

Problems Militating against Marketing of Library Services in Selected Nigerian Libraries

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate librarians and library officers level of perception of problems of marketing library services in the era of technological change.

Design/Methodology/Approach- The approach adopted was to discuss the problems that hinder effective marketing of library services in selected university libraries. A random sampling approach was used to survey the problems and strategies adopted by libraries to market their resources. Two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires were distributed and 186 were returned and out of which 163 were found usable. Mean and standard deviation were used to collect data for discussion.

Findings- Majority of the respondents indicated that inadequate fund was a major constraint. Others complained of inadequate infrastructure, available staff lack professional training, under staffed, no fund allocation, dearth of library materials to market.

Practical Implication- It is critical for the library and information science department to include marketing of library services in their curriculum. Librarians must become entrepreneurs and take leadership position in this information age. Librarians must have future oriented focus on their clients.

Originality/Value- The study challenges librarians to adapt and cope with the changes taking place in the environment in which they operate.

Keywords: Marketing, library services, Nigeria, librarians, strategies.

Paper Type: Research paper

Introduction

The library is regarded as the life wire and intellectual heart of a university system. The university library undertakes the responsibility of locating, procuring and supplying the right type of information to students, researchers' and lecturers at the right time and made information constantly available to users. The main objectives of libraries are to obtain self-sufficiency in their resources and to provide an optimum level of services to reach more potential users and encourage the use of library resources. There is now a shift from service orientation to customer orientation. The university library in order to carry out its duties effectively must not concentrate on books and journals only but must include other important equipment such as computers and CD-Rom

In terms of libraries, Kaur and Rani (2007) asserted that marketing means a sufficient change in the traditional attitude of librarians

drives. The library must also include global information network, of which the internet is the seed to facilitate the flow of information to users, e-mail services and on-line database services for effective enhancement of knowledge and research development.

Over the years, libraries are faced with problems of declining budgets, information explosion and escalation of prices of information materials. Due to the limited budgets of libraries, marketing was adopted as a way of ensuring that users are provided with many and appropriate information materials as possible. Marketing according to Kotler (1996) is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services and ideas to create exchanges with target groups that satisfy customer and organizational objectives.

towards acquisition, organizations, processing and retrieving information. The basis of library service should be to help its users to solve their information gathering and processing needs.

This the library can do only if it relies on systematic information collection procedures and policies and adjusts its products, services and organizational policies and procedures to the demands of the users.

Aharony (2009) pointed out that marketing is a set of processes that involve interactions among peoples, technology, methods, procedures, environment and material. Marketing changes dynamically and its focus care on customer needs and satisfaction. In addition, Ewers and Austen (2004) in Aharony (2009) claim that if libraries want to be client oriented, they should understand their clients' wants and needs, the environment in which they operate, their resources and strengths, and the social factors which influences their clients. Libraries should also identify their strength as a competitive business, employ and train staff in skills, client relations and marketing.

Based on the above definitions and conceptualizations, the key features of which include satisfaction of users, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges and generation of revenue, marketing is conceived in this work as all activities performed to promote library services to the satisfaction of clients and at the same time generate income to supplement regular budget, which is increasingly declining.

Libraries have begun to realize that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of administration, especially as a means for improving user satisfaction and promoting the use of service by current and potential users. Several factors like information explosion, technological and revolution, declining support and funds, budget cuts and escalating library costs, have been responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop some marketing approaches as a way of generating funds for the up keep and day – to – day running of libraries. These include fee – based services, photocopying and internet services, e – mail services, websites, online information services, current awareness services, selection dissemination of information (SDI) indexing and abstracting services, displays, conferences and seminars, binding, compilation of bibliographies, retrospective bibliography services.

Marketing in essence is a factor for survival in the world of information competition and economic hardship. The library more than ever needs to develop customer-centered and

strategic market planning for effective library management.

Statement of Problem

Marketing of services by librarians in academic libraries has become a relevant and strategic issue for libraries in this age of information technology. This is deemed necessary now that the use of internet is the major tool in marketing library services. Library websites can be created and could help to harness the resources of the library. The use of information communication technology (ICT) in marketing is useful to users by widening their horizon in their choice of available information sources and services.

