

Marketing Vis-a-Vis Revenue Generation in Libraries and Information Centres: An Indian Experience

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Abstract

The paper describes the importance of absorbing marketing principles and techniques in designing, generating and providing information products and services. An informative study of National Information Centre for Textile and Allied Subjects (NICTAS), describing its marketing and publicity activities as well as its future plans has been presented to illustrate the point that it is the *adoption of marketing approach* that will help Library and Information Centres (LICs), not only in their own self-sustenance but also in the sustenance and self-sufficiency of their information products and services.

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenge of coping with the changes in social, technological, economical and political environment has forced the LICs to change their time-honoured old practices. Pressure for accountability and the emergence of enterprise culture has lead the library and information professionals to take aggressive actions for financial self-sufficiency. This has lead to 'User Pays for His/Her Needs' principle and 'Profit-making by Library and Information Organisations'.

Hence, in the present era, the library and information professionals will have to think of producing an information product which is useful for revenue generation and for users.

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2. WHY SERVICES/PRODUCTS AT COST ?

2.1 Information is Power

The major inputs which are essential for any business, industry, teaching, research and development are considered to be only four M's: Manpower, Money, Material and Machines. Now, for developing countries, one more input which has become essential is 'Information'. This is a very important commodity. The present day power equation is:

INFORMATION = KNOWLEDGE

KNOWLEDGE = POWER

Hence, INFORMATION is POWER. Information is life saver for industry, business, etc. Value of information services/products has been established.

2.2 Information and Earnings

It is a fact that the information provided helps users directly/indirectly in earning money,

increasing knowledge or solving problems, etc., and thereby to earn money.

2.3 Cost of Producing Information

In order to provide correct and timely information, LIC has to invest and regularly spend money for hardware, software, manpower, documents, etc., to keep the information input base up to date

2.4 Virtual Libraries

Information Technology (IT) has resulted in virtual libraries. Users are no longer limited to their own LICs. Library and information professionals have also now to cater beyond the four walls of their LICs. Hence, the number of users have increased as well as universal availability of any information has become possible.

2.5 Limitation of Financial Resources

There is a greater demand of information and the financial resources of LICs for development of information services/products are limited.

2.6 Increase in Global Competition

Since global competition in information field has increased, therefore, timely supply of right information is possible for new advanced IT. Hence more financial input is needed.

Above mentioned factors have forced present day LICs to become self-sufficient in financial matters in order to provide timely, efficient and satisfactory services to their increasing clientele.

3. MARKETING ACTIVITIES FOR THE LICs FOR REVENUE GENERATION

Professional marketing approaches will help in achieving maximum utilisation of LICs services/products and thus generate more and more revenue. For this purpose, library and information managers will have to take initiative and a lot of freedom has to be given by the management to the library and information professionals in their pursuit in this newer thrust area.

In order to generate suitable revenue, it is suggested that the LICs put a marketing programme which includes the following groups of activities:

3.1 Development and Awareness of Information

The LICs should develop information that can be given to potential end users and make them aware of the same.

This should include visit or talks of or demonstration to potential end users/users' groups, preparation of attractive well written brochures describing objectives, services, etc., of the LICs, publication of informative articles about LICs services/products in a house journal as well as outside journals.

3.2 Promotion of Services

LICs should engage in activities that help to promote the services to the specific individuals who can get benefit from them.

This should include identification of users' groups, finding their information needs, sending them the promotional material/information, publication of newsletter, periodical surveys of end users, sending of specimen copies of information products/pamphlets, etc., to prospective users, users group meets, provision of evaluation card alongwith LICs services/products, identification of market opportunities, etc.

3.3 Marketing in Day-to-Day Operation

Marketing needs to be added in day-to-day operation of the LICs, so that activities are established and maintained.

This will improve both credibility and service level of the LICs. This should include help desk activities like walk-in counselling, quick response, regular sending of pamphlets to new prospective clients, etc.

