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Marketing Orientation in Library and Information Services

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ABSTRACT: *Marketing has penetrated everywhere and even in information management. For a long, time some of us (librarians, records officers and managers and other information scientists) had for a long time enjoyed a supplier's market and lost interest in working for our customers and yet we want those customers to continue coming back and also want new customers to our market. We should always keep in mind that only the satisfied customers would come back and also lure six or more customers to our information centres. This article seeks to explore reasons that require marketing orientation in library and information services.*
Keywords: marketing, human and social needs, information management, information services, softy skills, client, information explosion, brand loyalty, information scientist.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The interest in marketing has tremendously increased over the past few decades in libraries like other service centres which include education, health, transportation, insurance and banking. Kotler (2001) posits that it is not enough to just satisfy the customer but to delight the customer. Marketing orientation in libraries and information services helps in management of libraries, commitment to customer satisfaction, understanding customers, welcoming customers again and again, growth and improving image.

II.   PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

The purpose of the article is to explore marking orientation in library and information services thereby bringing out its significance.

III.   THE MEANING OF MARKETING

There is often a great deal of misunderstanding about marketing. Some people consider marketing as advertising. To some, it is still primarily equipped with selling and the pursuit of sales, rather than customer satisfaction (Gupta, 2003). Advertising and selling are not marketing but are part of marketing. Marketing is the wide range of activities involved in making sure that you are continuing to meet the needs of your customers and getting value in return (McNamara, 2011). Various methods of market research are used to get information about market, target markets, customer's needs, competitors, market trends and customer satisfaction and expectations with products and service. Marketing is more than selling and advertising. Selling is the actual transaction of getting a product or service in the hands of your customers. Adverting is persuading people to go for a product or service. The selling, transporting, and manipulating of information have become a huge business. Some libraries are reluctant or ignorant to make the change necessary to focus on the market place, even the need for effective marketing is generally not really applied.

Marketing is a management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements and profitability. (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2000). The definition shows that management must be totally involved in what the company is producing and selling, to whom, why and whether it will be a business success or not. As a marketer, you are portrayed as a facilitator helping individuals to satisfy their needs and the firm to create its goals.

IV.   MARKETING CONCEPT

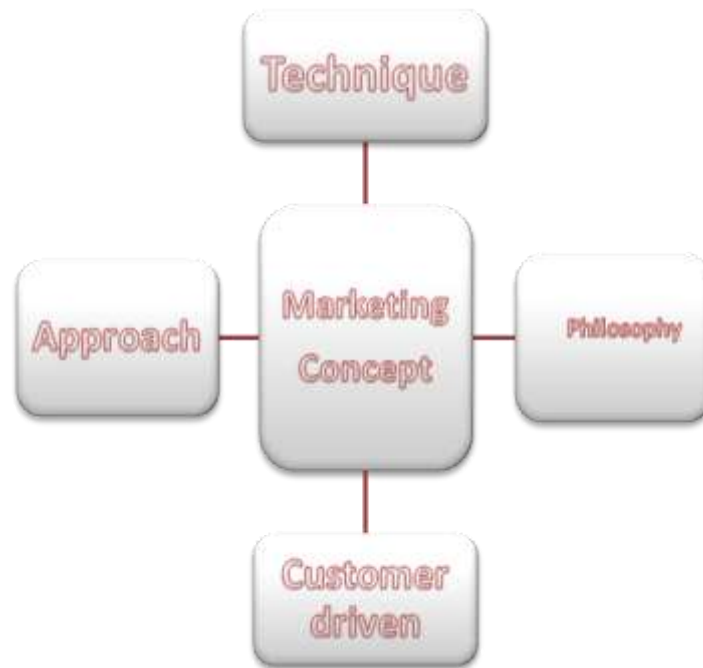Marketing concept incorporate marketing as a set of techniques, approach, philosophy and customer driven.

Figure 1: Marketing Concept

4.1 Marketing as a set of techniques

Marketing is viewed as a set of techniques involving a number of processes. Libraries and information centres that embraces the marketing concept try to provide products and services that satisfy customers' needs through a coordinated set of activities and that also allows them to achieve their goals (Dibb et al, 1994). The key activities of such concept are:

- An assessment of which the customers are, the services they want and the benefits they are looking for,
- Analysis of the library's strengths and weaknesses of competition,
- Understanding what the real differences between libraries,
- A practical action plan which draws on this understanding of the market place and sets out measurable action to achieve the current objectives.

