

MARKETING OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES – A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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Abstract : - *Marketing of library resources and services has become essential due to various reasons like budget cuts, decreasing users, availability of resources on the internet, rising cost of resources and competition from database vendors. The concept of marketing for the non-profit organization like libraries is always debated. But only recently the Libraries and other non-profit organization have become aware of the need of marketing. There is a need to find out way by which library resources can be marketed. In recent year's library marketing through social media is quite popular, similarly there is a need to prepare marketing strategy as well as the effective use of marketing techniques should be made to attain the goal of maximizing usage of library resources. A user study can help achieve the objectives of library marketing. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the practical approach through which library resources i.e. products and services can be marketed.*

Keywords: Marketing, non-profit, library resources, products, services.

1. Introduction

The concept of library as a not for profit organization is changing rapidly. Libraries are relatively new to the marketing concept. Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services is a relatively new concept in India and is in the primitive stage and very less literature is available in this discipline. Marketing approach is mainly useful to academic libraries so as to improve the image so that more numbers of

users can be attracted to use library resources (Patange, 2013). The concept of marketing for non-profit organization was introduced for the first time by Kotler and Levy in the year 1969. Later in the book *Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations*, Kotler (1982) elaborated the marketing strategies for organizations like libraries. According to him, library which is a not for profit organization is engaged in imparting services rather than producing goods (Jose and Bhat, 2007). The library is basically a non-profit

organization and in recent years only the need to market its resources and services to remain relevant has arisen. Library and Information products and services are now being recognized as saleable and there is a constant market for these (Kanaujiya, 2004).

2. Marketing of Library Resources and Services

Libraries store various knowledgeable resources; it's a treasure house of various knowledge resources like books, journals and magazines, manuscript, Audio Visual materials, etc which has a knowledge of eminent authors and writers. Conservation of this knowledge is primary task of all libraries and information centers but in recent years marketing of these resources has become essential due to under utilization of these resources. But with the advancement of information technology it has become easy to market the resources and services of the libraries and information centers through website on which all kind of material can be accessed with its bibliographic details and mechanism for promotion and marketing of services (Patil and Pradhan, 2014).

Traditionally libraries have been engaged in the marketing of library and information resources and services through display of new arrivals, exhibition, bulletins, user orientation programme, production and issuance of library guides, library week outreaches and other publicity programmes. These activities need to be carried out as promotional part of marketing. But with the recent

advancement in ICT (Information Communication Technology) which has brought competition in the information service delivery demands for an innovative approach for outreach activities till users for which the above traditional activities are not sufficient. Therefore more numbers of libraries are adopting social media tools to reach to users. Marketing is a process that involves systematic evaluation of users need and designing information products and services to satisfy the needs. Due to this there is a need of careful planning, analysis and identification of user's needs as well as choices available for meeting these needs.

Marketable Library and Information Products and Services include Reference Services, Referral Service, Circulation, Inter Library Loan, Selective Dissemination of Service (SDI), Current Awareness Service (CAS), Bibliography compilation, Indexing and Abstracting Service, Customized research and development, Reader's advisory, Databases and Information literacy services (Edewor et al., 2016).

3. Need of Marketing of Library Resources and Services

The need of Marketing of Library Resources and Services has arisen due to following reasons:

- To promote the use of available reading materials in the library and create awareness among the users.
- To optimize the use of information with limited resources and manpower.

- Limited Budget for library needs to market services and generate funds for library.
- To improve the image of the library.
- Due to the information explosion, readers require precise and correct information for their research and study.

Until and unless what is available in the library is communicated to the users it would remain in accessible and unutilized. The users remain unaware about the resources available in the libraries. Now a day's libraries are investing huge amount for purchasing reading materials and subscription to periodicals and online databases to fulfill the needs of their students, faculty members and research scholars. After investing such huge amount it should be put to maximum use. Libraries should think and work out cost benefit analysis of this investment. Therefore it is necessary to literate people about the services provided by the libraries and promotes its use (Kumar, 2015).

4. Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services

Library has many products and services in its storehouse which it can market. Each library first needs to do a study to find what can be marketed and the suitable mode through which it can be marketed. Marketing is not just about developing new products and services as well as only doing its promotion but marketing is dealt with bringing awareness about existing products and services to the library users. Marketing plan needs to be

developed and implemented with ongoing enhancement and products should follow.

Product – A Product is defined as something which a customer buys so as to lead the life or to solve the problem coming in day-to-day life. A product must be customer-oriented, capable of providing all the necessary benefits desired or expected by customers.

Service – A Service is any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is especially intangible and does not result in any ownership.

People – Experts, specialist, consultants, cataloguer, classifier, bibliographer, translator, abstractor, indexer.

Some of the most common Library and Information Services are as follows:

- i. Current Awareness Services – Traditional and Computerised
- ii. Selective Dissemination of Services – Manual and Computerised
- iii. Reference Service
- iv. Translation Service
- v. Document Delivery Service
- vi. Reprographic Service
- vii. Indexing and Abstracting Service
- viii. Referral Service
- ix. Information consolidation and repackaging and
- x. Online search service

Some of the most common Library and Information Products are as follows:

- i. Compilation of indexes and abstract
- ii. Profiles of specialist
- iii. Compilation of need based bibliographies
- iv. Current content files
- v. In-house generated information products
- vi. Catalogue (WebOPAC)
- vii. List of new arrivals
- viii. Bibliographies and
- ix. Library publications etc (Bhat, Kumar and Yusuf, 2016)

5. Library Marketing using Social Media

Social media tools have become a very attractive tool which allows the user to share information, communicate among the professionals; helps build relationship, sharing of pictures and videos etc. Libraries can smartly make use of different social media tools available for marketing of library resources and services. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Mebo, Myspace, WhatsApp etc are the most useful tools for information communication. Some of the examples of the academic social networks are Slideshare, Researchgate, Academia.edu and YouTube. Similarly Mendeley, Zotero, aNobi, Communitywalk, Google Scholar etc are the tools of which use can be made by the libraries to organize information of the academic library (Sahu, 2016).