3.4 Training/Orientation as a Marketing Tool

Effective training will sell LICs services. Training will establish the LICs as a bonafide source of knowledge. When users need

information they will immediately think of the particular LIC as the first place to go, e.g., National Information Centre for Textile and Allied Subjects (NICTAS) organised training programmes/seminars on online searches, business information, resource sharing, textile information and documentation, etc.

3.5 Word-of-Mouth Endorsement of Activities

There is a proverb that "If you are satisfied, tell others, if not tell us". Word-of-mouth marketing is the most effective way of marketing. Through word of mouth, current customers of the LICs tell potential customers, the value of the services they receive. This is most desirable method of marketing, but it is also one of the most difficult tasks to implement.

Good 'word-of-mouth' marketing comes out of excellence in products/services. If services/products are not good then the approach affects adversely and that in turn effect the revenue generation.

3.6 Priority Approach

Prioritize the segments you will attempt to serve first according to your strength in areas.

This will help in initial acceptance as well as getting financial support.

NICTAS has progressed well in all above mentioned directions of marketing. Result is the financial self-sufficiency of NICTAS in recurring expenditure by its well planned and executed marketing strategies.

4. NICTAS AND ITS SERVICES/PRODUCTS

NICTAS is located at ATIRA (Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association), Ahmedabad—an internationally known cooperative industrial research institute of India. Proposal for setting up NICTAS was submitted to DSIR in 1978. The first financial grant to NICTAS was released by NISSAT (National Information System for Science and Technology) in April 1987.

Following decisions were taken before the formal starting of NICTAS:

- (a) All effects must be made to make NICTAS self-sufficient in recurring expenditure within a maximum of ten years (Table 1).
- (b) No service should be given free of charge, i.e., all services of NICTAS should be fee based.

Table 1: NICTAS income and expenditure (Rs. in 1,000) from 1986-87 to 1996-97

Period	Expenditure		Income (in thousand rupees)	Income in Percentage of Recurring Expenditure
	Capital	Recurring		
1986-87	012.5	009.3	000.6	6.5
1987-88	205.2	093.7	049.4	52.7
1988-89	716.1	279.7	135.4	48.4
1989-90	525.0	509.5	175.4	34.4
1990-91	114.3	584.5	275.9	47.2
1991-92	107.4	633.4	363.0	57.3
1992-93	223.1	658.2	483.7	73.5
1993-94	035.2	778.3	598.6	76.9
1994-95	186.7	705.7	908.5	128.7
1995-96	119.0	806.5	964.8	119.6
1996-97	018.0	899.3	1244.3	138.4

- (c) As far as possible no free service should be taken by NICTAS. At least some token honorarium should be given.

4.1 Users' Groups

Keeping these decisions and various objectives in mind, NICTAS first identified the following users' groups who need textile information:

- Policy makers/Administrators
- Managers
- Machinery manufacturers
- Ancillary equipment makers
- Technologists/Engineers
- Marketers/Traders/Exporters/Importers
- Researchers
- Educationists/Students
- Designers/Fashion creators
- Textile consumers and their organisations
- Entrepreneurs: Decentralised sector (hand-loom, powerlooms, processing houses, etc.)
- Consultants/Trainers
- Chemical and auxiliary manufacturers
- Fibre manufacturers
- Garment manufacturers
- Government bureaucrats
- Journalists, writers, etc.
- Member of Parliament/Legislative Assembly/Local Bodies, etc.

4.2 Major Services of NICTAS

Keeping the above users' groups in mind and based on the comprehensive survey of 'The information needs of the textile and allied industries in India', conducted by ATIRA in 1980, the major services provided by NICTAS are as follows:

World Literature in Abstract Form on Textile and Allied Subjects: NICTAS has CD-ROM databases containing over 2.75 lakh records on textiles, covering the period 1973 to December 1997. This is being updated every three months. One can get search results within 30 minutes.

