



A Study on the Need of Marketing Techniques for Academic Libraries in Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine if Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) would improve students' achievement in English grammar more than Conventional English Language Instruction (CELI). Guided by four research questions, this study was a quasi-experimental study involving four intact classes of junior secondary III students. Two of the classes were randomly assigned to the experimental group while the other two were randomly assigned to the control group. Grammar proficiency tests were used to collect data. The study, which lasted for 8 weeks, utilized the computer for the experimental group and printed texts for the control group. Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation scores. Findings revealed that CALL had an overall positive effect on students' achievement in English language more than CELI. Based on these findings, some recommendations made include that for improved English language instruction in the UBE, schools that have computers should encourage English language teachers to use CALL in their classroom; government at all levels should strive to provide schools with high quality teaching materials such as computers and teachers should be trained to use computer-assisted language learning in schools.

In the study of need of marketing approach for academic libraries and information centers(LIC) in Kuwait, researcher conversed that marketing of library services in order to uplift the tools and techniques for adopting for the better services for the benefit of customers (library users). The marketing is taking place in an information scenario. The LICs are developing marketing strategies and becoming aware of marketing their services. These LICs are interested in marketing of information products/services. Library and information professionals are grasping a marketing approach, as it is an essential weapon in the competition age. Currently, efforts for increasing user-awareness are taking place for efficient marketing of information. In this contest the librarians' roles is widely absorbed and believe that their aim is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time. Achieving this goal through modern-day technology and marketing approach, researcher finally suggested some recommendations to be adopted for the improvement of the library in the current scenario.

KEYWORDS: Marketing, Customer Services, Librarianship, Promotion, SWOT Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is gaining a considerable connotation in libraries worldwide. Various self-support policies, e.g. escalating competitiveness, rising customer demands & expectations, and widening access to information by the hour, have been some of the main feeders to the fascinating area of marketing. Today, marketing is the “trend-of-the-day”, although promotion is the main push-button, requiring an initiative, both from the service provider and the customer. It has been less than three decades since marketing was first applied to the field of library and information services. The premise of marketing is simple and appealing: The customer is at the nucleus of every library activity.

LIBRARIANSHIP & RESPONSIBILITES

The idea of Librarianship encompasses the fundamental principles on which the practices, techniques and activities of libraries are based. These principles serve as strict guidelines for successful librarianship, and also as a means for resolving issues at times.

Most extensively engrossed belief about a library is that its key aim is to provide the “Right information to the Right user at the Right time”. Reaching this goal through recent technology means:

- Eliminating obstacle to access the resources.
- Enhancing the use of information.
- Allow users to access information on their own.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Approaching marketing and promotion from a rational standpoint can help any organization achieve the objectives for which it was established. The initiative put forth towards this unique integration of an art with a science requires either a push from the innovative service provider or a pull by the well-informed customer.

The key objective of this study is the integration of marketing techniques into library & information science and services. Hence, reinforcing and reiterating the basic values and beliefs of this profession in today's dynamic setting.

Such integration or incorporation will help to clarify certain aspects, like

- Difficulties encountered and remedies adopted in real-time “service marketing” for the benefit of the customers at library.
- A focus on the user's goals thus, helping them to articulate their goals at every phase.
- Realizing individuals' demands, requirements and expectations from the library and information center thus setting stage for the better usage of library.
- Providing an apt study/work setup for the user.
- A commitment to assist the user to develop the skills of acquiring information from various sources like books, journals and databases.

Promotion of information resources is not just a question of cost, but also the attitudes of the people executing the action plan. The effect of services offered, born primarily out of customers' experiences, is a major factor to create acceptance of the services among the general public. Promotion of information services is not a separate module/entity – it belongs to everyone: It is a way of working and a way of living.

THE NEED OF MARKETING APPROACH IN KUWAIT UNIVERSITIES

We can identify four basic reasons why university libraries in Kuwait need to adapt a strategic marketing approach:

- 1 Emphasis should be focused on the customers or a library user wants.
- 2 Library should first determine library user's wants and then think how to make and deliver a literature to satisfy those wants.
- 3 In terms of marketing approach in the library helps to the future growth of more effective usage of library or information centers by the customers.
- 4 Long term goals should be oriented, so the service could be extended.

