THE NEED FOR MARKETING AND TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN LIBRARIES IN GHANA

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Abstract: The importance of Marketing and Total Quality Management in libraries in stressed in this paper. The writer is of the view that the conditions which challenged libraries in developed countries to adopt Marketing and Total Quality Management strategies are very much prevalent in Ghana at present. It is not, however, clear if library managers are effecting the necessary changes to satisfy their clients. There is therefore the need for libraries in Ghana to adopt these initiatives in order to ensure their continued use and importance. Failing this, the writer concludes that the continued survival and sustenance of libraries in Ghana is in jeopardy.

Introduction

According to Seddom¹ information has become a very profitable commodity and as such, many profit-making organizations are now involved in the provision of information services and products on a scale equivalent to that being done by libraries. This phenomenon has slightly increased the number of competitors in the information market place. The emerging technological challenges and societal changes also pose an unprecedented threat to the continued survival of libraries as worthy information providers.

In the face of these challenges it is now time for libraries to exhibit that they are invaluable to the continued survival and sustenance of their organisations. This can best be done by actively marketing their services, and by means of total quality management.

The concept of marketing library and information services and products is catching on in many libraries worldwide. It has now been realised that marketing information services and products is essential for all information providers if they are to continue to exist. This is largely because information has become a very valuable resource in recent times comparable to traditional resources such as land,

capital and labour. Fortunately, information is a highly marketable commodity and libraries, according to Cornish\(^2\) are still major sources of information provision.

Total quality management (TQM) has been defined as “a management philosophy embracing all activities through which the needs of the customer and the community, and the objectives of the organization are satisfied in the most efficient and cost effective way by maximizing the potential of all employees in a continuing drive for improvement.”\(^3\)

Total quality management has been the fundamental business strategy of the world’s leading organizations throughout the 1980s. In some developed countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, a number of organizations have adopted TQM as a way of life for the continuous improvement of the quality of their products and services to their customers. Quality, to these organizations is the ‘totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.”\(^4\)

In the context of service, quality is about putting the right service in the hands of the customer, at the right time and price. It is therefore, not surprising that these organizations have focussed their products on niche markets, rather than selling standard mass-produced goods. This reaction has been the response to the fierce competition on the domestic and international business environment, technological changes, pressures to demonstrate value for money (especially in service-oriented organizations), and consumer sophistication, among others. Today, we are witnesses to quality products and services from Japanese, British and American organizations.

**Marketing and TQM in Libraries**

Surprisingly however, marketing and its theories have not been widely accepted by practitioners in the information profession and its application in libraries has been extremely slow and cautious. This approach is attributed by Tanui and Kitoi\(^5\) to the fear of dealing with the little – known sphere of marketing which is mistakenly associated only with profit – making enterprises. It is thus often assumed that marketing is inapplicable to the services and products of a library since a library with good books, up-to-date journals and staff is an end in itself. It must however

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\(^3\) British Standards Institution. BS 4778: Quality Vocabulary. Part 1 1987

\(^4\) British standards Institution: BS4778 Quality Vocabulary. Part 2. 1991

be stated that marketing is for both profit-oriented and non-profit organizations. It
does not only involve a good but a service as well.

Many librarians still hold a rather myopic view that their services and products are so essential that people will use them as they have always done without any additional effort on their part. They erroneously assume that users’ needs are also satisfied because they come to use the library. Unfortunately however, although librarians may regard libraries as indispensable, it is by no means certain that those outside the profession share this view. This aversion however seems strange, since marketing like librarianship places the user at the centre of all activities. It is thus very essential that the marketing concept is wholly and quickly adopted if libraries are to continue to exist as information providers in the future. Weingard\textsuperscript{6} sums this up when she states that “if libraries are to survive or thrive, the complete spectrum of marketing approaches is essential to the managerial toolbox.”

