

MARKETING A COMMUNITY LIBRARY SERVICE TO THE RURAL POPULATION IN KENYA

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INTRODUCTION

Until recently, the theories of marketing were not widely embraced by practitioners in the information profession. All along libraries and other information agencies believed that their product had intrinsic value and that their clients would use the libraries without being persuaded to do so. However, this line of thinking has no place in the information age. We are in a world of profound change, diminishing fiscal resources and increasing personal options.

The information manager must reexamine the existing relationship between producers and consumers and embrace the marketing principles. In the past marketing strategies have been used successfully by the private sector where the goal is to make profits. Similarly managers in the public sector should use the same strategies to meet the objectives of their organization. (Kotler 1981) defined marketing as follows:

“Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchange of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives.”

Marketing is the means by which organizations identify unfulfilled human needs, convert them into business opportunities, and create satisfaction for others and profit for themselves. The capacity for organizations to survive and prosper depends on their ability to continuously create value for target markets in an environment of ever-changing needs and wants. (Kotler 1981)

Community libraries

Community information has been defined as” survival information, the kind of information necessary for participation as a full and equal member of society” by (Martin 1984) as quoted by (Alemna 1995).

The report published by the United Kingdom Library Association (LA) in 1980 defined community information services as:

Services which assist individuals and groups with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. The service concentrates on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their **I**{bes, their jobs and their rights. Although community information services have worked with some success in Britain and USA, they are still in their infancy in other countries and especially in Africa. (Rosenberg 1993) as quoted by (Dent 2006) wrote that the concept of rural information centers were recognized by professionals and others in Africa as early as 1968. It was felt that rural people needed to access information. As a result, several projects such as reading rooms in Botswana, the **Osu** initiated libraries in Ghana and the village libraries in Tanzania were founded.

Community libraries differ from traditional libraries in that they are proactive in their sense of social purpose. These libraries are organized and managed by local organizations such as churches, schools or community groups and have close ties to the local

community. They rely on donations from supporters to operate. They do not get funding from the government.

Need for information

A common pattern in the studies on rural communities in Africa shows that rural Africans need information in areas such as health occupation, problems of daily existence such as water supply, electricity and roads, education, religion and recreation.

(Alemna 1995) argues that public libraries do not provide adequate services for rural communities because they are stocked with materials that are not related to the needs of most rural Africans.

Type of Materials

All libraries serve some kind of community i.e. a town, city, province, school, college or business. A community library service should be responsive to the needs of the community they serve. It should offer materials different from those being offered by the public library and there should be a cordial relationship between the librarian and the user. There is need for feedback from the community being served. The rural community should be consulted on collection development.

(Alemna 1995) suggested that community libraries in Africa should provide commercial services such as photocopying, typing and duplication, which may not be available in the communities.

There is also need for an overhaul of the present public library services. What is needed is an intermediary between the “illiterate” rural African and the store of knowledge in libraries. In most African countries, 80% of peasants live in rural areas.

In addition it was suggested that the community librarian lives in the community and is also well known and trusted by the community. Information workers are expected to

work closely with professional in the community. This would enable the librarians to re-package information, offer explanations and recommendation to the library users.

Characteristics of a rural community library

(Mostert 1998) as quoted by (Dent 2006) describes the community library as one that has “moved away from the western public library model towards active service oriented systems, based on the needs of a community as a whole”.

(Dent 2006) further quoted several researchers such as (Philip 1980) and (Kempson 1986) who articulated the importance of library staff and their interaction with users. (Atherton 1993) also found that employing a librarian who is a member of the community helps the villagers feel a great sense of ownership.

(Mostert 1998) asks readers to consider the following questions when evaluating the role of community library staff.

- Is there interaction between librarians and users?
- Are services tailored to meet specific community needs?
- Are the librarians known and trusted by the community?
- Do the librarians have good communication skills?
- Do librarians know how to share information in ways that are understood by users?

