

Management and Marketing

Marketing Research in the Infodocumentary Structures

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Abstract

The numerous problems of the infodocumentary structures demand the elaboration and implementation of surviving strategies. Through marketing strategy, the organizations try to know and understand their clients. The first step of the marketing strategy is to check up the clients, the competing structures and the environment factors in which they function.

Keywords: Marketing, Library Marketing, Marketing Strategies, Marketing Research.

In the outstanding actions of updating the cultural and infodocumentary services, the introduction of marketing elements concerns more and more the managers of these institutions, the staff and the users.

Although recent enough, marketing concerns gain more and more ground, needing a better assimilation of experiences from different institutions in the country and abroad, and the establishing of unitary norms of application through decisions with legal-administrative character.

If we consider the relationship between infodocumentary structures services and the whole of their beneficiaries as a confrontation between the global offer involving costs and a set of differential requests-in other words

such a market relationship-then it is as obvious as possible that marketing implementation is entirely justified.

The introduction of the marketing concept does not mean only a unique organizational change, but a permanent process which requires a thorough revision of services. From the beneficiaries' point of view, the whole conception of these institutions must be reconsidered, especially the construction of the funds, the labor process and the inner organization.

The accomplishment of a strategy at national level is imposed by the deep structural and process crisis which the cultural and infodocumentary institutions undergo. Besides the inherent problems specific to the transition period towards a new type of economy which influences the activity directly or indirectly, these are faced with a multitude of other problems such as: the lack of documents, of financial resources (in a worrying decrease), of a qualified staff, of equipment (especially of the I.T. ones) to which one can also add the lack of conception, the confusing actions, the institutional isolation and many others. Most difficulties derive, according to us, from the lack of professional managers, from disregarding the principles of the scientific management and of an ergonomic labor organization and also from not knowing the methods and general marketing techniques and of marketing devices. The management of these structures is to be blamed for the immobility of establishing clear goals and analyzing different relationships and costs, of corroborating the constitutive interdisciplinaries of the librarianship field.

With cultural structures but also in many economic ones one can notice only an empirical management. We did not have a management of the documentary structures, but sometimes only managers with certain performances. The lack of the special studies, the lack of some valuing criteria in selecting the managers, the inflexibility of a general centralist background reduced the management of the cultural institutions at the level of mean and inefficient administration.

All these problems demand a strategy at national level in which marketing strategy should constitute an essential component. Marketing research will represent a preliminary stage of this indispensable strategy.

The father of marketing, Philip Kotler, defines marketing research such as: "a systematic activity of defining, picking up, analyzing and reporting relevant data and conclusions for a certain marketing situation a company can be faced with." (1)

Such as results from this definition, marketing research is a practical operation which does not only resume to picking up information and

statistic data, but it also imposes a processing, interpretation and analysis in order to draw a concrete conclusion, to enable the management to take important decisions to enter the market and elaborate marketing programs.

Marketing research will develop in several successive stages, within a complex process, beginning with defining the problem and the goals and finishing with presenting the conclusions and reaching an appropriate decision. Each stage will consist of a series of activities which will develop simultaneously or in a certain succession (2):

1. Defining the problem, the decisional variants and the research goals. This first step consists of carefully defining the problem, having a decisive influence upon the other stages. Cultural and infodocumentary structures in Romania face a general problem: the lack of a strategy at national level which orientates the whole activity for the next period.

An exact evolution of the goals will lead to gaining an image of the characteristics to be studied. The main goals of the research could be:

- defining potential clients of different services and products based on knowing certain categories of users, their characteristics, needs, motivations and their behavior;
 - analyzing the clients' satisfaction;
 - determining the features of services and products (nature, content, presentation, quality, availability, price);
 - determining the exact position of the services and of the library products compared to similar services and products;
 - determining the market development possibilities, whether through expansion (gaining a new category of users), whether through getting thoroughly into the matter and differentiation (making new services and products, to attract an even growing number of users);
 - analyzing the image of infodocumentary and cultural structures in the communities they serve.

2. Drawing up the research plan. This stage has several activities such as:

a. Choosing the data sources. This activity has in view a series of decisions concerning: the type of source, the type of information to be picked up.

b. Selecting general research methods. Within this kind of activity, one can solve several important aspects of tactical nature, such as:

- a conceptual and operational definition of the researched variables, as well as classifying them in dependent and independent variables;

- determining the way of measuring of variables with the help of some metric or no metric dials;
- choosing the methods of picking and systemizing the information in three main ways such as: investigating some static sources, directly investigating with market experiments and simulating the market phenomena;
- establishing the instruments of picking up the information and of the research development program.

3. *Picking up the information.* This phase focuses on the organizational aspect and the methods used to get the information. The problems to be solved and the decision that would be taken are those referring to: where, when and how this is going to be done?

