

Competence and Attitude of Librarians in Marketing Library and Information Services

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Abstract

This study looks into librarians' knowledge and attitudes toward marketing library and information services. The article looked at different approaches taken by authors in the field of library and information management. The study was guided by empirical studies of previous related articles. Marketing in libraries, competencies required for librarians to market library services, librarian attitudes toward marketing, library marketing plan, library marketing tools, promotion of library services, library marketing strategies, and challenges of marketing library and information services were all thoroughly considered. Librarians must therefore accept the responsibility of marketing products and services to their target audiences. There is a need for librarians to make better use of their knowledge, wealth of experience, and services by introducing new innovations into the library. As a result, this paper investigates the various competencies and attitudes that librarians require for marketing in order to achieve library goals and objectives.

Keywords: Library Marketing, Librarians' Competency, Attitude, Information Services

Introduction

Libraries provide enabling services to their users in order to meet demands for easily accessible information. Information is the foundation of every library operation, and it is seen as the only selling commodity that users return after purchasing without a refund. Information provision and services are required to provide users with the resources they require for learning, development, and research. According to the Reference and User Service Association (2011), librarians must be aware of their users' behavior and needs in order to effectively meet their information needs.

Information is seen as a variable that is required at all stages of human existence, and librarians' attitudes toward information provision and dissemination are critical for meeting users'

informational demands. The majority of patrons regard the library as a symbol, a safe haven in an unfamiliar environment where they can obtain important information (Akinade and Akinola, 2022). This mindset may have an impact on the ability to strategize the best possible ways to educate and market information products and services to users who find library use acceptable and satisfying. However, librarians must develop competency-based skills and understand the concept of marketing (Kavulya 2004).

According to the Special Libraries Association, competencies are "a combination of skills, knowledge, and behaviors critical for organizational success, personal performance, and career development" (1998). Competencies are required in any field of endeavor, whether to perform daily routines or to interact with organization staff and, especially, the clientele that the organization is meant to serve. Librarians, on the other hand, are trained professionals in the field of library and information science, with the goal of acquiring the competencies and skills needed to engage in routines and marketing of library products and services. Librarian competencies include knowledge acquisition in the fields of information resources, information access, technology, management, and research, as well as the ability to apply that knowledge as a foundation for providing library and information services. Because of the librarians' marketing expertise, the library should become more dynamic, facilitating service delivery and user satisfaction while also making access more convenient. The purpose of this paper is to list some of the skills required by a librarian to promote libraries and information services. It also seeks to clarify the roles of marketing in assisting libraries in meeting their goals and objectives.

Marketing in Libraries

Marketing a library's services is an important aspect of its operation. Renborg (1997) gave a presentation on "Marketing library services, titled how it all began" at the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) annual conference in 1997. According to this paper, the history and concept of marketing library services can be traced back more than a century. The first public relations course for libraries was held in 1963 at Columbia University in New York. Public relations planning in libraries took time to become ingrained in culture (Renborg, 1997). Earlier in 1995, Bushing stated that "marketing can help libraries decide their future and identify quality products-services, programs, and materials" (Nims, 1999).

Marketing in the context of a library refers to the tools used to communicate information to users. It is the duty and obligation of librarians to regard users as executive patrons of the library. Because libraries' intentions are to achieve a common goal and objective, strategies that will ensure users continue to use their services on a regular basis are required. In addition,

librarians must take steps to make information available and meet user needs.

Marketing in libraries, according to Shontz, Parker, and Parker (2004) is "a purposeful group of activities that foster constructive and responsive interchange between providers of library and information services and their actual and potential users." In their research on the global marketing of library and information services: the modern library is now commonly referred to as an information market, with the library user serving as the library's information consumer or customer. Libraries are implementing new ideas to make services more effective for their end users, and marketing library information products and services is critical in any library service. They provide their customers with services such as cyber cafes, mega-bookstores, online book dealers, an internet community, and consulting services. According to Gupta (2006), the focus of marketing for libraries and information services should be on relationship marketing, internal marketing, branding, customer loyalty, internet marketing, network marketing, and so on. Librarians have used marketing to sell their products to users in order to increase patronage and utilization of their services. Librarians who market their products have an advantage in a competitive environment and will continue to exist in the future.

