

Effective Marketing: A Promotional Tool for Library and Information Services in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a review of effective marketing as a promotion tool for library and information services. In today's fast-paced world, marketing ideas are crucial for promoting library and information services. These ideas are effective tools that libraries can use to connect with their target audience and convey the worth of their resources. Libraries interact with their communities and maintain their relevance by effectively implementing marketing methods. It offers libraries a framework for showcasing their offerings, improving user experience, and drawing additional users. Applying effective marketing to library operations boosts their effectiveness, visibility, and utilisation in the digital world.

Keywords: *Effective marketing, library, information services.*

INTRODUCTION

The main discussion is marketing principles as applicable to instruments, marketing library and information services. Therefore, the take-off strategy would be to dissect the fundamentals of marketing ideas to demonstrate their applicability to the successful and efficient promotion of library and information services. Chopra (2012) claims that the marketing concept is a philosophy that holds that identifying the needs of the target market and meeting those needs more effectively and efficiently than rivals is the key to reaching objectives. His marketing strategies focus on generating profits through customer happiness rather than maximising profitable sales quantities. As a result, the focus is on selling satisfaction rather than just things (Chopra, 2012). The characteristic of librarianship is user happiness because all other activities are centred around and designed to achieve it. User satisfaction is therefore the primary focus of all library operations. According to Igbafe and Aliu (2000), the user-centred library and information service that should be our collective dream and aspiration is one that ultimately leads to user satisfaction in all its ramifications. To determine market categories, their sizes, and their needs, the marketing concept turns to marketing research. A plan can use the marketing mix to meet the needs of the target audiences (NetMBA, 2010a).

As there are numerous writers on the topic, the definitions of marketing are diverse; yet, a few would be adequate to get to the core of the issue. The performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer is how the American Marketing Association (AMA), the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), and the National Association of Marketing Teachers define marketing. For many years, this meaning has been upheld and generally accepted. Marketing comprises both individual and organisational activities that, through the production, maintenance, distribution, advertising, and pricing of goods, services, and ideas, facilitate and expedite exchange relationships in a dynamic environment. Marketing is an organisational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers; managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organisation and its stakeholders. According to the American Marketing Association (2004), the focal areas can change, with the usage of the words 'value', 'managing customer relationships', and 'stakeholders' taking centre stage in the definition. It is because the process is essential to marketing. Gupta (2006) approaches marketing concepts with new aspects. The main point is that:

- i. When it comes to carrying out marketing tasks throughout the entire firm, marketing is the guiding principle.
- ii. It is a collection of interactions between people, technology, procedures, the environment, and material (resources of information in the case of libraries), through which any information is delivered to the client.

- iii. Value is the collection of advantages or benefits that a consumer or user receives from utilising a good or service. Value is communicated to clients in an easy-to-understand way.

It is important to shed some light on the historical background of marketing to information services and libraries. This is especially true given that marketing is typically perceived by laypeople as buying and selling, but all library services are free and non-profit worldwide. Many library and information staff still do not understand the notion or practice of marketing. According to Shripad and Meghana (2015), some LIS professionals may believe that marketing is somehow unsuitable for a public service organisation like a library and that there is no place for it in a non-profit industry.

According to Gupta and Savard (2010), what is true about marketing in general is the confusion concerning the concept (marketing) itself, because most people seem to see marketing only as the equivalent of advertising or promotion; they do not observe below the tip of the iceberg. Instead, they believe that what is beneath the surface is to please the consumer. Marketing theory incorporates crucial strategic factors, including assessing the client's demands; arranging the components to meet those goals, and reassessing the results.

Librarianship is not unfamiliar with marketing; it has become popular in the last three decades. It's noteworthy to note that librarians in North America were employing marketing strategies as early as 1876, segmenting and targeting consumers using strategies like probability, direct mail, streetcar signage, telephone solicitation, banners, and more, even though marketing was more formally introduced in the profession after the 1970s. The progressive library of the 20th century welcomed everyone and invited them to participate in the construction of a community cultural centre (Kleindl, 2007).

As the art and science of finding and keeping readers and users of the library and information centre, marketing in LIS is viewed differently in the context of libraries because of the broader history of marketing mentioned above. Kotler and Levy first proposed this idea in 1969 and further detailed marketing tactics for non-profit institutions, like libraries, in 1982 (Kotler, 1985). According to him, non-profit organisations like libraries essentially produce services rather than things; the main qualities that set services apart from other types of goods are that they are intangible, indivisible, variable, and perishable. As a result, marketing services require a different strategy from marketing commodities.

According to Eagleton (1992), information services are a valuable and marketable commodity. Information products and services are in high demand, and this demand is influenced by the prices, references, income, expectations, population, season, technology, and the cost of other items. Sociological marketing refers to marketing targeted at non-profit organisations, like libraries (Adeleye, 2003). The definition above calls for examining several marketing-related actions, including:

- i. Marketing Research and Customer Analysis
- ii. Development of new services
- iii. Pricing
- iv. Distribution
- v. Promotion
- vi. Evaluation of services

Information products and services can benefit from all the marketing strategies. While the policy differs, the tactics are the same whether it is for the non-profit or business sector. Building relationships with customers, branding, company identity, marketing communications, pricing and pricing policy; gathering marketing data, and marketing strategy and planning are some ways that marketing can be defined.

