

Strategies Used in Marketing Library and Information Services in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State

Oyemike Victor Benson¹, Adaora Joy Udo-Anyanwu² & Charis O. Onuoha³
Virtual Library / ICT Unit, Library Division, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State¹, Department of Library & Information Science Imo State University, Owerri², Department of Library & Information Science Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Imo State³

greatoyemike@yahoo.com¹, adaoraudoanyanwu@yahoo.com²,
karisdee@yahoo.com³

Abstract:

Purpose: This study was carried out to identify the strategies used in marketing information products and services in academic libraries in Owerri Imo State, Nigeria.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The survey research design was adopted for the study. Three objectives and three research questions were formulated to guide the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 100 library and information professionals working in different academic libraries in Imo state. Instruments for data collection included a well-structured questionnaire. Out of the 100 copies of questionnaire distributed, 78 copies were retrieved with 74 copies properly filled and found valid for the study. Data collected through the use of questionnaire was analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

Findings: The results revealed that use of library notice board, face-to-face interaction with user community, seminar/workshop, use of institutional websites, networking among professional colleague are the most dominated form of strategies used in marketing information products and services. It also indicated that inadequate funding, low level of awareness on use of ICT in marketing information products and non-collaborative effort among librarians and libraries are the factors affecting marketing of library and information products and services..

Implication: Provision of adequate funding, training and re-training of library staff, provision of stand-by-generator, change of attitude towards the provision of library services with establishment of collaborative network between libraries and librarians were recommended based on the findings of the study.

Originality/Value: The study has drawn attention to the necessity of consortium of marketing librarians, whereby they pool their ideas and resources together and use a larger database to make available products visible to the larger community.

Keywords: Information services, Library, Library services, Marketing, Imo State

Introduction

The rapid growth of Internet has drastically changed and transformed the way and manner which library and information product and services are offered and as well put the libraries and librarian at the center of hyper-competition. If librarians and libraries must survive, then marketing must be seen as a necessity. Library and information centers have began to realize that by using marketing principles and techniques, they can understand better their users needs,

justify finding, communicate more effectively with a variety of external audiences and achieved greater efficiency and optional result in delivering product and services that meet the identified needs of their client (Adekumisi, 2013)

Library and information professionals were originally adjudged to be the custodians of knowledge. This no doubt must have been the force behind the slogan 'if you want to know, asks a librarian'. However, a critical examination of contemporary society points to

the fact that with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), librarians seems to be losing grip of the portfolio of being custodian of knowledge. Knowledge is now getting closer to the people at the press of the button. Libraries and information centres seems to be losing their clients on daily basis.

In contemporary society, people now easily access information and information bearing resources on the go as long as they are connected with their laptop, smart phones, ipad e.t.c. Even though users can have access to information via the internet and other technology, the fact remains that the place of the library in the society cannot be put aside. Librarians are now dwelling in a highly competitive world of marketing. To Komolafe, Opadeji and Haliso (2012), marketing is an important weapon for handling such competition. It is worthy of note that even founding fathers of librarianship recognize the competitive environment which the profession is involved and hence proposed the five laws of librarianship even though it was not expressed fully in marketing terms but a critical examination of the five laws portray the need for applying marketing of library services in competitive environment. To really point to the competitive nature of the information environment, Freiden, Goldsmith, Tackacs and Hofacker (1998) pointed out that the selling, transporting, and manipulating of information have become a huge business and it is estimated that there are more than 36,000 information product suppliers in the USA (Meyer and Zark, 1996).

Marketing covers those activities that connect the organization to those parts of its outside world that use, buy, sell or influence the output it produces, the benefits and services it offers (Vij, 2012). Marketing is human activity that is directed at satisfying the needs of library users through an exchange process. However, marketing of library and information services and the type of clients they serve, even when private library differs and their information needs and audience are different, have a common mission, which is to serve the end users information needs (Igbeka, 2008)

Jose and Bhat (2007) pointed out that we live in an era of competition and library's competitors include internet, television, FM radios,

exhibitions and fairs, leisure services, holiday services, computer games, family retreats e.t.c. Four main factors namely information explosion, technology revolution, escalating library costs and increasing competition by information providers and web-based commercial services provider have been identified by Adekunmisi (2013) as being responsible for encouraging the library professionals to develop a marketing strategy to its operations and services. The library according to Okon and Umoh (2014) is generally regarded as an information market to its users or clientele, the buyer or consumers. However, the library's monopoly of the information market according to Martey (2000) has been broken and it has to compete to survive and stay in circulation.