Marketing knowledge, according to Snoj and Petermanec (2001), is beneficial to libraries because an effective marketing program can help the library create a competitive advantage by

1. developing new services or changing existing ones to better satisfy their users;
2. improving their organizational status and image to various stakeholders; and thus
3. improve overall performance

Library service marketing competences required of librarians

According to Chandra (2011), competency is the key to overcoming developmental challenges in the corporate world. Every individual's or institution's success is determined by their level of competency. The European Parliament Council (2008) defines competency as the set of knowledge and skills that allow an employee to easily orient in a working field and solve problems related to their professional roles. According to Marshal *et al.* (2003), there are two kinds of competencies: professional competencies and personal competencies. He went on to say that professional competencies are related to the librarian's knowledge of resources, information access, technology, management, and research. It also includes the ability to use these areas of knowledge as a foundation for providing library and information services. Personal competencies, on the other hand, represent a set of skills, attitudes, and values that enable librarians to work efficiently, be good communicators, focus on continuing learning throughout their careers, demonstrate the value-added nature of their contributions, and survive in the new world of work.

Marketing has been identified as an important area of competency for library and information professionals. Chandra (2011) identified the significant impact of librarians' marketing competency. They are:

- I. Transparency and dynamism in library administration.
- II. Closer and positive relations.
- III. Innovation in library and information services.
- IV. Effective team work
- V. Enhanced self confidence among library's professionals.
- VI. Flexibility and adaptability in attitude.
- VII. Increased strong interpersonal relations.
- VIII. Organizational development.
- IX. Quality based library and information services

According to Pearson (2009), competency distinguishes a professional librarian from a para-professional. Librarians are expected to be competent in library services and management, marketing strategy and planning, and one of the key areas in which librarians are expected to be competent is good communication skills. Schmidt (2011) stated that administrators must ensure that all library staff are able to communicate effectively with their users in order to ensure that all staff are competent in marketing library services. Library management should ensure that training and personal development are implemented as a means of improving librarian competency.

Farkas (2011) outlines the following levels of competence that a librarian must have in order to market library services.

1. Project management abilities: Librarians must be able to plan, organize, and carry out existing and new projects.
2. The ability to question and assess library services.
3. Assess the requirements of all stakeholders. Librarians must understand how libraries provide services as well as the impact of stakeholders.
4. A vision for transforming traditional library services into an online medium.
5. Knowledge of critical technologies and the ability to compare them.

Librarians should be able to compare different versions of software to determine which will best meet the needs of their patrons. The ability to sell concepts or library services. To be a librarian, you must have excellent marketing and sales skills.

To summarize, marketing library services is all about providing users with more effective and efficient services. Marketing necessitates a set of skills and characteristics that librarians should strive to possess.

Librarians' Attitudes toward Marketing

Although understanding or observing the attitude of librarians is a difficult task in any organization. Estall and Stephens examined the factors influencing the attitudes of 54 respondents at three UK universities and compared their findings to previous research in this area. An online questionnaire was sent to the library management of 16 UK universities. They used a Likert scale to assess participants' attitudes toward pro-marketing, anti-marketing, marketing knowledge, extroversion, and resistance to change statements. Following-up interviews were conducted at the same three academic libraries to assess the current state of marketing. It appeared that all of the library staff, regardless of age, had a very positive attitude toward marketing. The respondents aged 55-65 and those with more than 20 years of experience have the most positive attitudes. However, the percentage of marketing training that is complete is not very high. Furthermore, the researchers discovered that respondents with lower levels of resistance to change tended to have higher levels of extroversion and a more positive attitude toward marketing. Furthermore, Estall and Stephens developed a new model of marketing strategy implementation in academic libraries, indicating a positive relationship between openness to change, extroversion, and attitudes toward marketing (Estall and Stephens, 2011).

Singh conducted a similar study to investigate the relationship between librarians' marketing attitudes and behavior in 33 different libraries in Finland. The semi-structured interview was selected as the data collection method. The participants were divided into three groups based on the data analysis results: strong, medium, and weak market oriented libraries. According to the findings of the study, there is a positive relationship between marketing attitudes and behavior. However, it also indicated that there may be exceptions when marketing attitudes and behavior are in conflict with one another. Furthermore, the findings indicated that a positive marketing attitude of library leadership is required for library market-oriented behavior.