This is extensively used by textile mills and technicians, R & D institutions, students and

teaching institutions, etc. NICTAS has also 'Colour Index' on CD-ROM.

Document Procurement: Procuring published papers, patents, standards, etc., within one hour to four months, depending upon users' needs.

Translation Service: English translation of non-English articles, patents, etc.

Reprographic Services: Supply of photocopies of articles, etc., from the literature available in ATIRA library.

Reference Service and Referral Service

Magazine Subscription Saver: Photocopies of content pages of journals received in ATIRA library. Then photocopies of complete articles. This helps mills, other commercial firms and institutions to save on buying expensive foreign journals without losing the advantage of timely access to articles.

Cult (Current Universal Literature on Textiles): The pin-pointed and current information to each user to fit the user's profile. This is provided quarterly.

Online Database Search: NICTAS **Globalisation:** NICTAS can now search and provide information on all subjects online as it can access information available with knight-ridder information inc., Data Star, STN and many other databases and web sites.

TEXINCON (Textile Information Condensed): This quarterly publication is a unique database held in a condensed summary form (of articles, books, developments, etc.) for easy access by users' groups. Each *TEXINCON* issue also contains one lead article in a significant area written by a specialist. Users' group index and spot light are some unique features of *TEXINCON*.

VITAMINS (Vital Information on Textiles Announced for Moulding Industrialised Nations): It is a supplement to *TEXINCON*. It is published to enable users to glance at relevant articles, etc., which they have missed.

State-of-the-art Reports: NICTAS has published six such reports useful to industry. Now, such reports are sponsored by suitable manufacturers or industrial companies.

5. MARKETING AND PUBLICITY ACTIVITIES

Following are some of the planned marketing and publicity activities of NICTAS in order to maximize utilisation of NICTAS services and products as well as to make NICTAS a self-sufficient information centre, over a period of time.

Regular Press Releases: Regular press releases are issued giving information/news about NICTAS recent activities. They are sent to over 40 textile and allied subjects periodicals and to various textile teaching and research organisations in India. Such press releases are also sent to prospective industrial users also. Some well responded press releases were on handkerchiefs, terry towels, denims, industrial fabrics, rotor spinnings, jute, etc.

Distribution of Pamphlets: Well designed, informative and printed pamphlets of services and products are distributed to identified users' groups. All these pamphlets are written in a style understandable to users' groups.

Pamphlets on NICTAS, TEXINCON, NACID, State-of-the-Art-Reports are regularly distributed during various national textile conferences. Specimen copy of *TEXINCON* is available free of charge on demand. In the past, multicopies of these pamphlets were distributed to all branches of Textile Association (India) and teaching institutes in India, with a request to distribute these pamphlets among their members as well as organise displays for students. All Directors of 'Textile Research Associations' are provided multicopies of these pamphlets and requested to distribute the same to their member companies with their next mailing. All textile mills, processing houses, cooperative spinning mills, textile machinery manufacturers, and textile export houses in India were sent a copy of each of these pamphlets.

Reviews: All NICTAS publications are sent to world leading periodicals/institutions/ experts to review or to give their opinion of the publications.

Concession to Students and Teachers: NICTAS provided 50 per cent concession to the

academicians (students and teachers, mainly) for subscribing to the *TEXINCON* and for literature search from CD-ROM databases.

It gives 10 per cent concession to bonafied students/teachers on the purchase of state-of-the-art reports.

NICTAS Pre-Paid Coupon Book: In order to eliminate procedural delays, NICTAS has introduced the 'Prepaid NICTAS Coupon Book' system.

Following are benefits for users:

- No need for preparing a proforma invoice for advance payment
- Quick service
- High priority
- No botheration of paying every time one uses a service
- The coupon books are user-friendly
- No time limit for their use
- Unused coupons can be returned any time, at par
- Immediate refund for unused coupons.

Lectures & Paper Presentations: Lectures and paper presentations by the Head, NICTAS at textile conferences and live demonstration during conference/meetings, etc. help in publicising the services and products.

