Review

Strategies for marketing library services and information products in Nigeria

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The increasing awareness and use of information for different purposes have resulted in the establishment of various information services providers which have the capacity to compete for survival with libraries in providing users with timely, adequate and relevant information in the preferred formats. Libraries and Librarians in Nigeria therefore need to respond to such challenges in the quest to enhance the use of their resources (electronic and non-electronic) and services. This paper therefore explores strategies using marketing as a managerial tool to accomplish library goals and objectives. Challenges or barriers, opportunities and the need to market libraries services and information products as well as suggestions for developing marketing plans and strategies are provided for libraries and librarians in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The information industry has grown dramatically in services, revenue and coherence over the last decade. Libraries around the world are facing rising cost and dwindling budgets due to technological advances and today's dynamic economic climate. As a result, marketing concepts are increasingly adapted within the library environment. 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 and Parameswari, 2002). 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. Four main factors namely information explosion, technology revolution, escalating library costs and increasing competition by information providers and web-based commercial services providers are responsible for encouraging the library professionals to develop a marketing strategy to its operations and services. Libraries therefore need to continue to respond to such challenges in the quest to enhance the use of their resources and services.

This paper therefore focuses on using marketing as a managerial tool to accomplish library goals and objectives. Challenges, barriers, opportunities and the need to marketing library services and information products are discussed while suggestions for developing marketing plans and strategies are provided as well.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, marketing library products and services is significant in any dynamic library services in a competitive environment. Libraries have historically been confident that their products had such intrinsic merit that users would automatically be attracted; they believed that people should use the library. Weingand (1999) considered this yesterday's thinking. Kaane (1999) suggested that with the mushrooming of new information providers such as cyber cafes, mega-bookstores, online book dealers, the Internet community, consultants and other web-based commercial services operators, libraries cannot continue to assume that they are the only sources of information that people will consult, Librarians and other information professionals have to adopt marketing as a tool if they have to exist in the tomorrow environment.

Shamel (2002) noted that the concept of marketing has widely been discussed in literature and accepted professionally but this acceptance has not found its way into most library schools' formal curricular yet there is no substitute for the performance of individual librarians in the workplace. In the same vein, Jestin and Parameswari (2002) expressed that lack of business expertise among librarians and information scientists has been one of the major barriers to operating a profitable information business.

Marketing as defined by the UK Chartered Institute of Marketing is the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customers' requirement efficiently.... (Nicholas, 1998). Morgan (1998) from librarianship perspectives defined marketing as an exchange process whereby two or more individuals (or groups) exchange goods or services for items of value. Stating that, one of these individuals is almost always a librarian, while the other individuals include taxpayers, students, faculty, or in the case of special libraries, fellow employees. The items of value are information and information services exchanged for a perception of worth – a rating valuing the services rendered, a highly intangible and difficult thing to measure, which user of library services "pays", not to libraries and librarians, but to administrators and decision-makers. Ultimately these payments manifest themselves as tax dollars or other administrative supports. Morgan (1998) further notes that as the perception of worth decreases, so do tax dollars and support.

The essence of marketing involves finding out what the users want, then setting out to meet those needs. As Librarians we all participate in this process of assessing our users' needs and trying to fulfill then. By so doing, we are already marketing our library information skills. However, in order to do this effectively, libraries and librarians need to embrace the total marketing function involving market research and analysis, service planning and promotion.

Reasons for Marketing Library Services and Information Products

Libraries and information professionals must learn to effectively market and advertise their services because of the following reasons:

- 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 to potential library customers or users.

- Libraries of all types 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 university units and projects for funds, so also special libraries find their allocation decreasing when the parent organization budgets are cuts.

- Libraries have to market 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 in order to improve the image of their libraries and themselves. For instance, libraries have to be unique in the kind of access and services they provide. Librarians also have to change the perception of users and others toward them as being information experts.

- Librarians are and should be regarded as essential and valuable community resources. In essence, there is the need for the librarians to make people to be aware of the services and products they provide and their comparative value. Librarians should see themselves as resources people go to for information and should be well prepared and equipped themselves as experts in the field.

- Libraries depend on the supports of people they serve for their survival. A library should therefore communicate and work with its customers and funding authorities to provide information about what the library is doing and to enable the library to learn about the community its serve.

- Librarians are not visible. Shamel (2002) believes that people who are in positions to employ librarians are not aware of the values of libraries and librarians. There is thus the need for librarians to be more proactive in marketing their cause to potential users and people in positions of power.

