

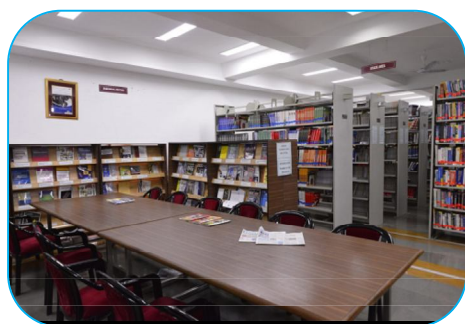


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MARKETING OF INFORMATION SERVICES IN AGRICULTURAL LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTERS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper deals with the marketing of library and information services in the agricultural libraries and information centres. It discusses about the marketing concept of today's library and information centers covering various topics such as concepts of marketing and types of concepts, Strategies of marketing, various segments, marketing of information and modern ICT based libraries.

It also discusses the services and products of the agricultural libraries and information centers the ultimate objective of the marketing of library and information services

should be the dissemination of the right information to the right customer (user) at the right time.

KEYWORDS: *Marketing of Information Service, Agricultural Libraries.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the information marketplace is under continual evolution. Two of the most powerful drivers of change in 'the new economy', information and communication technology and the internationalization of the marketplaces, are impacting even more strongly on the marketplace for information products and services than on other business sectors. All organizations in the information industry, irrespective of whether they are in the public or private sector, need to form new strategic alliances, identify new market segments, and

evolve new products and, in general, manage changing relationships between suppliers and customers. If organizations in the information marketplace are to survive and flourish, they need to be confident about their mission and role, and to be continually alert to technological, economic, political and social factors that are re-shaping the context in which they seek to serve users, contribute to communities, attract and retain customers, and establish and maintain relationship with other organizations.

2. MEANING OF MARKETING

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.

According to American marketing association (AMA) "Marketing is the performance of business activities that directs the flow of goods and services from the producer to the consumer or user".

According to Kotler (2006) "marketing means working with markets to actualize potential exchange for the purpose of satisfying human need and wants.

3. MARKETING CONCEPTS

Marketing concepts relate to the philosophy a business use to identify and fulfill the needs of its customers, benefiting both the customer and the company. Same philosophy cannot result in a gain to every business, hence different businesses use different marketing concepts (also called marketing management philosophies) marketing concept

can be categories into five levels.

3.1 The production concept

During the era of the production concept, businesses were concerned primarily with production, manufacturing, and efficiency issues. Companies that use the production concept have the belief that customers primarily want products that are affordable and accessible. The production concept is based on the approach that a company can increase supply as it decreases its costs. Moreover, the production concept highlights that a business can lower costs via mass production.

3.2 The product concept

This concept works on an assumption that customers prefer products of greater quality and price and availability doesn't influence their purchase decision. And so company develops a product of greater quality which usually turns out to be expensive.

3.3 The selling concept

The selling concept highlights that customers would buy a company's products only if the company were to sell these products aggressively. This philosophy doesn't include building relations with the customers. This means that repeated sales are rare, and customer satisfaction is not great.

3.4 The marketing concept

A company that believes in the marketing concept places the consumer at the center of the organization. All activities are geared towards the consumer. A business, aims to understand the needs and wants of a customer. It executes the marketing strategy according to market research beginning from product conception to sales.

3.5 The societal marketing concept

The societal marketing concept calls upon marketers to build social and ethical considerations into their marketing practices. They must balance and juggle the often conflicting criteria of company profits, consumer want satisfaction, and public interest.

4. WHY MARKETING OF INFORMATION?

Library and information products and services are now being recognized as commodities that can be sold, exchanged, lent, and transmitted. University libraries and information centers rely on their host organizations for operational costs. To gain some self sufficiency, university libraries and information centers think seriously about not only recovering the costs incurred but also making a profit through their services. Information marketing by university libraries and information centers in India is essential in order to:

- Promote the use of information resources;
- Create perception of need and there by create demand;
- Ensure the optimum use of information;
- Improve the image and status of the libraries and library professionals;
- Tackle the problems of rising costs of reading materials, journals, and databases;
- Cope with the information explosion;
- Introduce cutting-edge information technology system in library services;
- Balance shrinking funds;
- Save libraries from declining reader-support; and
- Uphold the dictum that information is power.
- The market of the university library consists of various segments;
- Academic staff members, who engage in teaching of various subject disciplines, conduct research, and maintain scholarly projects to develop their respective profession. Non-academic

staff and other people such as researchers, professionals and general public outside the university and information centers;;

- Needs, wants and demand of the library are centered on academic and educational requirements such as bibliographic information, textbooks, full text in digital formats, reference and reading space, information consultancy, and facilities for learning environment;
- Tools and facilities for entertainment, leisure and social activities;
- Information required for day to day life, know-how technology, and community information;
- Strengths and opportunities of university libraries and information centers;;
- Availability of resources collections covering various disciplines practiced in the university and information centers;
- Availability of professional staff with expertise in different subject areas and the paraprofessional staff to help with the dissemination of desired information;
- Possibility of obtaining funds under comprehensive project proposals;
- Infrastructure facilities and links with expertise; and Information skills of the staff.

5. STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING IN LIBRARIES

Product:	Information resources and research services.
Price:	Free to employees. In other words, company sponsored. This is particularly important in an R&D environment where research budgets are tight and the company may not realize Return on Investment (ROI) in a project for some time.
Place:	Not necessarily a physical location anymore. A strong web presence is necessary. Libraries are virtual as well as physical spaces now and the possibilities in both these worlds are endless.
Promotion:	Internal bulletins, e-mails, the company intranet, the library web site, newsletters and poster campaigns are all effective promotional vehicles for highlighting new tools and advertising events.
People (Staff):	Staff is relatively a new element in marketing mix as its importance for the Development of strategies has only recently been realized. It is difficult to achieve satisfactory exchanges with public without suitable staff. That is why marketing experts now talk about "internal marketing", emphasizing that the entire staff must be at all costs involved in the organization's marketing strategies.

- For the library to remain competitive, or even more fundamentally, to remain relevant, it has to change its image. It has to shed the image of a highly fortified storehouse of knowledge guarded by staff and security devices, a treasure house where the borrower is a nuisance or a potential thief. The new-age library ought to be a true service organization, a group of professionals who quickly identify in the vast ocean of knowledge the kind of information that different customers need and help them access it with the least waste of time and effort. A library that can survive and thrive in the Internet age is a knowledge-based social structure.

6. WHAT TO MARKET IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES?

The Information Services are the channels through which the agricultural information is disseminated and communicated to different users. The agricultural science university libraries have to provide various information services according to the needs of the users, library infrastructure, facilities available and technology.

Subbaiah" identified and explained the agricultural science university library services under the following heads: 1. Reference Services. 2. Loan Services (i.e. interlibrary loan facilities). 3. Documentation Services. These include: a) Abstracting b) Information concerning newly arrived literature c) Current awareness service d) Indexing e) Retrospective Information file f) Union lists. The

services provided by agricultural science university library, according to Shrimali^{^^} include: 81 General Services: These will include the longest possible of opening hours and the maximum of opening days; open shelves; classified cataloguing; departmental collections; reserved book, i.e., textbook collections, hostel libraries, browsing rooms etc. Orientation Services: These would comprise of, issuing to guide book for students and manuals for faculty and research workers; tour programmes for new comers and individual guidance in use of library tools for others; News bulletins, exhibits and displays; class instruction in use of library tools; new arrival lists etc. Special Services : These would be, reference service; readers advisory service; routing of periodicals; reading lists; preparation of bibliographies; indexing, abstracting, translations, supply of microfilm and Photostat copies, inter library loans; audio-visual services, provision of more copies of text books etc. Group Services: These would be conference with faculty to keep in touch with the curriculum; contacts with research workers to know about their research programmes etc. Extension (Mobile) Services: One of the important functions of an Agricultural Library is to bring the benefits of the scientific research to the masses particularly to the agriculturists in the rural areas.

The agricultural library has a definite role to play in this field. For this, the Agricultural library must organize a Mobile- library service to cater book needs of the village communities. A Librachine (Library Van) shall carry books on basic knowledge of agriculture, dairy, animal science, community development, social work etc and shall also be equipped with a projector to show films on agriculture, animal science, public hygiene, rural health and sanitation and community development etc. The mobile van shall have a regular programme of visiting places at appointed time when the village people shall borrow books and deposit them back.

In modern times, libraries are offering services by using latest Information Communication Technologies (ICT) viz via internet, web sites, alert service, face book, emails, whatsapp and so on with the intention of speedy and fast delivery of the information products.

7. CONCLUSION

The modern library is now generally called an information market and the library user is a consumer of information. Information is a vital resource for research and development of any nation. Marketing is essential in making the proper planning, designing and use of such services and products for the better and optimal use of information. The library should give priority to provide excellent customer service enhancing its image as information provider in the information era. The library and information services should be user (customer) oriented in order to satisfy their information needs effectively. Marketing of library and information services includes customer (users) priorities, expectations, individuality, responsiveness, relationship, quality of services, professional skills and competencies, value-added services, etc. The ultimate aim of marketing here is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time.

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