Mostert’s characteristics of the rural community Library

1. Establishment - Established at the request of the community
- Needs full cooperation from community
2. Governance - Participative management in the form of community committee.
- Participation ensures relevant services.
3. Finance - Funds provided by community /sponsors
4. Aims - Proactive service
- Empowerment of all community members especially the disadvantaged

- making all community resources available to all community members.
5. Users
 - Can determine membership either open to whole community or restrictions can be imposed.
 6. Information
 - Directly lined to everyday lives of community members.
 - Two kinds of information: Survival information e.g. on health And childcare
 - Citizen's action information, e.g. information concerning social, Political and legal rights
 - Mainly alternating materials such as pamphlets, brochures, newspaper clippings and oral material.
 - Proactively provide information to the disadvantaged in the community to help them cope with problems in their lives
 7. Services
 - Active interaction between librarians and users.
 - Information and referral — linking the correct service with the correct user
 - Direct service- face to face with librarians and users to solve users problem.
 - Backup service- based on active involvement of library staff in community activities and services that can make community aware of sources that can solve their problems.
 - Self-help — teaching users to become self reliant
 - Each community determines the type of service rendered.
 8. Staff
 - Different qualities than those of traditional librarians are required from staff members, for example: staff are known and trusted by the community.
 - Good communication skills are essential. Staff are able to repackage the information
 9. Cooperation
 - Active Cooperation exists between library and community organizations

MARKETING A COMMUNITY LIBRARY TO THE RURAL COMMUNITY:

Marketing is anything you do to sell your product or service. The marketing concept is based on the principles of exchange that occurs between two parties. Each group that is identified has something that the other wants and the purpose of marketing is to facilitate an exchange of these values. (Griffith 1992).

A marketing strategy must be developed in accordance with the objectives of the organization. Before marketing an information service, it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the information centre and the parent organization.

A community library in rural Kenya, for example in Nyeri district would employ the following strategies for marketing its services.

Marketing Model for a community library in rural Kenya

The following model of the marketing process as quoted by (Griffith 1992) owes much to the rational decision-making model proposed by (Simon 1976) for applications in policy planning and strategic management. Similarly (Kotler 1979) proposed an organizational analysis in preparation for the development of a marketing strategy. There were three elements in this mission analysis, market analysis and resource analysis. These elements fit easily into the first stage of the model, which has a total of seven stages:

- 1) **Mission analysis:** Analyzing objectives
- 2) **Market analysis:** Defining the markets
- 3) **Market analysis:** Assessing the needs of users and potential users.
- 4) **Resource analysis/ offering fit** providing the resources and services to meet those needs.
- 5) **Promotion:** informing users and potential users about the offering
- 6) **Evaluation:** measuring the degree of take-up of the offering.
- 7) **Feedback:** modifying the strategy in light of the evaluation

The above model is most suitable for starting up a new service or radically structuring a new one. Therefore it will be ideal to use it for the marketing of the community library service in Nyeri district — a typical rural community in Kenya

For the purpose of this paper, I will call the imaginary community library in Nyeri district as Othaya Community Information Centre (OCIC) herein referred to as community Centre.

In order to market the services of the community centre, it is necessary to develop a plan. It is only in the second half of the last century that planning at the corporate level became formalized. (Weingand 1987)

First, companies have found that systematic examination of a complex and changing environment has produced results. Second, planning forces managers to ask the right kind of questions for example, what are our objectives?

Finally, planning is a logical way to document the future on paper because it is possible to erase and start again.

What business are we in?

(Mchombu 1996) as quoted by (Dent 2006) presents five main categories of information needs from research needs done in rural communities in Botswana, Malawi and Tanzania as follows:

1. Health information specifically related to common diseases.
2. Economic information to enhance small business endeavours and income generating activities.
3. Information to support self governance , self management and leadership
4. Environmental preservation and renewal.
5. Literacy education.

MISSION ANALYSIS

Trends

In order to understand the needs of the custom in Othaya community centre it will be necessary to answer Kotler's list of questions

What business are we in?

The community information centre will be expected to contribute to the development of the local community by providing educational, agricultural and business information.

Who are our customers?

The customers are individuals and organizations in the division. ie. Students, farmers, businessmen, officials from central and local government

Which needs are we trying to satisfy?

The potential users need information on education, agriculture, business, health, reference and recreation.

Which segments do we want to focus on?

In Othaya Community Information Centre, the groups which should be singled out for special attention are students from primary to college level, farmers who grow coffee and tea and those who keep dairy cattle. Others are micro and small-scale businessmen.