Abdulsalami and Salami (2013) opined that librarians must begin to change their orientation about traditional approach to library services in order to experience the dividends of marketing library and information services.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- to identify the available marketable information products and services in academic libraries in Imo State
- to determine the strategies used in marketing information products and services in academic libraries in Imo State
- to identify the constraints to effective marketing of information products and services in academic libraries in Imo State

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked in line with the objectives of the study:

- What are the available marketable information products and services in academics libraries in Imo State?
- What are the strategies used in marketing information products and services in academic libraries in Imo State.
- What are the constraints to effective marketing of information products and

services in academics libraries in Imo state?

Literature Review

Martey (2000) see information as a marketable commodity and pointed out that there are numerous providers in the information industry. Komolafe-Opadeji & Haliso (2012) pointed out that marketing is an important weapon for handling competition and that for academic libraries in Nigeria to remain relevant to the academic community, marketing concept must be embraced. Okogwu (2006) pointed out that marketing has become important in library environment because it sets the library toward organizational strategic thinking and planning, thereby offering the opportunity to develop more effective library services which could lead to over all improved organizational decisions.

The products and services that can be marketed in order to satisfy the needs of library users according to Vig (2012) ranges from books, periodicals, reports to electronics document to other allied services from traditional one's like circulation, interlibrary loan, reference services, access to international databases, online researches and CD-ROM searches

Jose and Bhat (2007) summed up the basic philosophy underlying the needs for Library and Information Service marketing as: to focus on the customer, to improve the image of the library, and to build relationship with the corporate world recovery. Okorafor (2014) argued that since it is generally believed in library services that "the right information should be provided to the right user at the right time" that integration of marketing into library philosophy will be helpful in reinforcing the basic values of the profession in a changing environment.

In relation to professional skills for marketing, Adekunmisi, (2013) submitted that library personnel requires professional knowledge and skills in order to market and attract users to the library and these includes: perception of users needs and ability to obtain feedbacks from users, technical knowledge such as ability to use the Internet and other electronic resources and databases and knowledge of various marketing strategies for promoting information skills.

Abdulsalami, and Salami, (2013) in their study of marketing information services in polytechnic

libraries in Nigeria using a survey method revealed that information resources that are available in most polytechnic library are books, journal pamphlets as well as information communication technology with library orientation and current awareness services as mostly used strategy in marketing of information resources. Okon and Umoh (2014) in their study of marketing of information and library services in Nigerian university libraries pointed out that marketing of information and library services in Nigerian university libraries has been at very low ebb. Eke and Njoku (2012) in their survey of librarians attitude towards marketing of library and information services in academics library in Imo State, Nigeria concluded that certain information product and services can be marketed/priced and that the age along practice of giving all manner of library information services free of charge should be reconsidered.

Anyanwu, Chikezie & Ossai-Onah (2012) submitted that the wrong marketing behaviour will result to consumer dissatisfaction, in view of this, the behaviour of library users should be appropriately studied because the marketing approach used in one type of library may not necessary work when applied to a similar library. This to them call for a thorough study of library users behaviour and that the marketers of library and information services must ensure they possesses the right behaviour which is the pre-requisites for marketing right

Ukwoma (2014) in her study of strategies for marketing library services by library and information science (LIS) professionals in Nigeria identify good communication skills, face to face interaction with the user community networking among professional colleagues, using bulletin boards, seminars and workshops, newsletters, publicity through advertisements and announcements, and through website as the major strategies for effective marketing of library and information services. She further revealed that inadequate funding, lack of training and education of librarians on marketing, lack of ICT infrastructure and lacks of internet facilities to reach out to the global world are the challenges hindering effective marketing of library services and averred that showcasing the resources available in the library, promoting the image of the library, sustaining the survival of the library, creating

awareness among the university community as well as ensuring the visibility of the library as the major reasons for marketing library services.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The target population comprises all the librarians of the various academic libraries in Owerri, Imo State namely: Imo State University Library, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education library, Federal Polytechnic Nekede

Library and Imo State Polytechnic Library. The data collection instrument used for this study was the questionnaire. A total of hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered purposively to librarians in the various libraries. 78% was returned while 74 out of the 78 copies were properly filled and found valid for the study. The data generated for the study was analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