- Library users expect recognition, attention and appreciation for their individual information needs. As customers always have ever-changing needs and wants, there is the need for librarians to market as dynamic as retail markets and thus create an environment in libraries that foster customer consciousness and satisfaction among employees.

• Effective marketing have been found to increase library funds, increase usage of services, educate customers and non-customers, change perceptions and enhance the clout and reputation of the library and its staff.

Libraries and Librarians have a role to play in the management of information. Information Management is defined as the process of managing, selection, collection building, processing, controlling and dissemination of information in an organization (Jestin and Parameswari, 2002). Information management can help an organization recognize and use the potentials of the resources of information and information technology. Considering the information management cycle, librarians have a significant role to play in almost every step in the information-user matching process.

Marketing as earlier considered in the paper involves planning and managing the organization's exchange relations with its clientele. It consists of studying the target market's needs, designing appropriate products and services, and using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and serve the market. The followings are vital concepts that will be briefly discussed in this paper: marketing activities or research; principles of marketing management; marketing techniques and marketing strategy.

Marketing Research

The first stage is market profiling which is done to obtain marketing information. This involves the systematic gathering, recording and analyzing of data relating to the demand for a service or product (Katz, 1988). The parent organization needs to be analyzed in terms of funding sources, the contribution the library makes to the mission of the parent organization; resources available and the needs of the user. Marketing is centered on the customers or library users. In order to better meet users' needs and communicate effectively with users, market research is required to gather the data upon which strategic decisions and enhancement of services must be based. It is necessary to first identify the market scope as this will enhance formulation of appropriate policies.

Jestin and Parameswari (2002) notes that market research helps to reduce uncertainty in the decision-making processes, monitor as well as control the performance of marketing activities and thus librarians should consider factors like: user affordability; extent of use; relevance of the service to users; repeat customers; user preferences and staffing while conducting marketing research.

Regular market research not only helps to determine what current and future collections and services the users may require, but also provides valuable information about how librarians might best communicate so that users know about and understand how to maximize the potential of the services available to them (Spalding and Wang, 2006).

Product Planning/Market Plan

Product planning is the marketing activity concerned with developing a product that satisfies customers (Jestin and Parameswari, (2002). Nicholas (1998) stated that the marketing plan is the tool which will ensure that library services and products are viewed in a focused and clear way. Information gathered from the marketing activities or research, the conclusions of which should be summarized and stated, form the basis upon which the market plan is based. At this stage, according to Jestin and Parameswari (2002) management must decide;

• Who should be the user group?
• To whom the information services or products should be targeted?
• What should be the services or products that can be produced and marketed to the different target groups?

It is advisable that marketing plans be regularly revised in light of new information, goals, aspirations and service enhancement.

Pricing

Pricing is the marketing activity that determines the price of the product on the basis of costs as well as market factors such as distribution channels, discount structure, competitors' prices, ability or willingness of customers to pay and so on. Jestin and Parameswari (2002) highlighted questions of concern during pricing as involving:

• What are the costs involved in the generation of services and products?
• What factors need to be considered in arriving at costs?
• Should the information services or products be given free?
• If so, to whom and why?
• What would be the impact in relation to the value of a product, if given free? and
• What should be the criteria for pricing?

Promotion

This is the activity that covers all aids to sales. Promotion stimulates demand and increases sales. Essentially, promotion is the means of informing your users what you do and what you can do. In essence, it involves mechanisms that inform the target groups about the resources available, services and products offered by the libraries or the information centres. Nicholas (1998) expressed that the benefits for those who promote their

library services include increased usage, increased value in the organization, education of users and changed perceptions.

Questions to consider regarding promotion according to Jestin and Parameswari (2002) include:

- To whom is the promotional materials directed?
- What is the message?
- What promotional mechanisms are available?
- What points are to be considered in the design of a promotional package?
- What is the role of the library staff in the promotional activities?

The promotional plan emerges from the marketing plan and has to do with how to achieve the objectives that have been forecast. The setting of clear promotional objectives will ensure that the success of the advertising campaign can be evaluated. From time to time, it should be accepted that promotional activities have not met their objectives. At this point, the marketing strategies need to be re-evaluated based on the feedback received from users.

