MARKETING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES
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ABSTRACT
Marketing of library and information services is a nascent development in our country. The paper discusses and emphasizes the need for the adoption of marketing approach by the university libraries to augment their financial resources and exploit new information technology to provide better information support to the users. Highlights the marketing concept and its various activities and how these activities can be successfully applied in the marketing of library and information products and services in university libraries. Also discusses on the problems in implementing marketing concept to library and information services. Provides various definitions of marketing. Suggests to promote marketing of library and information services in university libraries in view of the budgetary cuts by UGC and State governments.
Deals with method of designing services and products. Concludes that the marketing policy of the libraries needs careful planning, structuring, execution and evaluation with regular review.

INTRODUCTION
The marketing of information has been a popular topic in the library profession in recent years. But at the same time there has been much controversy regarding the concept of marketing in the library and information services profession. A great deal has been and is being written about 'marketing library services' and charging information services. There is still much resistance in the library and information services field to the use of 'marketing' approach to management. The information product and services are like customer product and services in many respect. But there is a reluctance on the part of librarians to employ marketing principles in libraries. Marketing as a concept and as a practice, still seems alien to many library and information personnel. Within the profession, there is a residual feeling that marketing is somehow inappropriate for a public service institution such as library. Some librarians still hold this view and see no room for such practice in a not-for-profit profession like librarianship.

Now it is high time to change our attitude. Marketing of information means transference of information to the potential user/customer. The marketing of information in the university libraries happens to be a recent phenomenon. In India, the universities are being funded by the UGC and state governments. This may be the reason that the information providers in the university libraries are not seriously thinking in terms of marketing their products and services. The university libraries until now depended upon common sense standards for the acquiring of information and disseminating of the same to the users. Their efforts in this direction can at best be described as casual or immature. The result is that information services provided by the
libraries have not proved very beneficial to the scholars. The libraries have failed to provide the required information support to the users because the services provided by them are often not user-oriented or need based. The reason for this sad state of affairs is that users are not involved in the design of services and they are not made aware of the potentialities of information services and how these services can benefit them in their pursuits. The result is that whatever services are available, remain either unutilised or underutilised. However, this state of affairs can be activated by adopting suitable marketing strategy.

The librarians in the university libraries can play a significant role in catering to the needs of different groups of the academic community - students, teachers and research scholars - for furthering their educational research. They are more responsive to their user's needs and wants and more effectively achieve the library goals and objectives. They are not fully exploiting the comparative advantages that they possess in comparison to private sector information agencies.

Rising prices of reading material, information explosion, introduction of new information technology, shrinking funds, devaluation of money, declining support to libraries have made it necessary for the university libraries to reconsider their position and to utilise some of the tools that have made it possible for profit organisations to operate efficiently, effectively and profitably. One of the tools which is appropriate is marketing their products and services.

Many librarians have their view that marketing products and services is not possible in the profession of librarianship. Philip Kotler is of the view that marketing is not limited to large corporations seeking profits only. It is equally applicable to non-profit organisations as well as colleges, universities, charitable institutions, libraries, information centres and service organisations of all kinds.

Marketing approach is very useful to university libraries to improve their image and to attract more users. No doubt, marketing helps the librarians to upgrade their reputation within their organisations and as a profession within the society.

DEFINITION OF ..........

Marketing is a process which carries goods from producers to ultimate consumers. Marketing, in its broader sense, is the social instrument through which the material goods and culture of a society are transmitted to its members. Marketing, in its library sense, refers to the instrument through which information (both raw and processed) are transmitted to its members. Kotler2 has rightly defined:

"Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the
purpose of achieving organisational objectives. It reties heavily on designing the organisation's offering in terms of target markets needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets."

In the words of Stanton3, "marketing is a total system of interacting business activities to plan, price, promote and distribute want satisfying products and services, and present to potential customers."

Dragon4 neatly defined the concept of marketing and outlined its major aspects as "follows. "Marketing is a systematic approach to planning and achieving desired exchange relations with other groups. Marketing is concerned with developing, maintaining, and/or regulating exchange relations involving products, services, organisations, persons, places or causes."

Zachert and Williamss considered that 'marketing is planning that focuses on products, ; place or mode of delivery, adjustment of cost/price to the market, and promotion to ! specifically targeted segments of the special librarian's market."

The above definitions call for various activities in marketing. They are :

1. Market research and customers' analysis
2. Development of products and services
3. Pricing
4. Distribution
5. Promotion
6. Evaluation of products and services.

All the above mentioned activities of marketing as applied to other industrial sectors are equally applicable in the area of information products and services. Whether it is for profit or non-profit sector, methods remain the same while the policy varies.

INFORMATION MARKETING IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN INDIA

It can be said that the concept of information marketing is still in a state of infancy in university libraries in India. Factors which characterize the difficulties of information marketing are :

(i) Lack of proper assessment of requirements, wants and needs of the users;
(ii) Casual approach in supplying information to the potential users;
(iii) Lack of perception of how much information services and products can contribute to boost research and development activity;
(iv) Lack of perception of the economic aspect of buying information on the part of
the user of information.

The recognition of information as a commodity or organisational resource is not very new in the developed countries. But the situation is different in a developing country like India. In the university environment, it still sounds strange to think of information as a marketable commodity. In the university, the main objective is the growth of knowledge and stimulation of research while in a market, the main objective is profit making.

To accelerate the pace of research and development, it looks imperative to find a confluence point of the academic and business approach to strike a balance between the two, so that the users can get the needy information for a payment and without wasting much of their precious time.