Who are the competitors?

There is no need of duplicating what is in the local school libraries and also in the public library at the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) branch at the provincial headquarters— Nyeri.

What advantages do we offer the target market?

- The location of the community centre is an obvious advantage. Many customers can reach there without incurring a lot of expenses.
- The service is free.
- Membership will be open to all residents of the area
- References to extension officers will be possible
- There will be adequate facilities for study
- The environment will be conducive for studies.

OBJECTIVES OF RURAL COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

In his 1980 speech to the library services for the rural population conference (Philip 1980) as quoted by (Dent 2006) set six objectives specially for Kenya but which are applicable in other African countries:

1. To help the rural children and adults maintain knowledge gained from their education.
2. To help rural farmers increase productivity

3. To help rural people understand the country's social, political and economic endeavours.
4. To aid in the development of a wholesome family, providing materials about health, family planning and health care.
5. Providing materials to help get rid of tribalism and provincialism.
6. To inspire members of the community to read, use books and enjoy these items for education and recreation.

The Objectives of the imaginary- Othaya Community Centre will be:

- To promote use of the material resources
- To improve awareness of the community center to the local community
- To concentrate on both users and non-users especially the illiterate.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Trends (environmental analysis)

There is need to establish changing needs of users. A study of the target group would be able to determine what is required by the users.

Methods of analysis include conducting a survey, interviewing individuals or using statistical data. After the analysis it is possible to determine future demands in the primary market.

MARKET SEGMENTATION

The major market segments are students from primary to secondary, farmers and micro and small businessmen. Others are government officials and non users, who are mainly semi-illiterate and illiterates.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The most valuable form of market research is that conducted among non-users in order to find out the needs of potential users. Although this kind of survey is expensive, an attempt will be made by surveying users and by membership enquiries. Suggestions from users will be welcomed including published research materials applicable to the area.

AWARENESS

Part of the marketing effort should be devoted to raising the level of awareness of information among segments, which are unaware. Among the segments which may require marketing awareness are schools, some farmers in certain locations and businessmen. Part of the marketing effort should be to increase awareness of the range of information sources available in the community centre.

IMAGE

This is one of the most important aspects of marketing and one of the most difficult to deal with. The location and types of building may effect the perception of those who have not visited the information center.

Even the internal design, its fixtures and overall arrangement of stock may generate an image in the minds of visitors. Luckily for me, the community information center in Othaya will be an elegant building, which will purposely build as an information centre.

RESOURCES ANALYSIS

Offering mix: There are virtually no limits to the type of information, required to meet the needs of users in a library.

There should be a wide range of publications for school children, students, farmers, businessmen, local councillors and government officials e.t.c

The stock includes reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories etc; education information for primary and secondary school level; company information, Company information, market research report in agriculture and business, statistics, periodicals and news papers, maps and travel informative etc.

Online access to educational, agricultural and business data bases will be provided and can be utilized by those who are computer literate. The material should be current.

Seating capacity should be adequate and reasonable. Other services like photocopying, cyber café, and telephone will also be provided at a fee. Talks to groups and tours of the library should be given to instruct users so as to raise their literacy level and thereby raise awareness.

FACILITATION

Facilitation is the establishment of an organized system to enable take up of services. One important aspect of this is the location. The community information centre is located in the divisional headquarters this is a central place for most of the users. Opening hours will match the requirements of the users.

The community Centre will also require telephone facilities and a cyber café for Internet and e-mail. The general organization will reflect the rural setting of the information centre. Materials will be arranged so that users can easily get what they want as soon as possible. If users can access information quickly, it will give positive image of the information centre.

PROMOTION

Targets

In order to have a successful promotion plan, effective communication between the library and its targets must occur. The marketing plan will include methods to be applied in the campaign. Identifying targets is the first step in any marketing effort.

School children and students

Although there are many primary and secondary schools in the area, most of them have no formal libraries. The few school libraries existing are poorly stocked. The information center will attempt to fill this gap.

Farmers

A number of coffee and tea farmers may need information about variety of fertilizers, pesticides and marketing of their products. Dairy farmers will require information on cattle feeds, veterinary products etc.