Ranger investigated the Oberlin Group's attitude toward marketing in academic libraries. Similar to the previous studies, these respondents have very positive attitudes toward marketing their libraries, services, and resources (Ranger, 2007).

Aharony took a different approach; the study sought to investigate the attitudes of school, academic, and public librarians toward marketing libraries. The questionnaires were completed by 160 people. Personal characteristics such as empowerment, extroversion, and resistance to change were found to have a positive correlation with attitudes toward marketing libraries. Furthermore, the outcome assumed that in today's information age, librarians should be empowered, decisive, and less introverted in order to survive, market their libraries, and justify their professional position. Furthermore, the findings emphasized the idea that librarians should be exposed to marketing concepts in order to comprehend the importance of marketing and its implications for the survival of libraries in the twenty-first century (Aharony, 2009).

Library Marketing Plan

The essence of marketing is determining what users want and meeting those needs. To use these effectively, librarians must first understand the marketing functions involved, such as market research and analysis, service planning, and promotion. According to Jestin and Parameswari (2002), planning is the marketing activity concerned with developing a product that satisfies customers. The market plan is the actual process of determining the library's business goals and objectives, as well as how to achieve them.

According to Nicholas (1998), the marketing plan is the tool that will ensure that library services and products are viewed in a focused and clear manner. The market plan is based on information gathered from marketing activities or research, the conclusions of which should be summarized and stated. Marketing actions must be effective when they are planned and coordinated.

In an article titled "objectives of the college and school library," John Dean (1969) discussed the role of the college and school library in promoting education for the nation. He stated that the primary goal in determining the design of any library service is to analyze the needs of the clientele and provide for their satisfaction to the extent that resources allow. According to him, a large variety of materials comprise the library product, and the library provides goods that are either tangible (e.g., books and internet access) or intangible (e.g. personnel assistance or value of the library as the premier community institution).

Farkas (2006) stated that there are numerous things librarians can do to improve services. He suggested that the first step be to rethink all of their policies and services. It is also critical for libraries to determine whether or not their mission and objectives have been met. Rowley (1997) argued that libraries should begin by aligning their mission statement and subsequent goals and objectives of their services with a strong customer orientation. He stated that this can be accomplished by devising strategies to aid in the completion of their mission.

However, one of the goals of any librarian during market planning is to understand the specific purpose and mission of the library. These are some examples:

- a. Marketing process by examining the library's mission or purpose
- b. Assess library capability with a marketing audit, an internal assessment.
- c. Find out what products (services) your users want, and how they perceived the library, through market research.
- d. Develop goals and objectives based on your mission and the results of your internal audit and external research into what customers want.
- e. To meet goals, select strategies to promote your products that will work best, be affordable, and reach your customers.
- f. Create a plan of action that describes all the steps needed to carry out the strategies for meeting goals.
- g. Evaluate how well you have done.

In addition, Jestin and Parameswari (2002), in their management approach, highlighted the important things librarians must be aware of during marketing. They are as follows:

1. Who should be the user group?
2. To whom the information services or products should be targeted?
3. What should be the services or products that can be produced and marketed to the different target groups?

It is also recommended that marketing plans be revised on a regular basis in light of new information, goals, aspirations, and service enhancements.

Tools of Library Marketing

In this age, libraries must use a variety of marketing techniques to increase library patronage and frequency of access by users. Among them are:

1. Networking with community leaders
2. Meetings with local government to plan for the library's support
3. Focus group with targeted library users to learn more about their needs
4. Partnering with the media to learn how to generate effective publicity for the library
5. Using library and community web pages to communicate about the library's hours and services
6. Using internal publishing for newsletters, flyers, brochures, bookmarks.

Some tools are also required for library marketing. These are some examples:

- i. Marketing with the media
- ii. Newsworthiness
- iii. The Local Newspaper
- iv. Flyers
- v. Brochures
- vi. Newsletters
- vii. Marketing through Electronic Information
- viii. Library Homepages
- ix. Group Meetings, and
- x. Community Fund-Raising.

Library Service Promotion

Promotion in libraries stimulates demand for services and increases library patronage. Marketing in a library setting has been viewed from various angles. For example, Ravichandran and Babu (2008) define marketing of library services as the process of planning, pricing, promoting, and

distributing library products in order to create exchanges that satisfy both the library and the clientele.