Marketable library and information products and services available in your institution library

1.	Types information products and services	Available	%	Not available	%
A	Books	74	100	-	-
B	Periodicals	72	97.3	-	-
C	Reports	68	91.9	-	-
D	Electronic documents	65	87.8	5	6.8
E	Inter-Library loan	47	63.5	10	13.5
f.	Reference services	71	96	1	1.4
g.	International databases	48	64.9	9	12.1
H	Online databases	65	87.8	5	6.8
I	Offline databases	39	52.7	16	21.6
J	Home delivery services for books	14	19	39	52.7
K	Translated basic information packages foreign library users	16	21.6	29	39.1
L	Internet services	71	96	2	2.7
M	Audio visual	56	75.7	7	9.5
N	Television	57	77	12	16.2
O	Video camera	35	47.3	19	25.6
P	Compact disk	59	79.7	4	5.4
Q	Television set	50	67.6	11	14.8
R	Abstracting & Indexing services	63	85.1	4	5.4
S	Reprographic services	69	93.2	2	2.7
T	Display and exhibition	60	81.1	5	6.8
U	Current awareness services	59	79.7	7	9.5
V	Selective Dissemination of information	55	74.3	11	14.8

The table above shows that almost all the items listed a – v with the exception of item j, k, and o (Home delivery services for books, translation of basic information for foreign students and video) are marketable library and information

services available in the libraries studied with percentage above 50%. Books, periodicals, reports, reference services, internet services and reprographic services scored above 90%.

Table 2: Strategies used in marketing information products and services

2.	Strategies used in marketing information products and services	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
A	Use of social media (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter)	30 (120)	23 (69)	5 (10)	6 (6)	63 (205)	3.25	Accepted
B	Use institutions websites /Library being online	40 (160)	22 (66)	3 (6)	2 (2)	67 (236)	3.52	Accepted
C	Use of mass media (Advertisement)	19 (76)	22 (66)	13 (26)	14 (14)	68 (182)	2.68	Accepted
D	Newsletter marketing	26 (104)	23 (69)	6 (12)	11 (11)	66 (196)	2.97	Accepted
E	Use of social media tools	19 (76)	32 (96)	7 (14)	3 (3)	61 (189)	3.10	Accepted
f.	Use of electronic mails	25 (100)	31 (93)	2 (4)	4 (4)	62 (201)	3.24	Accepted
g.	Use of press release	16 (64)	18 (54)	12 (24)	12 (12)	58 (154)	2.66	Accepted
H	Use of library notice board	51 (204)	23 (69)	-	-	74 (273)	3.69	Accepted
I	Through display and exhibition	41 (164)	17 (51)	4 (8)	3 (3)	65 (226)	3.48	Accepted
J	Through the use of bulk SMS	19 (76)	18 (54)	9 (18)	12 (12)	58 (160)	2.76	Accepted
K	Through effective public relations	33 (132)	26 (78)	3 (6)	6 (6)	68 (222)	3.26	Accepted
L	Application of good communication skills	36 (144)	29 (87)	-	2 (2)	67 (233)	3.48	Accepted
M	Face-to-face interaction with user community	44 (176)	26 (78)	-	2 (2)	72 (256)	3.56	Accepted
N	Networking among professional colleagues	41 (164)	23 (69)	4 (8)	1 (1)	69 (242)	3.51	Accepted
O	Seminar / workshops	39 (156)	24 (72)	-	2 (2)	65 (230)	3.54	Accepted

Table 2 shows the strategies used in marketing of information products and services. The most acceptable strategies used in the surveyed libraries include use of library notice board (3.69), face to face interaction with user community (mean = 3.56), seminar / workshops (mean = 3.54), use of institutions websites / library online (mean = 3.52), networking among

professional colleagues (mean 3.51), through display and exhibition (mean = 3.48). The above results show that the conventional methods of creating awareness for library resources are still adopted in marketing of information products and services. The least accepted strategies are use of press release (2.66), use of mass media (2.68) and use of bulk SMS (2.76).