Inadequate funding and its accompanying effects such as poor facilities, equipment and resource is a major hindrance to the provision of library services to the community. University libraries, especially in the public sector, do not have sufficient funds to purchase reading materials such as journals and books, equipment such as computers. This decline in funding has been partly blamed on lack of appreciation of the role played by libraries in the educational process by the academicians, and students in the university. Those responsible for resource allocation in the university do not appreciate the rationale on which reading materials should be purchased yearly, and such obsolescence of information to support new courses are not fully understood. This influences attitudes towards library budgets, as they among the first to be affected by budget cuts in the university, denying both students and lecturers access to appropriate academic support materials. Though these process university libraries in Kuwait like other developing countries seem to have fallen into a vicious cycle, whereby, given the political nature of budgeting and competition for scarce resources, budgetary support for libraries is rarely perceived as an essential institutional infrastructure warranting constant support. Consequently, receiving no direct personal benefit from library collections, these stake holders have devalued the library's contribution to their academic progress. With time, this has led to a crisis of “self reproduction and relevance” and the university library has become marginalized from the core business of the university. In this context of deteriorating support from the parent organizations, university libraries need to re-assess their objectives by engaging with the various stakeholders to find out their real information needs and expectations, so that they can improve the quality of their services to meet these needs.

In Kuwait, it has been observed that the university library has become the one among the several sources of information available to the academic community. Over the last five to ten years, the relative value of university libraries in the Kuwait has declined to the total loss of faith in their own existence and it is felt that they are no longer at the heart of teaching and research. Increasingly, academics and in particular senior faculty members in Kuwait, adopted other strategies to obtain information such as personal contacts in the first world to obtain reports, and journal articles, writing for reprints, travel outside the country and development of personal libraries, the purchase of key texts and subscription to journals. For undergraduate there is an increasing dependence on lecture notes and hand-outs, purchase of textbooks, all which are felt to be in end more reliable than depending on the university library.

There have been many changes in the university educational scene characterized by increased enrolment both for undergraduate and for postgraduate levels, and changes in methods of delivery and curriculum, for example, distance education has continued to gain popularity in the Kuwait with many universities creating programs that target the big demand for higher education. There also has been an introduction of evening courses, which has attracted many students. For example, in Kuwait University, more than 2000 students are registered for part-time degree courses. There have been changes in curriculum such as introduction of new courses, all of which require supporting library and information services. All these create new categories of users, by which through market segmentation in libraries can identify their unique information requirements and information seeking behavior and to create appropriate services.

Like many other universities, Kuwait academic institutions are witnessing a rapid proliferation of electronic networking and use of computerized databases to access information in their libraries. There is evidence of departure from total reliance on print-based information to the use of electronic and digital techniques in information storage and access. For example, all local & foreign universities have online public access catalog (OPAC) systems, integrating electronic and internet based sources in the collections, indexing and abstracting journals in CD format, subscribing electronic journals databases. In this atmosphere of change there is a need for data to be collected on the expectations of the users and their current needs, if they are to make good use of the electronic information sources. There is a need to find out what users already know about what the library has to offer in terms of new methods of accessing information and their experiences with electronic information access techniques, so as not only to design information delivery services but also to mount appropriate information literacy programs to enable users to effectively use these techniques.

MARKETING TECHNIQUES IN LIBRARIES

Libraries as non-profit organizations have three major constituencies:

1. Clients to whom they provide services.
2. The parent institution from whom they receive funds.
3. Donor agencies.

As non-profit making organizations, library and information centers cannot avoid marketing practices. But why should libraries market their services? Four reasons are outlined below:

- (1) Marketing as an aspect of management enables library and information managers to know and understand the needs of their clients. This knowledge will help them to make good management decisions, which will in turn help in providing services to clients more efficiently and effectively.
- (2) Library and information managers are not only interested in the group of people who do use the services, but also interested in non-users. Marketing will help library and information management to identify the information needs of non-users and therefore provide them with relevant information.
- (3) Librarians and information managers need to present their services as an indispensable part of the organization within a community and try to justify their claim that their clients may perform efficiently or effectively without a library service. Otherwise their community will in one way or another suffer without a good library and information service. In this way, marketing techniques will help libraries and information services receive more funding from their patrons.
- (4) Marketing may help to improve the image of the library and information profession.