Distribution

Distribution is the marketing activity concerned with distributing the product from the manufacturer to the consumer, making the product available and easy to buy. Promotional activities can take many forms and the promotional media will depend on the nature of the target audience and on promotional objectives. The followings are major channels of dissemination.

Personal skills: The librarian's manner whether in person or on the telephone will affect library users' rating of the library. For instance, as Librarians you need to be professional and use quality procedure and at the same time smile and establish a personal relationship with as many of your users as possible. React positively to complaints as people will be encouraged to tell you about other things they would like changed. Think about users' suggestions instead of defending your positions. Make yourself highly visible; visit staff rather than waiting for them to visit you. Learn research interest of staff, students and others. Establish the key players; identify people who can and want to help. This will go a long way in changing the perception of people about the library staff.

E-mail: E-mail is an easy way of reaching users quickly and cheaply. By maintaining up-to-date address lists of users, different user groups can be targeted with different versions of the advertising message.

The Internet: Although, it takes time to set up and maintain services on the Internet, it can reap rewards in terms of user satisfaction and recognition. The Internet has the power to improve the library's image and also allow the library to offer enhanced services. For instance,

a Library Web Home Page serves as a promotional tool for advertising in-house library services and electronic information resources and products on the web. Such pages should include e-mail link to the library making the librarians easy to contact.

Newsletters and Leaflets: These are also a means of delivering information. A newsletter could be used to list interesting new web sites, new journals and online services, and general news of interest. These do not have to be long, should be produced on a regular basis and widely circulated to members of staff and students. Leaflets and guides can also be handed out and or displayed on notice boards. The library notice boards should be located in a prominent place. These materials could also be circulated electronically. Other effective media or channels of dissemination are in-house dissemination, broadcasting, mails, telephone, local depositories and strategic placements.

Principles of Marketing

According to Jestin and Parameswari (2002), modern library services should be based on the following marketing principles.

(i)   The Library must have an active attitude towards the market. The management must actively study the market, persuade customers, promote the product and organize distribution. In most cases, it cannot expect customers to buy a product or use a service simply because it is produced or the service is rendered.

(ii)   Marketing should be given importance, as did other basic functions such as administration, production and finance.

(iii)   The marketing functions must be "integrated". This means that the various marketing considerations must be taken into account in the decisions of all managers, not only those directly concerned with sales.

Marketing Techniques

Management is required to control the application of a range of skills and techniques in marketing generally derived from theory of studies and from practical industrial experience. Jestin and Parameswari (2002) categorized marketing skills and techniques into four broad groups as:

- Those used in order to obtain data about the market;
- Those used to create and stimulate demand;
- Those used to analyse costs and other marketing factors; and
- Other practical skills and techniques

Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy means selecting various techniques in proper proportion and balance. It is important to note that not all enterprises or organizations can afford to use all the marketing techniques because different situations require different techniques. It is essential therefore that the marketing manager or the librarian are cognizance of the various marketing techniques and must be able to select those techniques that are necessary for a particular product in a particular situation. Successful marketing therefore, includes the art of deciding which techniques to use in different situations.

Jestin and Parameswari (2002) suggested that the proper and active use of marketing techniques provide the possibility of creating a market. They propose that:
- Increasing the present volume of sales can create a market
- Creating a market can mean waking up a sleeping market
- Creating a market can involve creating a demand that did not exist at all.

Librarians and information managers should therefore be weary that familiarity with effective marketing techniques and strategies can results into creation of new products and services and in effect new markets while libraries are more than ever patronized.

Professional Skills for Marketing

Library personnel require the following professional knowledge and skills in order to market and attract users to the library.
- Perception of user needs and ability to obtain feedback from users;
- Technical knowledge, such as ability to use the Internet and other electronic resources and databases; and
- Knowledge of various marketing strategies for promoting information skills.

Factors Impeding Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services

- The relatively low level of knowledge (Alemna, 2001; Shamel, (2002) and lack of agreement on user requirements, wants, and needs (Jestin and Parameswari, 2002; Kaane, 2006).
- The subsidized non-market environment in which most scientific and technical information products and services are used (Alemna, 2001; Jestin and Parameswari, 2002; Shamel; 2002).
- The virtual impossibility of estimating the value contributed by information products and services to the efficiency and conduct of research and development and

the advancement of scholarly pursuits (Jestin and Parameswari, 2002).
- The general economic unsophistication of those mostly schooled in the humanities and the non-market oriented library school environment, who purchase information products and services (Jestin and Parameswari, 2002; Shamel, 2002).
- The reluctance of librarians and other information professionals to engage in marketing adds to the problem (Weingand, 1999; Alemna, 2001; Bakar, 2005 and Kaane, 2006).