Some scholars observed Kaur and Rani (2007) in support opined that university libraries invest huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources. These resources according to them often remain unutilized resulting to wastage of money, time, energy and space. Library users sometimes do not know the resources and services available and do not ask for assistance in the use of the library. There is thus a gap between what is and what should be. Urgent attention is needed or else these resources will not be utilized effectively and users may not come to the libraries. They may abandon the library and as such users could miss out the information that could have made them better scholars. Libraries can solve their problems of underutilization of resources and services by marketing them.

The research, therefore, investigates the problems encountered and strategies which could be used to improve the services rendered to users.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the problems that hinder effective marketing of library services?
2. What are the strategies to enhance effective marketing of library services?

Review of Related Literature

The concept of marketing

Marketing performs the total management function by anticipating the demand of the customers, identifying and satisfying their needs

by the provision of right products or services at the right price and place. They also maintain that marketing in libraries is libraries wide philosophy and that it is consumer-oriented, integrated, goal oriented philosophy (Gupta and Jambhekar 2002).

Weingand (2002) is of the opinion that due to challenges and issues confronting libraries nowadays, libraries need to embrace change and also demonstrate leadership to the community through the use of marketing strategies and future oriented proactive focus on the customer. Also Zauha, Samson and Christin (2001) noted that libraries need to market themselves to remain connected with their communities and have some bearing on real world issues and present day event.

Leisner (1995) opines that contemporary management practice suggests very strongly that marketing is an essential component of an organizational business plan. Furthermore, for libraries to attain good height and achieve their goals; they must have qualitative marketing approach and set objective such as to achieve high level of customer satisfaction, and insure the survival of their institutions.

Obi (2002) observes that marketing of library services would help to educate some library users who do not know the work of librarians and expose them to the services of the library orientation, user education, reference/ reader services, bindery and reprographic services. She rightly observes that there is this tendency for users to shy away from asking for assistance from library staff, even when it is obvious that the service they need is available and the staff that can help is willing. She also observed that a user may spend long hours looking through book-shelves, before summoning courage to ask for assistance on how to locate a book.

Boakye (1999) observed that lack of marketing strategies affects library user skills and utilization of services. Kaur and Rani (2007) in support opined that university libraries invest huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources. These resources according to them often remain unutilized resulting to wastage of money, time, energy and space. Also Ochogwu (2007) opined that availability of information does not necessarily mean its accessibility not to speak of use. Therefore, library orientation is important for new students. Cuiying (2007) noted that a

coordinated program of orientation to the library, teaching research skills and instruction in critical thinking can assist users to reduce academic stress and increase the likelihood of success.

Edoka (2000) however, states that the library has the responsibility of ensuring that its resources and services are used. The library can effectively do these by involving actively in the marketing of its services like other organizations. The marketing programme will enable the library to reach more potential users, encourage and promote the use of library resources and work towards becoming the indispensable information centre where modern information disseminating equipment are functional.

Problems that hinder effective marketing of library services:

Some of the problems that hinder effective marketing of library services include lack of funds. Adebayo (2004) reported that the issue of funding is the worst problem facing libraries in Nigeria. The problem of funding in libraries constitutes set back and highest sabotage to the ability of libraries in Nigeria to design and deliver high profit services. Edoka (1991) revealed that budgetary allocations for running the libraries are grossly inadequate and government subventions have witnessed serious cuts coupled with the down-town in the economic fortunes of Nigeria. Uzoigwe (2004) rightly revealed that the failure of policy makers and fiscal managers to make adequate budgetary allocations for library services compounds the funding problems of Nigerian libraries. She adds that the perception of the library as a social and non-profit service provider has greatly undermined the ability of library administrators to identify, develop and exploit alternative sources of revenue.

An additional problem is the issue of non-computerization and non-automation of library operations and services. Asemoah-Hassan(2002) reported that very few Nigerian libraries are fully computerized and automated. As a result of inadequate telecommunication facilities, low level of computer literacy among library staff, dearth of computer gadgets and poor level of internet capabilities, clumsy and error-prone manual procedures are seen as threats in marketing services in Nigerian libraries.

Research Design

The design adopted for this study was a survey research. This was chosen because according to Nkpa (1997) surveys are used to ascertain the nature of a phenomenon from a relatively large number of cases. This is appropriate because it sets to seek the people’s opinion.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Three geopolitical zones namely South-west, North-central, and South-south zones were selected through the principle of random sampling technique. From each zone two states and two federal were randomly selected giving a total of four universities per zone and making a total of 12 universities.