MARKETING PLANS FOR LIBRARY-INFORMATION CENTRES

(1) Know the purpose and resources or product of your library/information centre. Identify the goals of your library/information centre and, in particular, goals for the marketing program. These goals as Grunnenwald describes: "Should be stated in such a way that subsequent evaluation of program results can be determined in an effective manner"

Try to know your product well so as to serve or meet the information needs of your patrons. It is important for information managers marketing for their services to take into account Fine's point that information is not an end in itself but a means to assist users to reduce the ambiguity of the various markets that can be met by the organization. This will help library/information centers to deliver specific programs that meet each of the specific market's needs.

(2) Know your competitors. Libraries and information centers are in competition with several non-profit and profit-making organizations in providing information. Managers of libraries/information centers should identify those organizations with which they are in competition. They should evaluate their roles in terms of the patrons they serve,

the products they offer and their own distinctive competence and market those services they provide better than anyone else, and or create awareness.

(3) Identification of your users of “publics”. A major step in library and information centers' marketing is identification of your “publics” or segments and a complete analysis of the marketing situation. Library and information centers have three major “publics”:

- a. The parent organization,
- b. Donor agencies and, very important,
- c. Users and potential users.

Applying marketing techniques to libraries requires that a library identifies various groups of users and modifies the library service and information based on those different groups and their different needs. This process is called “segmentation”. This will involve knowing your patrons and their information needs by conducting user studies. Non-users are a very important part of the library and information centre community and their information needs should not be ignored. Non-users may not be using the information services because they may not be aware of what services the library/information centre can offer to them. Everyone has information needs and problems to solve and libraries/information centers are best suited for this function.

Totterdell and Bird, suggested three types of information needs:

- The expressed need:** the people are aware of, and express through the use of a library or information agency.
- The unexpressed need:** the one people are aware of, but do not express.
- The inactivated need:** which is currently unfelt, but which can be developed by different means.

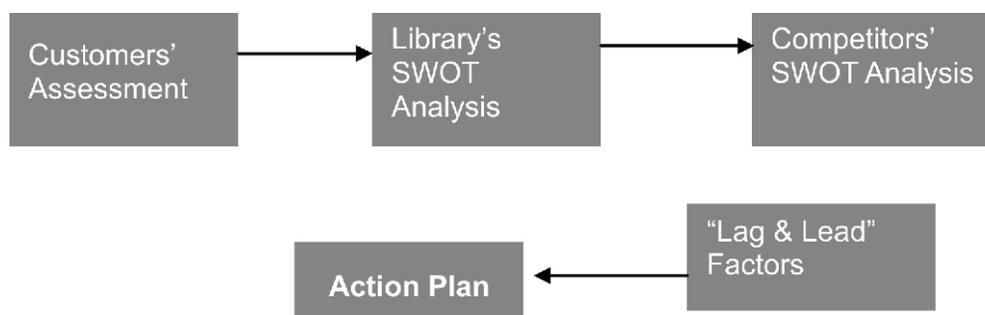
(4) **Establish a market strategy for the library/information centre.** After defining library segments and establishing needs and matching these with information resources, the next step is to identify particular goals for the marketing program.

(5) **Use of the marketing mix method.** This includes advertising and public relations, channels of distribution and product policies. In general these factors can be referred to as communicating with the library/information centre segments. Communication with the segments enables the Library/information centre not only to provide its users with needed information but also to get feedback. Feedback in marketing is very important, without which re-evaluation of services provided to the market becomes a challenging task.