Table 3; Constraints to effective marketing of library and information products and services in your institution library

4. Constraints to effective marketing of library and information products and services	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
Inadequacy of computer trained and certified librarians	26 (104)	34 (102)	10 (20)	3 (3)	73 (229)	3.14	Accepted
Inadequacy of funding	37 (148)	32 (96)	1 (2)	1 (1)	71 (247)	3.48	Accepted
Non-collaborative effort among librarians and libraries	31 (124)	26 (78)	9 (18)	4 (4)	70 (224)	3.20	Accepted
Lack of networking librarians	23 (92)	25 (75)	11 (22)	6 (6)	65 (195)	3.00	Accepted
Inability to determine price of information products and services	18 (72)	24 (72)	7 (14)	15 (15)	64 (173)	2.70	Accepted
High level of information illiteracy among library users	29 (116)	20 (60)	9 (18)	11 (11)	69 (205)	2.97	Accepted
Language barriers	15 (60)	20 (60)	17 (34)	11 (11)	63 (165)	2.62	Accepted
Locations of library and information centres	13 (52)	24 (72)	16 (32)	12 (12)	65 (168)	2.58	Accepted
Lack of commitment of the library management	5 (20)	7 (21)	3 (6)	4 (4)	19 (51)	2.68	Accepted
Inadequacy of qualified human personnel/resources	19 (76)	30 (90)	7 (14)	8 (8)	64 (188)	2.94	Accepted
Attitude of library users	12 (48)	25 (75)	10 (20)	16 (16)	63 (159)	2.52	Accepted
Inadequate knowledge of users need	14 (56)	25 (75)	10 (20)	13 (13)	62 (164)	2.65	Accepted
Lack of ICT infrastructures	20 (80)	23 (69)	11 (22)	10 (10)	64 (181)	2.83	Accepted
Attitude of librarians	23 (92)	20 (80)	11 (22)	11 (11)	65 (205)	3.15	Accepted
Irregular power supply	45 (180)	17 (51)	3 (6)	5 (5)	70 (242)	3.46	Accepted
Prohibitive cost of ICT equipment	29 (116)	26 (78)	4 (8)	3 (3)	62 (205)	3.31	Accepted
Low awareness of application of ICT to marketing of information products	22 (88)	19 (57)	7 (14)	8 (8)	56 (167)	2.98	Accepted
Inadequate technical support	28 (112)	32 (96)	3 (6)	6 (6)	69 (228)	3.19	Accepted
Inadequate ICT up-dating opportunities	34 (136)	26 (78)	2 (4)	7 (7)	69 (225)	3.26	Accepted
Lack of adequate awareness	37 (148)	30 (90)	2 (2)	-	69 (240)	3.48	Accepted
High cost of ICT tools	41 (164)	23 (69)	3 (6)	4 (4)	71 (243)	3.42	Accepted

The table 3 above shows the constraints to effective marketing of library and information products and services. The most accepted constraints are lack of adequate awareness, inadequacy of funding (mean 3.48 respectively), followed by irregular power supply (3.46), high cost of ICT tools (3.42), prohibitive cost of ICT

equipment (3.31) and inadequate ICT up-dating opportunities (3.26). The least accepted constraints include: attitude of library users (mean =2.52), locations of library and information centres (mean = 2.58), language barriers (2.62) and inadequate knowledge of users need (2.65) etc.

Table 4; which of the following ways can the challenges of marketing of library and information products and services in your institution be addressed?

5.	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
Establishing a collaborative network between librarians /libraries	19 (76)	16 (48)	-	3 (9)	38 (133)	3.5	Accepted
Adequate provision of funds from parent institution	13 (52)	18 (54)	6 (12)	2 (2)	39 (120)	3.08	Accepted
Strategic location of libraries and information centres	12 (48)	32 (128)	5 (10)	-	49 (186)	2.78	Accepted
Through proper market segmentation	12 (48)	26 (78)	5 (10)	4 (4)	47 (140)	2.98	Accepted
Creating good library working environment	20 (80)	14 (42)	-	-	34 (122)	3.59	Accepted
Proper selection of suitable library services	15 (60)	23 (69)	-	-	38 (129)	3.39	Accepted
Conducting audience analysis	11 (44)	27 (81)	4 (8)	4 (4)	46 (137)	2.98	Accepted
Establishing good public relation	12 (48)	28 (84)	1 (2)	-	41 (134)	3.27	Accepted
Conducting outreach services	13 (52)	27 (81)	3 (6)	3 (3)	46 (142)	3.09	Accepted
Re-orientation of library users	15 (60)	18 (54)	3 (6)	2 (2)	38 (122)	3.21	Accepted
Encouraging online training	15 (60)	19 (57)	-	2 (2)	36 (119)	3.31	Accepted
Regular training for the staff	16 (64)	13 (39)	-	2 (2)	31 (105)	3.39	Accepted
Provision of standby power supply	19 (76)	13 (39)	2 (2)	-	34 (117)	3.44	Accepted
Provision of technical support	18 (72)	19 (57)	-	-	37 (129)	3.49	Accepted
Provision of translation services	15 (60)	23 (69)	4 (8)	5 (5)	47 (142)	3.02	Accepted
Encouraging networking among librarian and libraries	18 (72)	15 (45)	2 (4)	-	35 (121)	3.48	Accepted
Friendly disposition of library staff	15 (60)	23 (69)	2 (4)	2 (2)	42 (135)	3.21	Accepted