4.2 Marketing as a Philosophy

It was less than three decades ago that marketing came into the field of library and information services as thinking and orienting library and information services business and information services in marketing term. Integration of marketing into library philosophy is helpful in reinforcing and reiterating the basic values of the profession in a changing environment. It implies commitment to shared professional beliefs. Marketing should first of all be an attitude of mind. The most widely agreed beliefs are about library services 'to access the right information to the right user at the right time". This also supports Ranganathan (1957)'s laws of library services which include saving time of the reader and each user having his/her reading material.

4.3 Marketing as an Approach

There are exploited symbolic dimensions to human and physical resources while serving the user. In this approach everything, human skills, service, attitude and information resources are put more closely to serve the customers' information needs. Kotler (2005:158) posits that "today you have to run very fast to stay in the same place". Ranganathan (1961)'s "service trinity" has great relevance with such approach in the case of libraries Ranganathan consider:

- Users which are the customers or more appropriate clients,
- The staff (service providers),
- The information resources and system which include different types of material, systems, and procedures have greater relationship with each other in library.

4.4 Customer-Driven Marketing

Philosophically users are the main central entity in every type of libraries. Customers are the main part of the service sector. We need to incorporate elements of client or customer-centredness in our approaches to serve users. Library users also expert recognition, attention and appreciation for their individual needs and desire for self-expression. Libraries should concentrate more in developing customer orientation in every operation of the organisation. Their focus should be on distinctive competitive competencies, value delivery, customer defined quality, relationship management and a customer defined quality, relationship management and customer focused organisational culture.

V.   REASONS REQUIRING MARKETING ORIENTATION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The following are some of the reasons why marking orientation is of significance to library and information services:

5.1 Effective and efficient Management of Libraries
The information explosion at global level would make libraries without marketing orientation a challenge. Mutongi and Chiwanza (2016) proffer that we are now living in the information society and global village of which we are bombarded with huge sums of information which is not all relevant to us. It is therefore imperative to consider marketing as a skill in curbing the information explosion. In this way we will be able to acquire what the clients need, store and disseminate the right information to the right clients at the right time. Marketing helps in anticipating, identifying and satisfying the client's needs efficiently and effectively. Keiser and Galvin (1995) aver that the world in which libraries exist has changed dramatically. It moves faster, relies on technology and competes more intensely. Fearful that change may threaten our existence, we must look to marketing to help us manage better.

5.2 Commitment to Customer Satisfaction
In particular to library services areas, the clients include fund providers, patrons, employees, employers. As such, satisfaction of the customer is of primary concern in the marketing process and the entire ethos and shared values of the organisation owe the responsibility of satisfying the customer. Indeed the 'customer is the king'. The increased customer satisfaction will result in the increased willingness to use and pay for the services offered. Hence, the customer's satisfaction has a direct link with the support we get for the library and information services. Roper and Williams (1999: 84) come out with some the following ways of handling customers:

- **Show interest**- For example, call customers by name and let them know that you are listening; give them your name too. Always treat customers with respect.
- **Show empathy with customers-**Imagine how you would feel in their position.
- **Admit the problem**, if there is one. Be sure to say that 'we' made the mistake, rather than 'I' or 'they', and apologise for any inconvenience caused.
- **Do not assign blame** (to the computer, the mail room, and so on). Customers do not care whose fault it was; they just want a solution.

There is also need to consider the internal customers who are the employees. Failure to satisfy and delight them would result is the failure to achieve the business goals and objectives. There is therefore need to instil soft skills which will be of the benefit to both the internal and external customer. Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects. Hard skills are about a person's skill set and ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable. The soft skills and hard skill if incorporated will bring out efficiency and effectiveness in marketing.

5.3 Understanding Customers
The most important role of marketing in library and information centre is to find information products and services needed by the customers. We must always remember no library owns its users to the extent that it determines their likes and dislikes. We must pay attention to users' requirement and preferences.

5.4 Growth of Libraries
As propounded by Ranganathan (1957) a library is a "growing organism". Due to global information explosion, libraries are bombarded by more information that comes in a second. Today's information can be old information for tomorrow. Today's information might be tomorrow's ignorance.

5.5 Welcome again and again
We should deal with a smile to the user. We should give positive attitude and favourable relationships with users. The users will come again only if their present needs are well met and in meeting the information needs of users marketing attitude plays a vital role.

5.6 Improving our image

Marketing orientation results in the improvement of our image. This leads to customer and brand loyalty. A good reputation may involve cordial relations with the community, good facilities, high service standard, discipline as such marketing efforts helps us in improving our image improved services.

VI.   CONCLUSION

Marketing should be wholly practiced in libraries and information services so as to bring the right information products and services to the right clientele at the right time and place therefore satisfying and delighting the customer. A delighted customer will always lure other customers to the library market, Marketing has its significance in library and information services in the effective and efficient information management, growth of libraries, improvement of our image and brand and above all meeting and satisfying the customer's needs better.

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Bio-data

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