, and social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook (Hinchliffe & Leon, 2011; Moulaison & Corrado, 2011) to market their services and resources with mixed success. Blogs and wikis, as well as social networking and information sharing sites such as Facebook, Flickr and YouTube, create new types of content. Information professionals use tools such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication), tagging and bookmarking as a means of promotion. YouTube is a video sharing site which allows people around the world to communicate and interact, making it a distribution point for user-created content (Yi, 2014).

Besides posting materials for promotion purposes, information professionals can post photos of the organization and staff to provide a virtual tour of their agency. Twitter is social networking tool that is becoming increasingly popular, because of its ability to showcase interesting events, features or news in 140 characters or less. Several papers have

explored how Twitter is being used in libraries to market their services and resources by actually using the social networking site to provide the service (Milstein, 2009Fields, 2010; Rodzvilla, 2010; Stuart 2010).

A favorite networking site for people of all ages to keep in touch is Facebook. A broad study by Hendrix, Chiarella, Hasman, Murphy and Zafron (2009) on the use of Facebook by more than seventy librarians found that most libraries used the social networking site to predominantly market their services. A study by Garcia-Milian, Norton and Tennant (2012) suggests that the more *likes* a library's Face book page has, the greater the potential for engagement with users through this medium.

These techniques continue to be used, and in addition, the literature reports on various approaches taken to promoting library services and resources, with mixed results on effectiveness. For example, Adeyoyin (2005) & Germano (2010) both believe that comprehensive marketing campaigns are required, used in conjunction with promotional materials; however, they did not go into details about the types of approaches that can be used, or the inherent success factor of such approaches.

Campbell & Gibson (2005) conducted a study confirming this: a yearlong marketing plan using any of the promotional approaches listed earlier had success in raising awareness of the library, however lack of a library-wide plan coordinating all promotional efforts created a disjointed effort, which had an impact on further achievements. A more recent survey of academic librarians on using many of the approaches listed was conducted (Polger and Okamoto, 2013). However, the authors do not explain which promotion technique was effective and what factors influenced the techniques used. Further studies of international academic libraries found that users were not being updated regularly, despite the knowledge that improving awareness of library services and resources can lead to increased use (Kaba, 2011Garoufallou, Zafeiriou, Siatri & Balapanidou 2013).

Increases in circulation, account registrations and e-book access became apparent after the creation of displays, physical signs and use of the library Website to promote resources (Jones, McCandless, Kiblinger, Giles and McCabe, 2011; McGeachin and Ramirez, 2005). Empey and Black (2005), although unable to determine heightened awareness resulting from their efforts, used anecdotal evidence to assess positive changes in user attitudes. The perception is that these small changes made significant improvements in staff and user engagement, as well as increased use statistics.

A common theme that emerges with the use of promotional materials and various approaches is that e-mail, e-mail alerts (distinct from e-mails due to their short or thematic nature), signage (both print and digital) and use of library Websites (announcements and screensavers) are the techniques that librarians mostly use for promotion in the libraries. This has been mainly due to relatively low investment of both funding and staff time (Kratzert, Richey & Wasserman, 2001; Verostek, 2005; Vilelle, 2005 ;Jones *et al.*, 2011;).The literature is compelling in its discussion regarding the importance of promoting library services and resources in order to maintain visibility in competitive environments. However, effectiveness of promotional tools used has not been studied in great depth.

Strategies Use in Marketing Library Products and Services

Marketing via Website

Website of library is a vital tool to share the vision and mission. It is a handy tool to announce the yearly plan, new additions and new initiatives of the library. The resources subscribed by the library can be deliveredto users in a systematic way by building a website of the library. Staurt (2010) stated that libraries can adopt new mode of promotional strategies to access the books and journals in print and digital format to make sure every book has its reader in the new age. Study suggested that librarians must adopt the change by enhancing their skills, attitude and aptitude so that the needs of the users can be understood and resources can be utilised optimally. Kaur & Rani (2009) postulated that libraries must organize orientation programmes, publicity of resources, and personal contacts on a frequent basis. Besides this, library should have a website which can be used for advertising library products and services and to distribute and disseminate library products and services.

Islam & Hossain (2014) examined 57 university libraries in Bangladesh and found the websites are not fully utilized for marketing of library resources and services. Majority of websites do not provide online literacy, online help, and copyright documents. Besides this, no library conducts online survey or networking using the website. Similar study

was conducted by Kaur in Malaysian libraries and found that libraries are not using the websites properly to do promotional activities among the user groups. Gardner, et al., conducted a study on academic library websites to learn how they promote library resources and services among faculty members. The study found that faculty WebPages is most significant to promote library services for research and teaching. Further, the study revealed that libraries have not utilized the opportunities in contributing scholarly communication through creating institutional repositories and open access measures. Libraries need to take such initiatives to remain relevant and visible among the users.

Wenhong (2006) stated that library marketing is a matching process between library resources and expectations of the users. Using marketing techniques libraries can enhance their visibility and make users more successful in using the library resources and services. The author suggested that exhibitions are a good marketing idea in academic institutions. Libraries have been demanding inclusion of marketing links on their websites. Therefore, library professionals must grab this opportunity in the digital environment.