The above table shows the ways the challenges of marketing of library and Information products and services could be addressed. Creating a good library environment has the highest mean rating of 3.59, followed by establishment of a collaborative network between librarians/libraries with mean rating of 3.5. Others with high rating are: provision of technical support (3:49); encouraging networking among librarians and libraries (3.48) and provision of standby power supply (3.44).

Discussion of findings

The result in table 1 indicated that books, periodical, reports, reprographic services,

display and exhibition, internet services, online databases, electronic documents are the products are services available amongst others that are marketable with percentage of 80% and above. Ranking highest is book (100%), followed by periodical and reports ranking (97.3%), Internet services (96%) and reprographic services (91.9%). It was obvious from the study that home delivery services for books (19%), translating of basic information, packages for foreign library users are not available in the libraries studied. The findings in table one is in agreement with Abdulsalami & Salami (2013) and Vig (2012).

The results in table 2 indicates that the use of library notice board, face-to-face interaction with user community, seminar/workshop use of institutions websites, networking among professional colleagues are the most dominated form of strategies used in marketing information products and services. These findings seem to corroborate that of Ukwuoma (2014) who identify similar avenues as strategies for marketing information products.

Table 3 indicates that inadequacy of funding, low level of awareness on the use of ICT in marketing, irregular power supply, high costs of ICT tools, prohibitive cost of ICT equipment, inadequate ICT updating opportunities and non-collaborative effort among librarians and libraries are the factors affecting marketing of library services, others, include attitude of librarians, inadequate technical support, lack of networking librarians, inadequacy of computer trained and certified librarians. A critical look at this findings show that marketing of library and information services and products is being besiege with plethora of problems. This is in agreement with the findings of Ukwuoma (2014) who revealed that inadequate funding, lack of training and education of librarians on marketing etc are challenges hindering effective marketing services.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- *Provision of adequate funding:* Adequate fund should be provided for academic libraries to enable them procure ICT-facilities and train their staff on ICT based library services. The provision of fund will go a long way in solving fund related issues as it affects the marketing of information products in Nigeria libraries.
- *Training and Retraining of library staff:* There is need to train the staff in the areas of applying ICT tools to marketing of library services. For instance, the social networking sites (SNSs) such as facebook, whatsApp, Twitter, Youtube can be utilized as cost effective means of marketing information products in academic libraries.

- *Provision of standby generator:* This is very necessary in order to solve the problem of unsteady power supply.

- *Change of attitude towards the provision of library services:* It is time that librarians change their conservative approach to the provision of library services. We are in the digital age where the users are faced with different options / opportunities to the provision of information services. The era of doctrinarian that users don't want to use the library is gone. Librarians as a matter of necessity should be more proactive and pragmatic in their approach to the effective provision of information services. We are to go over the social spaces in the internet to know what the users need and bring them back to the library.

- *Establishment of collaborative network between libraries and librarians:* If librarians are to effectively market their products and service. It is pertinent that libraries should collaborate with sisters' libraries; there should be a consortium of marketing librarians, whereby they pool their ideas and resources together and use a larger database to make available products visible to the larger community.

Conclusion

The study leads to the conclusion that library and information products and services are marketed in the surveyed libraries. The basic strategies adopted in the marketing of information products and services include the following: use of library notice board, face-to-face interaction, seminar/workshops, use of institutions websites and library online, networking among professional colleagues etc. The constraints to effective marketing includes: inadequacy of funding, lack of adequate awareness, irregular power supply, inadequate ICT up-dating opportunities, inadequate knowledge of users need, prohibitive cost of ICT equipment and non-collaborative effort among librarians and libraries.

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