- Advertising. The first step in marketing communication is to make people aware of where libraries/information centers are situated, what they are and how they can help people to solve their problems by providing them with relevant information. This can be done by using advertising techniques several means like media.
- Public relations as a promotional method. This is related to advertising because it also relies on printed promotional materials such as circulars, newspapers, announcements and public lectures, and these can be employed in many appropriate ways. Electronic media are also used in public relations. Most important is personal contact with library patrons. Printed promotional materials may not carry the full burden of product/service communication; some things need to be explained in detail and in person. Personal contact is the single most important promotional method that can be employed. The external setting of the library is not enough. Once a patron has been attracted to the library, all personnel must take pains to assure that the patron knows that his or her patronage is appreciated.

THE PROCESS

The whole process entails defining the objectives of a library, devising an overall strategy to achieve them, making short-term plans for action. The elements of this process are illustrated below.



- **Customers' Assessment** - An assessment of the customers are, the kind of services they require and the benefits they seek.
- **Library's SWOT Analysis** - An analysis of the Library's strengths and weaknesses opportunities and threads.
- **Competitors' SWOT Analysis** - An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of competing libraries and information providers.
- **Understanding “Lag & Lead” Factors** - An understanding of what the real differences are between our organization and the competition.
- **Action Plan** - An action plan that draws on this understanding of the marketplace and sets a measurable action to achieve the objectives.

STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED

I. No marketing strategies but activities

We are lack of marketing strategy at the organizational level, even though we have a lot of activities. We should have marketing policies in our organization, which includes the library's governing, acquisition, service, mission statement, and user definitions.

II. No sustainable plan for marketing

At the operational level, there is no marketing plan in our library. Sometimes we used to duplicate things in different departments and things are overlooked completely.

III. Challenge of ever-changing expectations from researchers

We are facing the challenge of ever-changing expectations from our researchers. We are trying to take a great part in the E-science platform. We will still have to face new expectations based on automatic information processing which one should be abandoned, and which one should be sustained? It should be a decision-making process based on analysis of users' needs, which is also the marketing strategy making process. It becomes more complex and difficult due to the changes rapidly in the user needs.

IV. Recruitment of professionals

The library is an organization and so there is a less pressure to promote itself to the community. Most of teaching faculty's characters is academic and the services like –elegant, leisurely, carefree, calm and unhurried.

As discussed above, different situations form our impressions of the library. It faces the same challenges as any other organization in the current era. We should have to compete with other organizations, even commercial ones, in the Chinese information service market. Personnel are the most important factor. The library should recruit new people with market-oriented experience, while sustaining those who have kept the library profession sacrosanct.

TOOLS AND METHODS USED IN MARKETING

Many libraries now use the internet to promote their services. Since library web pages have become more common than ever they play the same role in the virtual environment as the building does in the real world. Library webmasters must equip the latest techniques in web design in order to make distinctive portals, and learn how to promote their web sites in order to get prospective users. They describe online resources to help online library marketing efforts be more successful. Our webmaster promotes the web sites using these techniques:

A. Circulation Period alert (loan period alert)

Three days before the loan expires, our circulation system will alert the user to return the book. This technology shows our efficiency in the circulation desk, and avoids inconvenience.

B. Digital reference desk

In our library building, there is a reference desk, but it is only for answering ready reference questions. If it is a professional question, such as how to search the information for a research topic, we should answer these seriously. We can receive questions over the internet, and invite volunteers to help us to answer by experimenting with the offline reference service.

C. Cross search

On our organization portal, users can search the database one by one. If you want to search the definite subject information in a broader area, you can use the cross search technology. Buy choosing certain databases; you can have a keyword for the related subject resources in all the databases. There are 50 databases in the cross searching service program.