Most importantly, it is a means of informing library users about the services provided and how they can be used. According to Nicholas (1998), the benefits of promoting library services include increased usage, increased value in the organization, user education, and changed perceptions.

According to Jestin and Parameswari (2002), questions to consider regarding promotion include:

1. To whom is the promotional materials directed?
2. What is the message?
3. What promotional mechanisms are available?
4. What points are to be considered in the design of a promotional package?
5. What is the role of the library staff in the promotional activities?

Furthermore, promoting library and information products and services entails three distinct elements, all of which serve to facilitate communication between the library and its target market.

1. Public relations; informing users and members of the public about the availability of library materials.
2. Advertising; libraries use this medium by collaborating with advertising agencies and assisting them in informing the public about the importance of libraries and how to access available materials.
3. Incentives; through promotion, libraries provide their users with free or discounted services.

However, promotional plan emerges from the marketing plan. These plans are concerned with achieving the library's forecasted objectives and mission. They include a description of the service that requires publicity, a description of the audience for whom publicity is intended, details of the campaign method to be used, including the type of publicity to be used and the method of distribution, campaign execution, and campaign performance analysis.

Questions that need to be kept in mind when deciding what medium to use to reach the market. They are:

1. Will it reach the target market?
2. Will the market be receptive to the message?
3. Can the organization develop or create the type of media to carry the message?
4. Can the organization afford the cost?
5. Can the selected media get the message out in a timely manner?
6. Is there any possibility that the choice of media would have negative consequences?

Marketing Strategies of Libraries

Nwegbu (2005) defines library marketing as "designing and presenting library books and non-book materials in terms of the needs and desires of the library's users, and using effective techniques to motivate, inform, and service the library's present and potential clientele."

Librarians must use a variety of methods and techniques in the library to fit into the market strategy of attracting more users. According to Olalokun and Zaid (2006), displaying library materials to users is a powerful way of advertising the services and educational values of the institution in general, and the library in particular. As a result, successful marketing includes the art of deciding which techniques to employ in various situations. According to Jestin and Parameswari (2002), the proper and active use of marketing techniques allows for the creation of a market. They propose that increasing current sales volume can create a market, that creating a market can mean waking up a sleeping market, and that creating a market can imply creating a demand that did not previously exist.

The primary goal of marketing libraries is to face a four-pronged challenge.

1. An increase in clientele, variety, demands, and expectations.
2. An increase in the initial or capital cost of information and information technology, as well as the need to leverage technology and find new levels of economies of scale in order to serve the growing potential clientele.
3. In the event that public sponsorship and subsidy are no longer available, an alternative source of revenue must be found.
4. Complexity in identifying clients and their needs, as well as in servicing them.

