Role of Marketing Strategy in Academic Libraries: A Study

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Abstract
Marketing is the process of planning, pricing, promoting, and distributing goods and services to create "exchanges" that satisfy the library and the customer. Marketing is an ongoing and dynamic strategy because customer needs and library products change with time. Marketing concepts 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". The real value of marketing is to ensure the survival and growth of the library and information services, which exist to enhance the communities they serve, adding value to the lives of the people and organizations that are their users, customers and clients.

Keywords: Marketing; Marketing Plan.

Introduction
Every organization has two basic operating function:

- Production of goods, services, or idea
- Marketing of the goods, services, or idea

Many a management guru define marketing in deferent ways. Kotler,(1994) definition says "The Marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the need and wants of target market and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors. The marketing concept rests on four main pillars, namely target market, customer needs, coordinated marketing, and profitability."(Kotler,(1994) In general words marketing is a planned approach to identify and gain the support of users and develop appropriate services in a manner which benefits the users and and in the case of academic libraries, further the aims and objectives of academic libraries. Marketing includes selling, advertising, physical distribution, sales promotion, etc. Main function of an academic libraries is to provide right information to right user at right time, and this function can be done through marketing. For marketing, first thing is an appropriate marketing plan, this is the main part of successful marketing because under marketing plan we discuss what user need, plan information products and services, price of information product and services, how to promote information product and services, etc.

Marketing
Marketing is the process through we assess the need of market/customer/user, and we provides those service which satisfy the needs profitably. Smith defines that “Marketing is a stance and an attitude that focuses on meeting the need of users. Marketing is a means of ensuring that libraries, librarians, and librarianships are integrated into both today’s and tomorrow’s emerging global culture. Marketing is not separate from good practice. It is good practice”. (Krishan Kumar, 1985).

Marketing library and information services is a responsibility of everyone in an organization. It is the service that the user receives from all of the staff who helps them perceive the value of the academic libraries. So marketing is related to management, because management is the key to successful marketing.

Marketing and Strategy
Strategy is the key to successful marketing. Marketing is a management discipline, and it is equally a part of organizational and management philosophy, reflected in attitudes and approaches across the whole organization. Marketing provides the focus for successful organizations. The starting point lies in recognizing the fact that 'Marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and social needs.(Seetharama,1990).Further, marketing is a management process because it identifies the customer need and than meets customer requirements product/services efficiently and profitably, and in the whole process strategy plays a
more important role, so successful marketing depends upon good strategy.

**Marketing Approach**
The marketing approach is used for devising the marketing plan, identifying users needs, and organizational strategy. The marketing approach can be applied to make the existing planning process of academic libraries more rigorous. Under the marketing approach we mainly discuss these points:

- Target audience, competition and distinctive offer.
- Design of four Ps & Cs:
  - Product – Customer needs and wants
  - Price – Cost to user
  - Place – Convenience
  - Promotion – Communication
- Systems to interface with target audience.
- Production and delivery systems.
- Planning, organization and control of all the above.

**Purpose of Marketing in Academic Libraries**
There are two key purposes of marketing, (i) Achieving objective/goals of the academic libraries, and (ii) Satisfying user/customer needs and wants. Main objective of academic libraries is provide right information to right user at right time, and to put it in simple words satisfying user/customer needs. The second purpose is related to first purpose, if we provide product/services at right time to right user and fulfil the users need than we complete the purpose of marketing.

Main purpose of marketing in academic libraries is to encounter a four-pronged challenge:

1. Increase in clientele, their variety, their demands, and their expectations.
2. Increase in the initial or capital cost of information and information technology, and their need to leverage the technology and find new levels of economies of scale to serve the increasing potential clientele.
3. In the event of drying up of the public sponsorship and subsidy, the need to find alternative sources of revenue.
4. Complexity in ways of identifying clients and their requirements, and servicing them.

**Marketing Strategy**
Marketing strategy is a process that can allow an organization to concentrate its limited resources to grab the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. A marketing strategy should be centred on the key purpose that in academic libraries user/customer satisfaction is the main goal. A marketing strategy is a written plan which combines the efforts to plan information product and product development, and the ways to promote information products and services, how to price information product and services, and their distribution. It identifies the academic libraries marketing goals, and explains how they will be achieved within a stated timeframe. Marketing strategy determines the choice of target market segment, positioning, marketing mix, and allocation of resources. It is most effective when it makes an integral component of academic libraries; strategy: define how the academic libraries will successfully engage customers, prospects, and competitors in the market arena. Marketing strategy is a written marketing plan which cover all the functions of marketing from beginning to end. The plan helps the librarian/information manager to answer the following broad questions:

1. What is the current situation regarding the academic libraries, the product or the services?
2. Where should the information centre/product/services be in the next one year? ...two years? ...five years?
3. How does the information centre/product/service get there to realize specific targets?
4. To assess whether the information centre, product or services realize the goals and target set?

**Functions of marketing strategy**
The functions of marketing strategy include the following activities to be carried out by the library and information professionals:

- Analysis of users
- Planning new products, marketing plans and target markets
- Implementation of the plans related to marketing
- Control with regard to standards, quality, progress of marketing goals and expected results
- Identification of objectives in line with parent organization’s goals and information centre requirements
- Promoting demand for existing products and services
- Development of new and viable product and services, which have a sound client base.
- Execution of preparatory analysis assists staff in developing a customer-oriented outlook.

Preparation of the plan and the implementation of activities encourage and motivate information staff to develop a proactive stance in the target market.

**Conclusion**
Marketing strategy is the key to the successful proliferation; under a strategy where we incorporate all the important points like identifying organizational
goals; customer analysis; competitor analysis; plan for specific product/services, etc. Finally, marketing is a strategic level activity; it needs senior management involvement at all the levels and it must be on all agendas. Librarians and information professionals must encourage and develop a marketing culture in their libraries and information centres and be prepared to market their own very significant talents, experience and skills. Marketing needs resources, human as well as financial, and it needs teamwork for a successful implementation. It cannot be done alone, even where the library or information centre employs, or has access to, a designated marketing manager. Marketing is a recipe of success because through marketing academic libraries can increase the reach of their services and promote themselves. The investment needs to be serious, and the rewards are immense. So, marketing strategy is important for every library and information product manager and service provider for success in the market.

References