Marketing via Web 2.0 Tools

A proliferation of information is reaching the society after development in information technology. Web 2.0 has changed the delivery and marketing methods of information sources and services. Commercial agencies have come forward to do this work for big commercial ventures to promote their products. Similarly, libraries have adopted the Web 2.0 tools. In the last ten years, several studies have been conducted on the use of Web 2.0 tools in libraries. Landis30 stated that using the social networking tools such as Facebook can be handy to market the resources and events. The social networking sites can also be useful to remove the barriers in dissemination of information. Xia31 found in his study that use of Web 2.0 tools to market the library resources and service builds a positive connection between the library and users. Ekart (2011) explained in his study that using Twitter, libraries not only get feedback about library services but also get valuable information about the library users. This valuable information can be used in planning library resources and services. Mamatha (2016) concluded in a study that Twitter was used as an interaction and communication tool as libraries had a large number of followers, which can be helpful. She suggested that professional staff members be used for regularly updating and maintaining the library Twitter feeds to attract more users. Yi (2014) conducted a study on 400 librarians in 37 academic libraries in Australia to know their perception on Web 2.0 tools. The study found that librarians are using a variety of Web 2.0 tools such as, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Wiki, and You Tube. Verostek (2005), pointed out that YouTube can be successsfully used in imparting instructions to promote library use. In addition, reference services can be provided successfully using YouTube.Hendrix36, et al., conducted a study on 70 librarians to know the use of Facebook and found that majority of libraries use the social networking sites (SNSs) to predominately market library services. Besides this, several studies have been conducted to know the application of rich site summary (RSS) feeds applications in libraries. It was found that the RSS feeds updates are being used by academic libraries to market new library services and new additions of print and electronic collections. It is well established that proper use of these feeds services can be useful tools in promotion of library resources and services. Breeding advised the libraries to use the RSS feeds to attract potential users to the library and found the key challenges in the use of Web 2.0 technologies are applications of these tools in marketing and promotion. Xia revealed in his study that by active participation of librarians on Facebook Groups they can always keep the discussion alive by responding to the queries of students Therefore, these tools can be a crucial medium to promote the library and help the users in study and research.

Marketing via Mobile Phone

Gracia-Milian etal...(2012) states that mobile-based services have been adopted by many users. These services have become extremely popular among the users. The technology has been used to start a library alerts service. A study was conducted by then in collaboration with Emerald Group Publishing Limited and a need was identified to create a prototype model for SMS-based service to do marketing of the library resources. Study also found that longer SMSs need to split up to shorter messages. The SMS service is found effective for timely delivery of information resources to the users in an economic way. Rheingold found the use of mobile phone in marketing library services and resources as economic. Further, it also provides instant response and contacts with users. Modern tool s and technology are versatile and SMS-based services are cost effective.

These SMS-based services can be used as a tool to cater to the information desire of users. Five gaps have been identified which are responsible for unsuccessful delivery of service and affect the quality of service. First gap is between users and perception of the management. The major reason is that managements do not understand what exactly the users need. The other reason of this gap is that most libraries don't conduct user's survey prior to the start

of any service for the users. Second gap is between management perception and service quality specifications. The reason is most of the time specifications prescribed by the management do not adhere to service quality specifications. The third is quality specificationsandservice delivery.Thefourth is between delivery and promises to the users. The fifth and last gap is between perceived service and likely service.

Marketing via Video

Library instructional video can be used in promotion and marketing the library resources to save the time of users and library personnel. Martins (2006) shared his experience of using a video in the promotion of the library at California State University, Northridge. Videos of library resources and services were posted on the library website. The videos were shared using YouTube. 2744 people viewed the videos between September 9, 2010 and July 26, 2012. The campaign received positive feedback from faculty members. Using the video the library increased the users' awareness about resources and services, and communicated well. Similar attempt was made at Dartmouth College and results were satisfactory in promotion of library activities and services 47.(Gracia-Malian, etal… 2012).

Librarians' Attitude Towards Marketing Library Products and Services

Marketing concept is not well adopted by librarians. Staurt (2010) surveyed 623 library professionals in public libraries in New Jersey to understand their attitudes on marketing library resources and services. The study found that library administrators and library professionals who have done a course in marketing or attended any workshop on marketing have a high priority to apply the marketing concept in their respective libraries.

Shontz, et..al (2004) postulated that several library professionals are unwilling to adopt and implement marketing in the library and information centres. Majority of them believe that marketing of library resources and services is unnecessary and unsuitable for libraries. Hence, the adoption of the concept is subject to and varies from professional to professional. Librarians with good knowledge of marketing prefer to apply the concept to promote the library resources among users. Besides this, they market the library resources to enhance the reputation of library.

Conclusion

Librarians and library staff are trying to find out the appropriate ways to respond the contemporary requirements of the students and faculty to fulfill their goals, meet the needs of existing and potential users. Librarians are building the image and value of the libraries**.** The limited budget provision and the advent of new technology and its application in libraries have opened new vistas for marketing of library resources, products and services. In case libraries and library professionals' fails to catch hold the opportunities, the opportunities will be grabbed by Commercial vendors and technology specialists. NAAC while accessing the institution or University more weight age has been given to library services. Now a days many libraries are preparing for marketing of library services and created a record for each event for accreditation.

Therefore academic libraries, public libraries should plan their marketing and promoting the resources needs careful planning and policy and its execution on regular basis. The provisions of services should meet the requirements of current trends, respecting and identified and changing demands of more challenging users. Even in the curriculum of the Master's program of Library and Information Science discipline, separate papers on marketing and promotion of library services should be thoroughly taught. Library staff must realize the importance and understanding of marketing of services process, its theory and applications in practice such as Web.2.0 to promote activities and library mission to build a library brand name. New technologies such as YouTube, blogs, wikis attract the young users, provide an opportunity for libraries to revamp services.

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