Proper thinking, a strategic perspective, and operational strategies are necessary to accomplish this. Therefore, basic marketing ideas such as promotion, public relations, and advertising must include library and information services. Marketing, in its contemporary definition, refers to management that effectively recognises, predicts, and meets client needs.

Let us examine the motivations behind library and information service marketing before delving deeply into marketing principles as pertinent instruments for successful and efficient marketing. There must be periodic changes in the way we conduct our affairs because our society is dynamic. As a result, librarianship must evolve in the context of human interaction. This change mantra has led to many internal and external causes that have reshaped libraries' roles to consider marketing for the information industry. According to Shripad and Meghana (2015), the following elements are in charge of motivating the library profession to adopt a marketing strategy in its operations and services:

- i. The explosion of information (the quick expansion of reading material)
- ii. The technological revolution
- iii. Growing library expenses and budget cuts
- iv. The expansion of user-based services
- v. The complexity of information requirements and networking demands
- vi. Database vendors' competition
- vii. People's reading habits are deteriorating as a result of the proliferation of television and the internet.

After setting the stage for the discussion, marketing ideas that are crucial to the successful promotion of library and information services will now be examined. The marketing concept is a philosophy which is essential to reaching objectives, identifying the needs of the target audience, and meeting those needs more effectively and efficiently than one's competitors are aware of or believe. The following actions must be performed to succeed in this regard:

Marketing Research

Chopra (2012) states that marketing research involves gathering a variety of data and actions required to manage a firm. He added that information about the transfer and sale of goods and services from producer to consumer is gathered, documented, and analysed as part of marketing research. The assertion that it is dangerous to assume that the products of an information or library service (ILS) do not need marketing. Another common assumption is that libraries are products and need to market; there is a lot of market research for the right product (Bakewell, 1997). Therefore, marketing should not only focus on the available service because some assessment is required to determine whether the service is effective and whether it is the best product to satisfy consumer demand. As a result, the focus should shift from providing services that are perceived as necessary to providing services that people desire. Successful and efficient marketing is important in the grand scheme of things because it offers analysed information and facts to help solve issues and make the best marketing choice at the right moment. Marketing concepts rely on marketing research to determine the market categories, their sizes, and their requirements. Thus, a plan may be developed using the marketing mix to meet the needs of the target audiences (NetMBA, 2010b).

The Marketing Mix

The four Ps (product, place, price, and promotion) are traditionally included in the marketing mix. The set of instruments available to influence sales is known as the marketing mix. In the era of information explosion, those instruments are crucial for the successful and efficient marketing of library and information services. The impact of product marketing on effective library and information services delivery has been thoroughly discussed.

Products: The term product refers to an item or service that is intended to meet the needs and desires of customers. Determining other goods or services that may be promoted alongside a product or service is crucial for successful marketing.

Place: Since product marketing is not in a vacuum, we must discuss place as a pertinent component of the marketing concept. Blakewell (1997) contends that maintaining operations within the ILS itself is insufficient; to retain current markets and draw in new ones, the services should be expanded and advertised. Additionally, Blakewell advises that internal communication should not be undervalued.

Pricing: The concept of pricing can present some challenges in the context of effectively and efficiently marketing library and information services, but not if price is linked to value. There is no doubt that the majority of library services are provided at no charge.

These services have some utility value that is not diminished by this. For this reason, Sirkin (1991) suggests that pricing free leaflets to communicate their value is one way to overcome the impression that 'free' must equate to shoddy. The result is dubious and unsettling, though, as no creation should be even vaguely considered subpar as subpar, work will not advance a service.

Promotion: Public relations, sales promotions, advertising, and personal selling are some of the methods used to educate consumers about the goods and services offered. A product is considered finished when consumers are aware of its existence, features and quality, and respond favourably to it. Demand cannot exist in the absence of knowledge. Product awareness, favourable attitudes, and purchasing decisions are made possible by promotion (Anttilla and Iitanem, 1993).

The promotion is only effective if the other components of the mix are taken into account. Regretfully, it appears to be the one component that is applied carelessly. To ensure that individuals are presented with accurate information, many services employ a variety of advertising strategies without any prior planning. The process of dividing the user base into more manageable, homogeneous groups is known as market segmentation. It is easier to determine the needs of each group and to customise services to satisfy those needs. The primary benefit that a sector is pursuing defines it (Cronin, 1992). Therefore, community profiling is the most common type of market research for ILS. Marketing research should determine what services a library would like to offer, rather than speculation or assumption.

How much is there for library services?

What amenities would be necessary?

Where would be the most useful?

How does the library function when it is open?

What impact would it have on the area's current libraries?

CONCLUSION

The review of effective marketing as a promotion tool for library and information services should note that marketing concepts are not ends in and of themselves; they are only a means to a goal in the effective and efficient marketing of library and information services. The dynamic character of the job and the fact that the armchair librarianship age is long gone, when selling information and library services was not the norm, are further aspects of modern evolution that librarians should accept. Promote yourself and your offering (knowledge as a commodity) or risk becoming extinct like the dinosaurs.

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