Talks to Business/Industry: NICTAS is now approaching 'Chamber of Commerce & Industry' in various cities to arrange a talk on how NICTAS/NACID can help them to improve/expand their business'. Porbander Chamber of Commerce and Industry, had invited the Head, NICTAS to give such a talk. The talk was found very useful by participants and NICTAS has started helping them actively by quickly providing suitable and pinpointed information.

Users' Group Meet: One such textile institutional users' meet was held in January 1996. This helped NICTAS to publicise and modify its products and services as well as helped in planning for a few more future activities for NICTAS.

Quick Response to Users: All minor queries, photocopies of articles available in

NICTAS/ATIRA, and textile literature searches are responded within two days.

Use of Local Branches: Use of local branches of Textile Association (India) for NICTAS publicity, sale of information products and for getting advertisements for *TEXINCON* is being done.

Discount to Booksellers and Advertising Agencies: NICTAS gives 30 per cent discount on sales price to booksellers on the minimum purchase of five copies of any one state-of-the-art report and 15 per cent discount on subscription to *TEXINCON*.

Fifteen per cent discount is given to advertising agency on booking of an advertisement for *TEXINCON* on behalf of NICTAS. Ten per cent discount on advertisement is given to client on giving four continuous advertisements in *TEXINCON*.

Sponsorship of NICTAS Information Products: Manufacturers of related business enterprises also sponsor NICTAS information products. NICTAS state-of-the-art reports are now sponsored by manufacturers or related business enterprises. Each sponsor gets 50 copies of the report free of charge, which they can give with compliments to their present and/or potential customers and earn their goodwill. Extra copies of such reports are made available to sponsors at 60 per cent concession.

Recently such a report on 'Rotor Spinning' was sponsored by three manufacturers/suppliers of Rotor Spinning Machines in India.

Specially Prepared & Packaged Information: Comprehensive information packages on jute, terry towel, pollution control, denims, etc. are developed. There are more than 100 terry towels manufacturing companies in India. Keeping this in view, NICTAS did a comprehensive literature search on 'terry towel' and made photocopies of selected articles. Bibliographical details with abstracts of the literature were supplied, and a comprehensive package of information on 'Terry Towel' was made available at a cost of Rs. 1,500. Availability of this was announced in various textile journals and circulars were also sent to all terry towel manufacturing companies and more

than 50 packages were sold. Similar packages for other product areas are under preparation.

Co-operation of Textile Research and Teaching Organisations: In producing information products and their help in marketing/publicising NICTAS products and services.

Majority of the textile research and teaching institutions in India are helping NICTAS in the following ways:

- (a) Cooperation in summary preparation for *TEXINCON* by their specialists.
- (b) Distribution of NICTAS pamphlets, etc. to their member companies and others.
- (c) By including NICTAS news/information in their Newsletters, etc.
- (d) By arranging talks on NICTAS.

Identification of Prospective Users: From advertisements and company profiles published in various dailies, textile journals, etc., prospective users are being identified. Various advertisements of new companies in *Times of India* and other local dailies, *Economic Times* and other business and industry dailies as well as textile journals are regularly scanned. Various selected pamphlets on activities of NICTAS and NACID are dispatched to them. This database is also used to send request letters for advertisements in *TEXINCON*.

Exhibition/exhibition-cum-sales: Exhibition/exhibition-cum-sales at various national and international level textile conferences also help in marketing.

Display and Sale of NICTAS Products at Airports in India: NICTAS publications are exhibited and sold at the bookstalls located at Ahmedabad, Bombay and Bangalore Airports.

Articles on NICTAS: This is a regular feature. Articles on NICTAS & NACID activities are regularly published in various journals and magazines. This has attracted many to use NICTAS services and subscribe to the *TEXINCON*.

Free Supply of Specimen Copy of *TEXINCON*: Free supply of specimen copy of *TEXINCON* helps prospective user to assess his/her utility of NICTAS products and services.