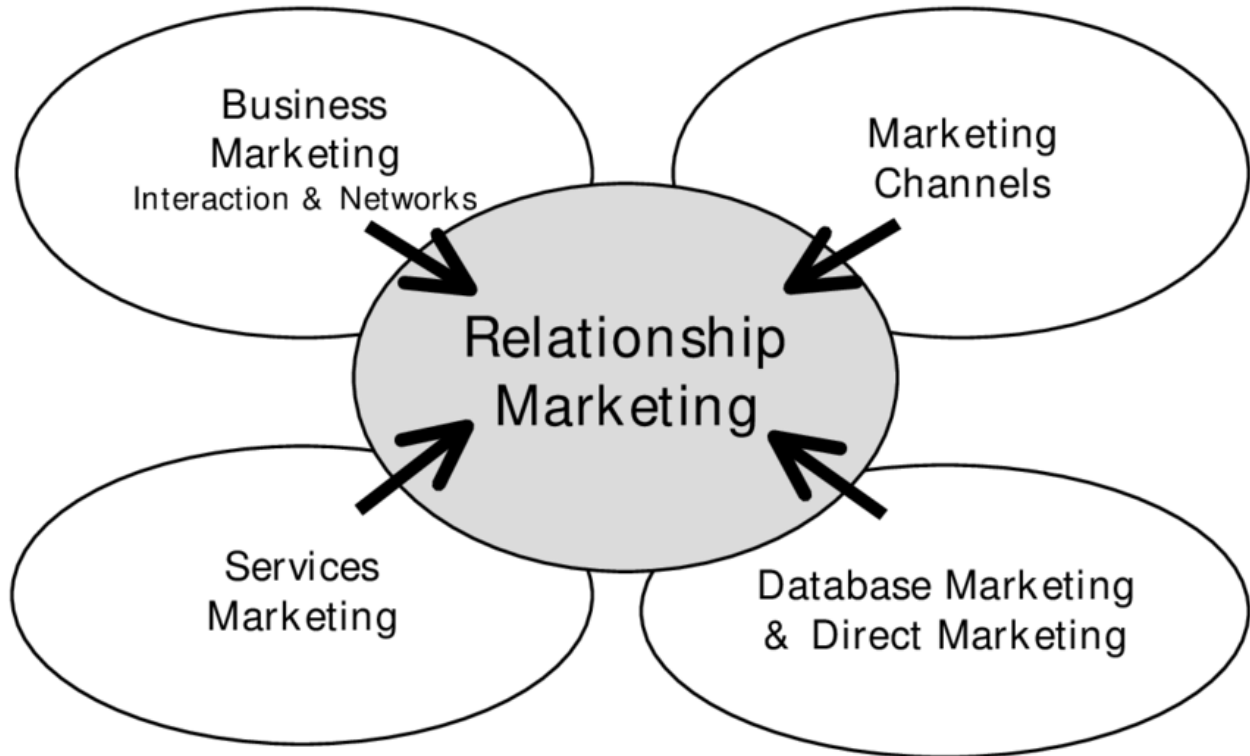
Marketing-minded librarians should ask themselves fundamental questions about their service users on a regular basis, such as: who they are, what they need, why they need, why they need something, how they need it, why they choose this service over competitors', what components of the service are important to them, how satisfied the users are with these components, what is the value of the components to them, and which factors influence their evaluation and selection (Rowley, 1998).

Kumber (2004) (2004) He stated that some librarians were not competent in marketing library services due to a lack of marketing training and education. He went on to say that while marketing is more widely discussed and accepted professionally than in the past, this acceptance has not necessarily resulted in more marketing classes in library school curriculum.

Furthermore, Savard (1998) asserted that if marketing principles are to be adopted by librarians, information specialists who are already in the field must be trained.

Theoretical Framework

The Relationship Marketing Theory



The Relationship Marketing Theory

Evert Gummert devised this theory. It is a type of marketing that emerged in the 1980s after evolving from direct response marketing in the 1960s. Relationship marketing is a type of marketing that focuses on developing long-term relationships with customers rather than single transactions. It entails comprehending the needs of customers as they progress through their life cycles. It focuses on offering a variety of products or services to existing customers as and when they are required. (Hurt, 1999).

According to Olotu (2010), the origins of relationship marketing can be traced back to the pre-industrial or medieval period when direct marketing was the norm, the industrial era, which refers to the period of the industrial revolution that gave rise to mass production and mass consumption of goods and services, and the post-industrial era, which saw a shift in marketing practices from transaction orientation to relationship marketing.

Challenges of Marketing Library and Information Services

According to Ajileye (2004), the most difficult challenge for librarians is presenting a positive image to users. Most librarians do not treat their users as library guests. They regard them as unimportant to the library's needs. According to Akintunde (2006), many libraries in Nigeria continue to operate in the traditional service pattern, with librarians in charge of main service points such as circulation, reference, serial, acquisition and cataloguing, and so on, with no emphasis on information technology.

Furthermore, after analyzing the challenges that the academic library may face, Ranger recommended that the academic library be marketed as a service rather than a product. Participants in her case study mentioned several challenges the academic library was facing, such as more diverse space for the library collections, student expectations, the decreased budget causing a financial challenge, the physical facilities provided by the library, the information management system, and even the generation gap between the 60s, 70s, and next generation (Ranger, 2007).

Conclusion

Marketing library and information services is essential in any library, especially academic libraries, in order to achieve the goals and objectives of their establishment.

The knowledge and skills acquired through workshops, conferences, and formal education are the most commonly used marketing competencies and attitudes by librarians in marketing library services. However, in order to successfully market library services, librarians must be professional in answering users' questions and have the ability to evaluate the services they provide.

The government and library owners should provide funds to facilitate the implementation of marketing strategies in libraries.

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