

Impact of Modern Information Communication Technology on Marketing of Library Services

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Abstract

The analysis of information technology has important implications for marketing in the identification of a library's competitive position. This paper demonstrates that effective use of Information communication Technology (ICT) will enhance the current operations of university library and assist the library users to carry out their various activities in the library. The prime objective of this paper is to examine the potential impact of Information technology on library management for the purpose of marketing University library and library services.

The paper concludes that Information technology and marketing are relatively new strategic weapons for libraries. The results show that information communication technology will assist university library strategically for competitive advantage, operational efficiency and help users to cope with the technological changes.

Introduction

The effectiveness of management of library information is accomplished by a combination of basic management functions, roles and skill. The fundamental structural change caused by information technologies not only affects the technical services of libraries but also shapes the library services that are being offered to the public. Libraries are possibly faced with a much more dangerous kind of competition than the one customary among direct competitors: the substitution competition caused by new information technologies.

Information technology (IT) is a strategic resource that facilitates major changes in competitive behaviour, marketing and customer service. In essence, IT enables a firm to achieve competitive advantages. Information technology is a resource that links the "marketing orientation" and "technology exploitation" of an organization, which clearly has to be harnessed and managed correctly (Barnes, 1993; Clear and Votel, 1990; Oasis, 1989).

Management skills are needed when dealing with all types of organized activities and all types of organization indeed, managing a library requires similar management skills to managing a football team or a large local government authority. Libraries are social institutions, created to conserve knowledge; preserve the cultural heritage; provide information and underpin education and research; and to serve as fountains of recreation. Recently, libraries are conceived not as archives or reading- rooms, but as "the foyer of living ideas that permeate and animate all aspects of national life. Thus from the foregoing, the prime objective of this paper is to examine the potential impact of Information technology on library management for the purpose of marketing library services.

Theoretical Framework

A library management system is a significant investment for library. Hitherto, the literature of librarianship was full of articles on library administration. Library schools also had courses on library administration only. However, now things have changed, librarians have changed and decided to move with the times and so we now have management courses taught in library schools and management principle practiced in libraries. Library job nomenclature hardly has the word “manager” attached to any post, at least not in our immediate environment, management positions do exist. The people who are placed in such positions invariably apply management principles and practice in their work. In the university library, Head of Administrations, Head of Sections, and even shift heads are not management positions. Evan (1976) said that the profit and loss statement does not exist for library; but the need for good managerial skills is just as critical in the library as it is in a profit making organization. Alternatively, the university administration may view the library as just a quaint repository for books and a provider of quiet study space whose role as a primary information provider has been superseded by the Internet (Hawkins, 2001, Stone, 2002).

Librarians and information specialists now argue that to ensure a prominent position within the future world of academia, library faculty must market their skills, services and resources (Brunsdale, 2000; Dodsworth, 1998). Without effective ongoing public relations, academic libraries may appear less relevant and less necessary to future generations of students, faculty and administrators.

Promoting Library Marketing in a University

Library marketing efforts appeared to have no discernible impact on the circulation of library materials. There is need for marketing of library instruction in this university and promotion of library instruction through the faculty and university’s newsletter. During the last 50 years interest in marketing theory and practice has been steadily increasing. This interest has deepened because of the popularisation of the term "marketing" and greater expansion and sophistication in its practical use. Consumers' choices have become a major concern for business organisations and meeting consumers' needs is now considered the main objective of enterprises. The realisation of the importance of consumers' dictates has eased the path towards the marketing concept and market orientation.

An effective marketing program requires the devotion of energetic planners and participants. Significant employee work hours must be focused on the development and execution of each new marketing initiative. Effort is the price that must be paid for successful library promotion.

The Changing Role of Marketing in University Library

Libraries are limited in their ability to perform their traditional role effectively, due to equipment with insufficient information technology. Many libraries consider technology as a route for service quality improvement, while others consider it as a cost-effective expansion strategy. Whatever the underlying strategy, nobody questions the importance of understanding the patterns of technology adoption by university libraries. The management approach to the study of marketing can be traced to such concepts as the marketing concept, marketing mix, product life cycle and market segmentation.

According to Moller (1994) this management approach can be characterized as trying to solve the problem of "how to develop an optimal marketing mix consisting of Product, Place, Price and Promotion solutions for the competing preferences of a chosen target segment of consumers, households or organizational buyers". The concept of the marketing mix focuses on the need for marketing managers to view the marketing task as the process of mixing or integrating several different functions simultaneously Sheth, Gardner and Garrett (1988). This management approach evolved in the 1950s and 1960s, when marketing management became a widely accepted business function, growing out of the more traditional sales management approach. Marketing is responsible for more than sales - it is the management function responsible for making sure that every aspect of the business is focused on delivering superior value to customers in the competitive marketplace, Webster (1992).

Marketing and Management Information Systems and Strategic Plans

The best place to launch a less stressful marketing campaign would be from within the library strategic plan. The goals of a marketing plan would reflect the goals of the library through alignment with the library strategic plan. One means of reducing the burden of increased marketing might be to focus only on those areas of highest priority. Thus a library marketing committee or team would be all the more likely to receive the support of their administrators and colleagues (in so far as the strategic goals of the library are supported by the personnel of the library). A marketing plan could focus first on those goals and objectives that deal with library image, with enhancing library services and resources, or with increasing the use of the library by a particular segment of the library community. A marketing plan will be most effective if the marketing team has a clear understanding of the interests, expectations, priorities, and fears of those for whom the plan is intended. Feedback from well-designed marketing surveys of the library staff and the university community is needed to maximise the effectiveness of a marketing plan and to ensure internal support for its implementation.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

University libraries will continue to play a central role in the intellectual vitality of university communities. However, university administrators and students must also believe this, by heightening campus awareness of library services and resources. Few higher educational institutions now offer virtual delivery of academic programs via the Internet and the World Wide Web, and cater to the needs of growing numbers of distance education students. Before university of Ilorin library can adequately address the needs, preferences, and expectations of its users, however, it needs to understand the peculiarities and challenges of serving users. A portrait of library resources and services available to campus students must be presented, and results of our investigation shows that University of Ilorin students' perceptions, expectations and use of Web-based library resources are reported. A key finding is that students are fairly pleased with the quality and availability of library services, but not fully partaking of the vast array of services and collections.

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