Suggestions and Recommendations

The importance of the library cannot be assumed, but must be weighed in relation to other critical needs like classroom and laboratory space, teaching and research staff, support services or repairing deteriorating classrooms. Thus, there is the need for the Librarian-in-Charge of libraries to justify why its management should allocate scare funds to support library collections and services.

There is also the need for the Library Directors or Managers to be aggressive in soliciting for funds from philanthropists, local and international organizations, schools, agencies, associations etc for library support. Money and others derived from such solicitation efforts should be used only for upliftment of library services and development.

Libraries should start thinking of plans or modalities to carry out research on customer survey. This can be conducted every two years, seeking information regarding the library's communication; service quality; facilities, resources and equipments; service delivery and library staff. These benchmarks will offer us guidance in providing better customer service; an improved delivery of library services and collection; better communication; a higher visibility and appreciation from clients, funds providers (management) and public policy.

There is also the need for Library Administrators to be able to project their libraries development plans. They must be able to do long range planning to project short and long terms costs and how they will be executed. They must be able to make strategic decisions concerning how funds will be generated and how the limited resources will be expended on staff, facilities and collections (printed, non-printed as well as electronic resources and facilities).

Librarians should also be able to write grant proposals to both local and international private foundation and government programmes in order to receive external grants to fund specific collections or library ICT projects.

As earlier suggested by Adekunmisi, Osinulu and Ogunbote (2009), marketing courses which can help uplift and develop marketing of library services should be introduced into the Nigerian Library Schools Curriculum

such that would-be librarians are trained to become infoprenuers. Also those already in the profession, that is, the library personnel should be exposed to refresher courses on library and information products services marketing techniques. They should also be exposed to training by allowing them attend seminars, workshops and conferences. They should be trained and re-trained and re-oriented to start thinking afresh.

Similar to it is the need for continual library staff development programmes through regular attendance at workshops, seminars and conferences. Staff should also continuously keep pace with new developments and improve on their user needs assessment skills. They should acquire and update their skills most especially in the areas of information communication technologies, communication techniques and customer care services. Possession of all these skills will put them in a position to better understand their users' needs as well as provide better and satisfying services to their clients.

The Nigerian Library Association can as done by the American Library Association (ALA), which initiated a multi-year campaign to raise the visibility of the value of school, public, academic and special libraries to the people who depend upon them (Spalding and Wang, 2006). The association can also design website with the campaign materials and resources made freely available for use by libraries all over the world. The Campaign should provide tools that will assist librarians to better understand their library users and the services they need, incorporating this information into service improvement and communicating more effectively what the library can deliver. Spalding and Wang (2006) noted that such Campaign had resulted in users being more satisfied with library services and a wider community had a greater appreciation for what librarians and library resources do to facilitate learning and research.

Volunteer Librarians can come together to develop materials and resources as well as also organize workshops for librarians to learn and apply marketing planning in their libraries. They can also develop guides or manuals to train librarians or act as facilitators in workshops where other librarians can learn to use marketing approach in their libraries. Toolkits can also be designed for libraries. All these resources can be made available freely at libraries websites. These resources, that is, the manuals, guides, toolkits, graphics, posters etc will serve to guide librarians through a strategic market planning process adaptable to meet the unique needs of a library.

We are now in the information technology age, libraries in Nigeria should start making plans for a formalized Information Literacy Program for patrons which will help potential users learn how to access and interpret information. This will shed light on identifying the need for information and learning, where to find the information required, how to evaluate, manipulate and synthesize the information in solving problems or tasks at hand.

CONCLUSION

Information is a vital resource for national development. The increasing awareness and use of information has resulted in the establishment of information systems and services which provide a variety of information services and products. Therefore, library acquisitions, organization and dissemination of information and services must be based on the modern concept of marketing to achieve optimum readers' satisfaction. Libraries must endeavour to nurture a culture of adequate and satisfying customer services to enhance its image and appreciation from the eyes of its users. If librarians are ultimately responsible for marketing library as well as information products and services, then the Nigerian Library Schools must equip future librarians with the necessary information technology and information management skills. It is thus of necessity that studies which can help to uplift and develop marketing of library services and information products in the country are essential amongst other things.

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