Social media has the possibility of bringing much closer relationship between library and information centers and their clients wherever users are based, and how they chose to learn about

and access library services and resources. In the present scenario libraries are facing numerous challenges (Islam and Habiba, 2015).

Some of the social media tools which can be used for the marketing of library products and services are given below:

Facebook: Facebook is the one of the most popular Social Media tool for creating awareness about library resources and library marketing. Facebook is a popular and free social networking site which allows its registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues and nowadays organization accounts are also there on Facebook. Facebook can be used for marketing of library products and services in several ways. Through the Facebook page/account librarians can market its resources by drawing users' attention to useful hidden treasures of the library that library users have forgotten or are not aware of, such as grey literature. If time is limited Facebook can be populated via other platforms such as Twitter feedback, the library calendar, a library Blog. WebOPAC search can be embedded on the Facebook page for ease of library users access. Using Facebook user community can be made aware about all the library events and happenings by creating descriptive hashtags (e.g. #awesomelibraryevent!) that can be used on sites such as Twitter and Facebook and encourage people to attend and live Blogs or tweet. Facebook can also be useful for selecting suitable methods to evaluate the marketing success of

Social Media platforms. Gallardo (2013) suggests best practices for librarians' Facebook page: stay to the point, pin important posts to the top of your page, be casual and conversational, use images, post consistently, post the same types of content on the same day of the week, give fans access to exclusive information or content, find your optimal time to post, and take advantage of Insights.

Twitter: Twitter is the second most popular Social Media platform. It is micro-blogging website of real posts and all the posts are limited to 140 characters and it's very less. Twitter can be used to keep library staff and patrons updated on library's daily activities, for example, frequently updated library collections. Libraries can utilize this platform to type short messages or status updates. Twitter can create library service alerts. Often library users prefer Twitter to interact with librarians because Twitter is more influential than other Social Media platforms and what happens on Twitter does not stay on Twitter. For making it more distinguished, it is important to give it a personal touch. For instance, add pictures to your Twitter account page's wall paper. Set-up searches for your Twitter account to save and retrieve them quickly, e.g. set up a search on the name of your library, or set up a geo-locational search. If ever a human error occurs in posting a message, respond quickly and apologize seriously.

Blogs: Blogs are one of the oldest social media channels. A blog (also called a weblog or web log) is a website consisting of entries (also called

posts) appearing in reverse chronological order with the most recent entry appearing first (similar in format to a daily journal). They are popularly used in libraries to broadcast library news and market other library resources. The Blogs are an invaluable part of New York Public Libraries social content marketing, with librarians acting as internal advocates and most of the traffic coming from Google searches and Blogss serve as a point of entry for customer service. Potter (2013) suggests some quick ways to increase Blog engagement as: i. Put a number on it; ii. Ask a question either in the title of the post or at the end and give them a voice via the comments session; iii. Use the hashtag in the title. Every time someone tweets a link to it, a wider audience will be able to read it; iv. It is important to register the Blog; v. Make it infinitely sharable via Twitter, Facebook, email etc. (Potter, 2013). Librarians can also develop subject-specific Blogs and play a leading role in advocating the use of blogs for scholarly communication and commenting on research findings. Increasingly, libraries are using blogs for publishing library news and events; providing information about new acquisition; and, encouraging use of library services (Jain, 2013).

6. Library Marketing Strategies

Library marketing strategies can be applied by the libraries so as to improve the image and visibility of the libraries so as to attract more users to enable them to utilize the library materials and services. Library marketing strategies responds to changes from socio-cultural, political as well as

technological conditions of that particular time. With the recent boom of information technologies in the new millennium after the introduction of internet, library marketing faces new challenges, but at the same time offers new opportunities (Xia, 2009).

Marketing strategy according to Weits (1985) involves the allocation of resources to support firms in gaining a competitive advantage in a target market. It comprises dual-oriented, rational, emotional and maintenance marketing strategy. Product performance entails the degree of success of new products as well as the financial results of market competition which is reflected in profit or market share (Obasan, Ariyo and Hassan, 2015).

7. Library Marketing Techniques

Marketing plan needs to identify the promotional techniques best suited to the service, as well as the needs and preferences of the target audience in the media they are most likely to use. Not everyone acquires information in the same manner, similarly not all users can be reached with one promotional technique. A combination of multiple approaches for delivering the message are advisable but the message conveyed by each method needs to be consistent as perceived by users. Direct selling (Word-of-mouth or personal selling), print brochures, posters, giveaways, open house, workshops, library catalog, research guides/webliographies, newsletters, website, targeted e-mail, RSS feeds, course management systems, and advertising are some of the

techniques commonly used by libraries to promote their e-resources (Jotwani, 2014).

8. Conclusion

In recent years libraries have been facing various challenges which include cuts in the budget, availability of quick information on the internet and many other information sources due to which impact can be seen on library usage. The libraries are losing its importance. To remain relevant libraries need to market its resources using various practical based approaches. It is just not good enough to just become a store house but the library needs to market its resources as well. There is a need to formulate suitable marketing strategies also there is a need to use appropriate marketing techniques so as to convince the users to use the library resources.

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