4. *Analyzing the information.*

5. *Presenting the conclusions.*

6. *Taking the decisions.*

A practical marketing research will be done in two ways: **directly** and **indirectly**.

1. The direct marketing research means knowing the market by going there and picking the information straight from the clients with appropriate techniques: the direct observation, the investigation and the experiment. This method assumes a good method of the actual market and reflects its state. The techniques used lead to surprising the most diverse qualitative and quantitative phenomena that characterize the evolution of the internal and external market.

The direct observation. Through this method one can get special data concerning the subjects of the research and of the environment they act in.

The investigation represents the most widely spread method, being used for the qualitative and quantitative market studies.

The experiment is a kind of test in which, based on observation, it registers the customer's behavior and reactions, toward the different changes brought to the product, to its price or to its way of presentation. The consumer is not warned that he is taking part in the experiment.

2. The indirect research will be done through different types of studies, such as:

Analyzing the services. The study has as main goal providing necessary data in order to conceive the new services or to improve the already existing ones.

Demographic studies. The purpose of these studies lies in a complete evaluation, from a demographic point of view, of the actual and potential market consumers.

Distribution studies have a specific character, especially referring to the performance place and time.

Promotion studies have in view to promote services and the image. The analyses will also focus on the promotion actions done by the competing party.

Motivation studies have an exclusively qualitative character, investigating the customers' reactions toward services, staff, and institutions in general, considering the factors that motivate their actions.

One of the methods used on a big scale in the marketing processes is the SWOT analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). This one has been imposed lately also in the cultural and infodocumentary structures.

The SWOT analyses gives information on the service's capacity of answering and controlling the impact of the environment. In an informational competent service which has always in view the impact of the environment, success will come up soon. Strengths and weaknesses are in relationship with the internal factors of the organization and the opportunities and the threats with the external factors.

Strength is the resource or the capacity of an organization to effectively achieve its goals. In an informational service, strength can be the innovative use of technology. It can also be the creativity of the staff in choosing efficient ways for solving some problems.

Weakness is a limit, a mistake, a flaw within the organization which prevents it from achieving its goals. For instance, a limited technological capacity can prevent that service from satisfying the client's needs.

It is often difficult for a manager to evaluate a goal achievement knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Other information is also necessary, information that can be obtained through interviews with the staff, the stakeholders, the clients and non-clients, through evaluations of internal reports, interviews, questionnaires, investigation.

Opportunity is any favorable situation outside the service. It could be a tendency or a change which favors the request of a service that has not existed before. Usually, the opportunity allows the service to strengthen its position. An example could be a technical change. Using the Internet and other public on-line services are recent examples of technological

applications which enabled opportunities to use some new services straight at the customers' place.

Threat is an unfavorable situation for the external environment of the service which can be a potential danger for it or for its strategy. It could be an obstacle, a constraint or anything else that can negatively influence the quality of the service.

A SWOT analysis is an instrument which offers management the possibility to create strategies in order to make strength and opportunities worth and remove threats and weaknesses of the internal and external environment.

The main instrument of the research will be the **questionnaire**. This one presents in a logical succession a reasonable and rational number of questions. With the help of the questionnaire, data needed for the investigation are picked up and ordered, and then the information is registered and stored in order to be processed. The success of an investigation lies in the quality of drawing up the questionnaire. The questions must answer the following criteria: to raise the interest of the questioned one, to be correctly formulated, to be easily understood and ask for exact answers.

In drawing up the questionnaire the following conditions will be followed:

- mastering conceptual base;
- choosing the words appropriately and elaborating the questions correctly;
- establishing the succession of the questions;
- establishing correctly the length of the questionnaire, of the number of questions to which answers are expected;
- establishing the graphic format of the questionnaires in order to facilitate their completion;
- establishing the completion instructions of the questionnaire;
- testing the questionnaire, considering parts of it as well as the whole of it.

Questionnaires fall into several categories according to the following criteria:

According to the question (quantitative and qualitative)

According to the period in which the research has been done (once or several times)

According to the content of the observation program (general or specialized)

According to the type of the questions (open or closed)

According to the observation unit (person, family, institution etc.)

According to the completion place (home, institution, book fair, exhibition etc.)

According to the method used when picking it up (through interviewers or questionnaires filled in by the interviewed person itself).

In drawing up a questionnaire one should follow the main stages:

Stage A: to set up the goal in detail. The purpose of the investigation and the list of the information to be included on are established.

Stage B: to apply the methods and conceptions of picking up the information. His stage includes two main activities: sampling and the investigation itself. The size of the sample can be measured according to the following formula:

$$n \geq 4p(1 - p) / c^2$$

Where: n stands for the sample size

p stands for the proportion of the sample component

c stands for accepted error (3%–5%)

Stage C: synthesis and analyses of the results.

Marketing research in the infodocumentary structures focuses on the following factors: customers and their interests, the competing structures and their resources.