Majority of such users have become regular users of NICTAS services/products.

Publication of TEXINCON Users' Comments: Users' comments with their names encourage users to send their comments/opinions and thereby NICTAS to improve its products and services.

Advertisements in TEXINCON and Liaison Visits and Lectures: NICTAS accepts advertisements for publication in *TEXINCON*. Well drafted letters of advertisements alongwith NICTAS and *TEXINCON* pamphlets are sent to various textile mills, textile machinery, auxiliaries, equipment manufacturers, etc. Even if some of them are unable to give advertisement, they do subscribe to *TEXINCON* and use NICTAS services.

Publication of Live Case Studies: Typical live case studies of searches done by NICTAS/NACID are published in suitable newsletters, journals, etc. This makes readers aware of the types of information NICTAS/NACID can provide to them.

Publication of TEXINCON Summaries in Primary Textile Journals: NICTAS has permitted some of the reputed primary textile journals to publish selected summaries from *TEXINCON*. Due acknowledgements are given by them to NICTAS. Also they write that full text of these articles are available from NICTAS. This has enabled NICTAS to get new users for various services provided by NICTAS.

Contacts with Foreign Booksellers: Textile Institute Book Shop, UK and many other foreign booksellers have been contacted for selling state-of-the-art reports.

Workshops and Training Programmes: Workshops and Training Programmes organised by NICTAS help indirectly in creating awareness about NICTAS products and services.

6. FUTURE PLANS & ACTIONS IN PROGRESS

With regard to marketing of NICTAS products and services to increase revenue of NICTAS, the following actions have been planned:

Identification of New Users: NICTAS will identify and reach those members of ATIRA and other textile research associations who have not yet subscribed to the *TEXINCON* and are not using NICTAS services.

Liaison Visits and Lecture Tours: A comprehensive crash programmes of liaison visits and lecture tours to major cities in India were planned to create awareness about NICTAS services and information products among students, teachers and other users of textile information. These will be organised in main textile centres in India with the help of suitable branches of Textile Association (India), textile trade associations, textile teaching institutes and textile research organisations of that area. One such programme was recently organised at SKJTI, Bangalore under the auspices of Textile Association (Karnataka Unit).

Display of Posters: NICTAS has planned to display NICTAS and *TEXINCON* posters, at all textile teaching institutions, textile research associations, and selected textile mills in India and also in other developing countries.

Such display will help in creating awareness about NICTAS/NACID services

Textile Information Users' Group (TIUG): A comprehensive database of NICTAS services users is under preparation. This will help NICTAS to remain in constant touch with users as well as to know their feedback on NICTAS services.

Preparation of Audio-Visual Material: NICTAS plans to prepare a video film of its activities and products.

Services to Third World Countries: Special efforts are under way to sell NICTAS information products and services outside India, especially to the neighbouring developing countries.

More State-of-the-Art Reports: NICTAS is planning to explore the possibilities that material suppliers in textile mills can give state-of-the-art reports or *TEXINCON* as gift to technologists. 10 per cent discount on *TEXINCON* and 30 per cent discount on state-of-the-art reports (on purchase of minimum five copies) may be given to such bulk buyers.

List of Current Projects: It is planned to procure current project list on Textiles from Ministry of Textiles, etc. and then each institution will be informed that NICTAS may provide all the needed literature/information support on the projects very expeditiously.

Publication of 'Indian Textile Abstracts': Proposal to publish 'Indian Textile Abstracts' has already been submitted to NISSAT for obtaining initial financial support.

CONCLUSIONS

Continuous modifications/improvements are made in NICTAS products and services as per response from users. Many new products/services such as CULT, online searches, VITAMINS, Spotlight, CD-ROM Databases, etc. have been started to meet the users' demand. Marketing is a continuous process and not a *once-a-month* or *once-a-year* activity. Marketing is a strategy, philosophy and a way of life for a successful LIC.