The following discussion highlights on how the market concept is applicable in the area of information services and products in university libraries.

1. Market Research and Customers' Analysis

Customers/users of university libraries are becoming increasingly demanding these days. Now they expect a wide choice, speedy delivery, easy access and a range of services such as 'access to an Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)', electronic information systems -including both bibliographic and full text services and microfilming facilities as well as more comprehensive and sophisticated information services provided by subject specialists, such as current awareness, in-depth enquiry and research services, and information skills programmes, besides the traditional ones. In response to users' demands and to support teaching and research programmes effectively, the university libraries are required to provide all these services. But before introducing any service, the libraries should have a much better understanding of users' needs and have closer liaison with them and a more proactive approach to identify the precise requirements of both groups and individuals, actual and potential users. For this they have to undertake the programmes of market research. These programmes should be concentrated around the users/customers and their information seeking behaviour. Users' study/users' need surveys should be conducted regularly to identify who the users/customers are, the services they want, their expectation from the library and the benefit they are seeking. All this will help in determining how well the needs and expectations of the users are met with by the existing products and services and how these can be met with more effectively by improving the existing ones or by developing the new ones.

2. Development of Products and Services

The products of the university libraries may range from books, periodicals, reports to electronic documents and services from traditional ones like circulation, inter library loan,
reference service to access to international databases, online searches and CD-ROM searches. Whatever the products and services of the library may be, these should be customer-oriented rather than product or service-oriented. The model of 'One-size fits all' has to be transformed into 'customized services' model.7 While designing the new products and services or redesigning the old ones, the librarians must keep in mind the users and their informational requirements, the existing infrastructural facilities available for the creation of products and services, technology to be used, library's strengths and weaknesses in terms of resources, personnel and areas of specialist expertise.

A new service I product can first be tested with few carefully chosen users I customers whose comments and suggestions may be taken into account in modifying the service I product, if necessary, before launching it more widely.

3. Pricing

Pricing of information services and products is one of the important aspects of marketing. It is relatively a new concept and is least applicable to marketing since library services are generally offered free of cost. It is the pricing area where libraries differ from industries. It is a debatable issue whether the information services and products in university libraries should be priced or not. There is still a widespread expectation that information services should be free. It is often argued that since university libraries are funded by the UGC, state governments etc. why should the end user be asked to pay?

But the situation is changing fast. The privatisation of education, budgetary cuts by the UGC and state governments, emphasis on accountability and self-sufficiency in relation to resources call forth the university libraries to generate their own resources and become indispensable sources of information and services. Moreover, the university libraries, now have to invest lot of money to use highly sophisticated gadgets of modern technology such as word processors, computers and telecommunication networks for information generation, processing and transmission. The building of database itself is a very costly affair. Therefore, information is no longer a free service if one wants instant, comprehensive, up-to-date and world-wide coverage of information. The plea for charging information products I services is that 'customers value what they pay for, and pay for what they value'.s Some of the information services such as photocopying, microfilming, inter-library loan in university libraries are rendered for some fee and many of the libraries have also started charging for specialised services such as computerised literature searches, Internet browsing, e-mail etc. For e.g. BHU library charges Rs.1 01- per hour for browsing Internet and Re.1/- per page for printing. The pricing policy9 may differ for various services and from segment to segment as under:

Cost recovery, by which the libraries cover only budgeted cost.
Commercial pricing, when the libraries make a profit.

Premium pricing, for a service which is in demand or of such high quality that the libraries are justified in asking customers to pay more.

4. Distribution:

Distribution pertains to dissemination of information through various channels. Traditionally, the users have to come to the library personally to receive or use the information, but due to the advent of information technology in university libraries especially the computers, telecommunications and networking have altered the picture altogether. Now the users can have access to remote sources of information. From marketing point of view, university libraries should go for computer based information storage and retrieval as it provides a better flexibility in access to information.

5. Promotion:

Promotion is another important factor in marketing. It involves mechanism by which target groups are informed about the resources available, services and products offered by the library. It is essentially 'the library reaching out to its customers, the humanisation of the market plan'. In university libraries, various methods can be used for promoting information services such as publicity through brochures, pamphlets, guides, journals, handbooks, public media, direct mail, demonstrations, exhibitions at conferences 1 seminars. Seetharama claimed that 'word of mouth' campaign is the best mechanism for promoting the use of libraries.

6. Evaluation of Products and Services

A marketing approach cannot be effective without evaluation. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing programmes to decide the continuance renovation 1 discontinuance of the products and services. The effectiveness of the products and services must be evaluated in relation to organisations' objectives, internal strengths and weaknesses and customers' satisfaction and demand. If any product or service is in no longer in demand or is difficult to provide with the available resources or costs too much to maintain in a competitive market, then such product or service should be abandoned. It is as important as introducing new product or service to meet the demands of the customers / users. Regular users' surveys enable the university libraries to review how well each service matches with customers' needs and expectations and plan the action required to correct any discrepancies.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing study it is concluded that market approach to information services and products is an endeavour to accelerate the services to provide the reserchers and scholars with
the required information support. The budget cuts and the advent of sophisticated technology in
the university libraries have opened up the new vistas for marketing information products and
services. If the university libraries fail to catchhold of the opportunities, the scene will be
captured by the commercial vendors. We know that the users do not mind paying for the
services if they are useful and provided at reasonable cost. Therefore, the marketing policy of
the university libraries needs 'careful planning, structuring, execution and evaluation with
regular review'.

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