The library's clients

Knowing the clients requires finding out answers to questions such as:

Who the clients of the library are, who uses the library? How many users are there, what cultural levels they have, what knowledge they have, why are they determined to go to the library?

What time of the day is the service or the library used?

What materials or services are especially used?

At every question can be brought about classifications according to certain criteria. For instance, at the first question there are classifications according to age, place, category, also according to how frequently it is used, according to the profession (researchers, students, professors).

The improvement of the services and products, the prompt adjustment of the library's activity to ever growing needs of the users ask for studies concerning its own users.

The studies consist of:

– The analysis of valuing information. The content and type of the information looked for and accepted by the users from qualitative and quantitative points of view, in order to establish the types of services and products adapted to the real need of the users.

– The analysis of the users' behavior towards the information. This indicates the way in which the users' needs can be satisfied as-a-matter of course. It suggests the way in which the users are instructed and formed.

– The analysis of the users' motivation and attitude offers data regarding their expectations in point of information in general, about a certain activity, data regarding users' apprehension and it values the activity of the library and of the librarians.

The study of the users provides theoretical and practical data and conclusions bring the basis for a certain service to be set up or improved depending on a user or more users precisely determined.

Methods, techniques, ways of observing the users:

- the direct observation of the users' behavior;
- the opinion questionnaire (regarding services, the librarians' conduct and competence);
- discussions (according to a structured or an unstructured plan);
- the analyses of the documents and of the administrative forms (the lending cards, observation, suggestion and complaint notebooks);
- the analyses of the users involvement in the library's activity (in the collection completion boards, in the services and products evaluation);
- the experiment (creating new activities, services and products).

Categories of users

The users' classification criteria are:

– objective criteria: the socio-professional category, specialization, the type of activity which dictates the information needs, the relationship between users and library;

– subjective criteria: the users' attitude and conduct regarding the information (table 1) the information activity in general, especially regarding the library.

Table 1

The users and their attitude regarding the information. (3)

Categories of users	Attitude regarding the information	Main need regarding the information
Pupils Students	Learning	Knowledge
Researchers	Creativity	Exhaustively
Production Staff	Interpretation	Pertinence
Planners Administrators Politicians	Decision	Precision Contemporaneousness
Teachers	Knowledge	Synthesis
Community members		Multiple

Competition

This notion is specific to marketing and it should not be neglected. Competition tension imposes the passage from the marketing selling services concepts and of the information products to a new vision, based on reasoning and economic intelligence, to the strategic marketing. It justifies a strategy of the “brand” services and of the information services in a competing background between similar services and information products. It is also required a differentiation between them.

Libraries are in a perpetual competence with other cultural institutions that try to attract more and more clients.

The relationship between libraries and competition becomes particular owing to the rigid character of the offer which rejects the “narrowing” of the products, thus avoiding the psychological reactions of the users and also owing to the means used in the battle with the competition.

The invisible character of the services needs a more carefully handling of the other instruments: the material elements of the services, the personalization of the services, the price, promotion and distribution policy.

Cinemas, television, theatre, museums, concert halls, the information and documentation centers, information brokers, the Internet represents only a few of the library’s enemies, among the other categories of competitors: stadiums, restaurants, gambling casinos.

Even where there’s only one tendered, there is only seemingly no competition on the market, because consumers will find solutions to work out their problem when they are dissatisfied.

Resources

Knowing the resources involves identifying the strong and the weak points, considering the library an institution providing services at all levels.

One should consider here: the offer (support, qualitative/quantitative services), the request (state, usage, the structure of the clients, the satisfaction degree), the inner effect (the image of the library, the popularity degree of the library/of the products), the situation of the structure (location, presentation, staff).

For instance, a recent analysis, through questionnaire emphasized the following:

- users go to libraries, in spite of the factors that determine their revolt (the number of documents, the necessary time to perform services, the concern of the staff, and the ability of identifying the requested information, the facilities of the libraries, the library taxes, the lack of the efficient promoting activity);

- the users show interest for certain domains: from wide domains such as-science, literature, art, human knowledge) to specialized ones such as management and marketing;

- the users check all kinds of existing documents, use all kinds of services; they desire a wide range of services with stress on their automation, with access to data base and Internet, and also with accent on the distribution of all kinds of information support;

- few users make use of the library's services for recreation, hobby;

- the users don't have a correct image of the librarian and of his attributions;

- the users agree with the introduction of library taxes when the library services and facilities witness an obvious improvement.

All these conclusions prove once more the necessity of implementing an efficient marketing program in the infodocumentary structures.

Without the help of the marketing research (opinion inquiries, sociological investigations in view to a near future, experiments) on potential beneficiaries, to surpass the present ones, the managers of the infodocumentary institutions will never succeed in solving the multiple problems they face with.

References

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