Micro And small businessmen

Since the introduction of entrepreneurship in schools, many young men and women have started what is commonly known as “jua kali” stalls where they sell another, household products; hardware’s etc. These young entrepreneurs require information on soft credit and marketing of their products.

Others: This group will include a few well-established businessmen, local councillors and government officials. The information centre will develop the collection geared towards satisfying the needs of all the above users.

Communicating an image

After the targets have been identified an exchange relationship is established through marketing communication. This includes all messages transmitted about the library whether verbally or written. The key element is of the library image include the building, the staff and the library director, (Griffith 1992).

An image check of the building should be undertaken before a marketing plan is developed. The overall appearance of the information centre should be improved. A small information center needs to maintain the friendliness of staff. It is also important that staff understands and support the marketing efforts. The frontline employees can make or break marketing program.

The image of the librarian has a direct effect on the degree of support given to the library in form of funds, salaries, equipment etc. The director should encourage other members of staff to participate in the communities activities. The varied demands that go with the administration of a rural library require administrators to develop creative ways of management.

ACTIVITIES

After the goals and objectives have been developed by the planning team, it is necessary to identify the various task which will accomplish the stated objectives.

Improving Awareness (publicity)

The director of the information center should contract the local news agencies for publication of library services in the newspaper and magazines. The director should prepare a library guide with information on membership hours of opening, materials available for references and borrowing, photocopying services library instruction and internet services etc. The advantages for the kind of promotion are free publicity distribution of promotional leaf lets and display of posters. Even feedback and suggestions about the service will also be available.

EXTENSION WORK

The objective of an extensive service is to convert a library into a social, cultural and intellectual centre, which encourages reading. The aim of extension services is to convert non-readers into readers. (Kumar 1987) In addition to being educative and recreational, extensional work lead also to publicity and can take many forms.

Public lectures and tasks

Promotion talks are able to reach potential users directly. A library should organize public lectures and talks by eminent persons and also by library staff. They should include a wide range of issues with special reference to current topics. It is necessary to encourage dialogue with the public by combining them with tours of the library where individuals can discuss their particular needs.

Reading circles

Persons with common subject interests may be brought together by the library to form a reading circle. The library should facilitate the group by offering space and materials for the meetings. Reading circles are common features in public libraries.

Reading to illiterates

In a developing country like Kenya, the number of illiterates is still high. These are people who are also economically, socially and culturally disadvantaged. The rural library should perform the special function of public libraries i.e. the reading hour for adults who cannot read. This function enlightens the literates. They get education, information, entertainment, inspiration and recreation. This kind of service may even inspire them to become literate.

Cultural programs

It is possible to arrange for a drama, a music concert, a film show, a magic show etc. This kind of program can attract many members of the community. Thus can be an opportune time to arrange for a book display related to the programme. It is also possible to arrange for celebrating festivals.

Local festivals may make the community identify with the library and also regard it as their own.

Exhibitions

During the time of public lectures, reading circles, drama, film shows etc. it is a good opportunity to organize a book exhibition on relevant subject areas. The location should be suitable so that the participants who attend can be attracted. Members of library staff should be present to assist visitors to select suitable materials.

Story hour for children

If the event is well organized, it is bound to attract a large number of school children. However it is necessary to consider separate sessions to accommodate different age groups. This arrangement requires prior consultation with the school authorities.

Apart from publicity in newspapers and magazines, it is essential to work. A lecture hall as exhibition hall with audiovisual equipment would be an ideal place to hold meetings.

Evaluation and feedback

An organization in the private sector can be able to measure the success of a marketing strategy in terms of increased sales and profits. But an information centre has no simple

method of evaluating its efforts in the marketing strategies. Promotional activities directed at non- users are bound to increase awareness. Request for tours of library are often an indication that awareness has been created.

CONCLUSION

Marketing is not a short-term exercise but is part of the continuous management of the library service. Managers are increasingly becoming aware that some of the challenges facing them such as securing adequate funding, increasing client usage and developing security measures to protect valuable materials etc, are in reality marketing problems. These are issues which can be addressed using marketing strategies that are quite effective in the profit sector. It is quite clear that marketing is a valid management tool which has a lot to offer in the management of information.

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