A controversy over the expansion of TQM into service-oriented organizations (such as libraries) has to do with the question of profit making. Business as we all know, are designed to make profit. Libraries, unfortunately, are not profit making ventures and are considered to offer “free” service. It should be noted, however, that libraries, be they public, academic or research are not ‘free’. Customers may not be paying directly for the use of the library but are entitled to the service because their taxes, school fees, the contributions and membership subscriptions of the organizations they serve, coupled with grants of various types donated to the libraries, are good enough reasons for them to be managed efficiently. More than ever before, stakeholders are demanding accountability, value for money. And precise justification of all resources to improve the competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility of the whole organization. Accountability is thus crucial both in the business sector in general and in the library in particular. This is yet another justification for the applicability of TQM to businesses and libraries.

Another reason why libraries should adopt TQM is that it (TQM) embodies certain values and approaches, which are common and already established concepts in libraries. These include the elements of participative management, staff training and development and responsive service to customers. However, several of the defining and extraordinary elements of TQM such as continuous improvement, quality tools and measurement and customer-focused planning are not commonly applied in libraries. It is for these reasons that libraries are in a position to expand and improve upon principles they already value and employ, while introducing

new approaches to planning, problem solving and envisioning future customer services and needs.

**Strategies for Ghana**

The library must remain relevant to the community. It is only when libraries in Ghana are seen as performing the arduous task of directing the flow of information services and products as a bid of responding to the demands of their information users can they be seen as marketing information. Effective marketing is the obvious means by which users can be made aware of the services of the library and their value. It can however be argued that perhaps, it is in recognition of this that academic libraries in Ghana are involved in all kinds of networks and resource sharing ventures as a means of offering users access to as wide a selection of documents as possible.

However, studies by Martey\(^7\), Kissiedu\(^8\) and Adwin\(^9\) all paint a dismal picture of no attempts being made to effectively market the products of libraries in Ghana. The problem then is, in the midst of dwindling funds, technological advancements and increased competition, libraries are still not only expected to meet the information needs of their users, but also to maintain their central positions in their organisations. Apparently, the library’s monopoly of information provision has been broken and it therefore has to compete vigorously to survive. Strangely, librarians themselves are taking the importance of the library in the academic setting for granted. This is obviously suicidal for libraries in these times when there is increased competition for funds, increased expectations for service, societal changes as a result of technological advances and growing competition from especially, the private sector in the provision of information services and products.

The pressure of demand on libraries has increased not just because of increasing number of students, but because of the high cost of books which make these beyond the reach of most students. The library, thus become the primary and sometimes the only source of information for students. The increasing student – lecturer ratios have also made it difficult for meaningful tutorials to be undertaken thus necessitating independent learning. There have also been the increasing

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\(^8\) Kissiedu, C.O.:Marketing as a Management Tool in University Libraries: the Ghanaian Experience (Unpublished)

technological developments in information management, which the libraries have to take into account. In an increasingly competitive world, quality is no longer an optional extra. It is an essential strategy.

TQM has been increasingly applied in libraries in the developed countries since the 1990’s and it is helping libraries to establish a culture of never-ending improvement of quality of products and services. By so doing, patron and employee satisfaction are guaranteed and stakeholders are assured of optimum utilization of limited resources to satisfy customer needs. While TQM in libraries is well established in developed countries, it has only recently become popular in some developing countries such as India, Malaysia, Fiji and Pakistan. In Africa, however, very little literature on studies conducted on TQM implementation in libraries is available. In Ghana, there is no literature on TQM studies, nor is there any library, which has implemented this concept.

Conclusion

Over the years, libraries in Ghana have been performing the traditional role of identifying, accessing, storing and disseminating information to a relatively small number of users. In recent years, things are gradually changing. In all types of libraries, the numbers of users are increasing. The universities in Ghana are now charging user fees for all facilities on campus including the use of the library as against absolutely free University education a few years earlier. Students are now demanding quality service for their monies worth. There is therefore the need for library managers to re-examine their traditional role and adopt an entirely new culture which would satisfy the ever-increasing demand for improved and quality service to the clientele.

Librarians in Ghana must also note that not embracing the marketing concept will ensure that the demise of their libraries will come sooner than expected. Libraries in Ghana are indeed in a time of great challenges and if they are to be prevented from becoming the dinosaurs of the future, then Total Quality Managements and Marketing Strategies must be adopted to prevent them from imminent collapse.

British standards Institution: BS4778 Quality Vocabulary. Part 2. 1991

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