D. Library portal

Exploring mechanisms for cooperation in the library system, some libraries have a portal, and some of them still have

no sole web site. We can design a uniform front page for the library. With the same structure, we can upload the common data into it, and embed it in the institute's portal. Librarians can add or deleting the required options by using ever-emerging new technology, and embracing innovative service methods, we should be able to provide new service programs that are based on the users' expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRENT SCENARIO OF MARKETING PRACTICES IN LICs IN KUWAIT

Reading is the ever-changing consumer behavior due to changes in consumers' needs, relevance of traditional products and services offered by LICs are being questioned. The Kuwait libraries with a limited array of traditional services are finding a sharp reduction in their client base. In Kuwait, measures to promote marketing of library and information services, methods of designing, measures to evaluate the products/services and user satisfaction are being developed gradually. Marketing must be used as management tool, involving motivation, innovation, and creating awareness as techniques.

- An increasing demand for complex and user friendly information products/services, particularly in Kuwait, is offering attractive opportunities. The wealth of information primarily resides in LICs where information technology can be used to understand the client requirements and design, and offer new user-friendly and relevant products/services.
- With the entry of business organizations in the market, LICs are facing serious competition from the “profit-making” information industry, which has seen the potential of an ever-increasing information service. LICs must have a clear concept about delivery of products/services. LICs can improve their situation by promoting themselves with the same marketing and advertising techniques used by successful business organizations.
- Marketing should concentrate on meeting information needs of users.
- Time plays an important role in information services; timely delivered information is valuable otherwise.
- Marketing of information is not just disseminating information; it includes the optimum use of resources of the library. Customer needs and demands, convenience, cost and communications are to be taken into consideration. Like the Marketing and Customer Service Division of National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) (formerly known as Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, INSDOC), marketing divisions must be opened and these can enhance the marketing approaches of the LICs. The information service paradigms of NISCAIR are:
 - “Personalized information services”;
 - “Corporate information services”; and
 - “General information services” (INSDOC, 2002).
- It is the adoption of a marketing approach that will help libraries not only in their own sustenance, but also in the sustenance and self-sufficiency of their information products and services. From time to time, the National Information System for Science and Technology (NISSAT) prepares course materials on marketing of information products and services.
- The purpose of market research is to understand the market and demand for services. Library staff regularly discusses the environment in which they operate and the market they need to reach. Newspapers and magazines, meetings of the user groups give an indication of the things to come. An annual user survey and weekly customer care meetings give an opportunity to share the experience of the frontline staff. Other tools for market research are the suggestion box and floor walking. Analysis of buying behavior is essential for successful marketing. Librarians and information professionals need to have a better understanding of marketing concepts and approaches to be introduced them into their services and to recover the cost of information services that they provide. Market research includes following:
 - study of actual market size;
 - study of potential market size;
 - user market segmentation;
 - geographical and territorial market potential; categorization of users; and
 - Identifying users' needs.
- Every library should have a marketing plan for the year. All the staff should be involved in the marketing plan exercise. The plan must cover:
 - Operating context
 - Objectives of the year

- 4Ps.....
- Staff training
- Budget requirements.

If the same speed and enthusiasm is created in the national information scenario, then the “marketing” phenomena will become pervasive and will work in favour of customers, and enhancing the productivity of information centers.

CONCLUSION

In this way, marketing is taking place in an information scenario, the LICs are developing marketing strategies and becoming aware of marketing. These LICs are interested in marketing of information products/services. Library and information professionals are grasping a marketing approach, as it is an essential weapon in the competition age. Currently, efforts for increasing user-awareness are taking place for efficient marketing. Finance-related decision-making processes are still not carried out by libraries; this area requires amendments so that necessary decisions can be taken while considering marketing strategies for LICs. The increasing role of information technology related methods to create awareness regarding information products/services among users has been discerned as equally important as traditional means and methods. At no time has the tension between potential capabilities and limited resources seemed more acute. Through these techniques, libraries can gain benefits of marketing activities. With the arrival of the information age in a new sense, the Kuwait librarians and information managers are facing challenges such as an increase in clientele, their variety, demands, and expectations; an increase in the initial or capital cost of information and information technology; drying up of the public sponsorship and subsidy and the need to find alternative sources of revenue; and complexity in ways of identifying clients and their requirements, and servicing them.

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