South West zone:

1. University of Ibadan
2. Fed. Univ. of Agriculture, Abeokuta
3. Ladoke Akintola Univ. of Tech., Ogbomoso
4. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye

North Central zone:

1. University of Agriculture, Makurdi
2. University of Jos, Jos

3. Kogi State University, Anyingba
4. Benue State University, Makurdi

South South zone:

1. university of Calabar, Calabar
2. University of Port-Harcourt, P. Harcourt
3. Cross River State University, Calabar
4. Rivers State Univ. of S&T, Port Harcourt

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire captioned library marketing services questionnaire (LIMASQ). The questionnaire consisted of six sections and the respondents are required to fill in the correct options. The questionnaire made use of a four point-Likert-type scale.

Findings

The result of the study are presented in a table and analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Research Question 1

What are the problems that hinder effective marketing of library service?

Table 1: Problems hindering effective marketing of library services

ITEMS	N	Means (x)	S.D
Inadequate fund	163	3.53	0.72
Inadequate infrastructure for the marketing of library services	163	3.17	0.71
The available staff lack professional training in marketing	163	2.98	0.89
The library is under staffed	163	2.93	0.83
Media access is highly limited	163	2.89	0.83
No fund allocation		2.77	0.92
There is dearth of library materials to market	163	2.69	0.93
Library management do not have marketing policy	163	2.68	0.96

From table 1, it was shown that the major problems hindering effective marketing of library services include inadequate fund (3.53), inadequate infrastructure for marketing of library services. (3.17), The available staff lack professional training in marketing (2.98), The library is under staffed (2.93), Media access is highly limited (2.89), No fund allocation (2.77),

There is dearth of library materials to market (2.69), Library management do not have marketing policy (2.68).

Research Question 2

What are the strategies to enhance effective marketing of library services?

Table 2: Strategies to enhance effective marketing of library services

ITEMS	N	Mean (x)	S.D
Publicity and public relations as promotion strategy	163	3.42	0.66
Pasting of new information on the notice board	163	3.40	0.70
Enhancing the image of Libraries	163	3.39	0.83
Devising a training programme	163	3.37	0.73
Using users orientation as a strategy	163	3.37	0.78
Advertising in print media or directories	163	3.00	0.78
Sending out sales letters, brochures and flyers	163	2.92	0.81
Word-of-mouth endorsement	163	2.83	0.85
Personal sales by the Librarian	163	2.65	0.89
Using pricing as a way of enhancement	163	2.42	0.85

All but one of the strategies listed were not accepted by the respondents as seen from the result in Table 2. Table 2 reveals that librarians preferred publicity and public relation and pasting of new information the notice boards as a promotion strategy (3.42) and (3.40) respectively. Enhancing the image of libraries and devising a training programme scored (3.37) respectively. However, using pricing as a way of enhancement was not encouraged as it scored (2.42).

Conclusion

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. The major problem hindering effective marketing of library services were inadequate fund, irregular power supply, inadequate infrastructure like photocopier, computers, air conditioner for the marketing of library services, unavailability of staff, low computer literacy among staff, lack of professional training in marketing, under staffing, limited media access, death of library materials to market, and also library management do not have marketing policy.
2. Strategies to enhance effective marketing of library services in academic libraries include; publicity and public relation strategy, pasting of new information on the notice board, enhancing the image of libraries, using user’s orientation as a strategy, devising training programme, advertising in print media or directories, sending out newsletters, brochures and flyers, word-of-mouth endorsement and also personal sales by the librarians.

Recommendation

Based on the findings the researchers recommend that:

- (i) Academic libraries should develop marketing plans that will help to ensure that the strategies are put in place and managed for the benefit of the libraries.
- (ii) Library management should be provided with enough funds to procure current global information networks like the Internet.
- (iii) Library staff should be given computer literacy training so as to be efficient in their place of work.
- (iv) There is urgent need to increase fee-based services in order to generate funds. It is not sufficient to install equipment or services. It is vital to market the services in the same way a private firm markets its products in order to make users aware. This becomes more urgent with several business centers/cybercafés operating on most university campuses.
- (v) Efforts should be made to improve the quality of services rendered to users by employing more staff and establishing a cordial relationship between the staff and students.
- (vi) The library should try to market itself by making use of other media like radio and television to bring to the notice of the general public the benefits that they derive from library services.

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