
MARKETING STRATEGIES USED BY LIBRARIANS IN A STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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Abstract

Academic libraries are currently experiencing changes in the new information age, due to rapidly changing media technologies, increasing users' preferences and expectations, competition from other information providers such as internet and dwindling library budgets. These necessitate library and information science professionals leverage on competitive marketing approaches to strategically reorient themselves and libraries as information superhighways that individuals cannot do without. This study therefore investigated marketing strategies employed by librarians in a state university library in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design of ex-post facto type. A validated questionnaire with Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.69 was used to gather information from all the librarians. The results revealed that user survey studies, books, interlibrary loan services and improved burrowing privileges were prevalent marketing strategies used by librarians. Unstable Internet connectivity and inadequate funding were identified as major challenges to effective marketing of library products and services. The study recommended use of ICT and social media tools; teaching of innovative marketing concepts and principles in Nigerian Library schools and aggressiveness on the part of librarians.

Keywords: Library marketing, Promoting library services and information products; Nigerian librarians; Nigerian universities.

Introduction

Marketing is being considered one aspect of competencies needed and critical among library and information science (LIS) professionals (Odiye, 2011). Osinulu, Adekunmisi and Okewale (2017) stress that librarians should be competent in all aspects of librarianship which include, basic foundational knowledge in librarianship, readers' services, information and communication technologies (ICTs) handling and use, reference services etcetera, before library professionals can adequately and effectively market library services and information

products, librarians must be knowledgeable, skilled and must possess good attributes or disposition in these core aspects of librarianship. Makori (2011) shares this view when he reported that marketing is basic and is considered as essential in the management process for promoting information products and services. Snoj and Petermanec (2001) assert that marketing knowledge can assist libraries to have a competitive advantage over competitors and it is through development of new services or changes in the existing ones that they can achieve this and satisfy users better. In other words marketing competency can bring about improvement in organizational status and enhance the image of librarians thereby improving library performance. Unfortunately, many studies have documented librarians' lack of professional understanding of the marketing concept and its applicability to librarianship (Alemna (2001), Patange (2013) and Adekunmisi (2013). Odine (2011) posited that most library top management view marketing as only applicable and relevant to profit making organizations. Das and Karn (2008) posit that most librarians do not promote library resources, services and products effectively due to lack of training and poor knowledge of marketing tools and techniques as well as fear of commercial publicity. Some librarians see marketing as manipulative, unprofessional, a waste of time and resources (Kumber, 2004). Similarly, Patange (2013) indicated a lack of business expertise among academic librarians. Adekunmisi (2017) also pointed out lack of interest in the idea and concept of marketing mix among librarians and library top management. These scenarios can be attributed to deficiencies of marketing concepts and principles in the Library school curricula (Mammo, 2007). These factors also contribute to low patronage and underutilization of library information resources, products and services. Librarians as information professionals need adequate knowledge, skills and attributes of marketing principles and a clear understanding and appreciation of the relevance of marketing to librarianship. Librarians must be involved in marketing and must use the marketing principles and strategies to convince and attract users to library collections and services they offer. a key responsibility of academic libraries is to provide timely access to information resources both print and non print that meet curriculum and programme needs of students and teaching staff. They also provide information services (manual, electronic and the web-based, circulation of library materials, readers' enquiry services, user education programs, reference services and electronic access to resources and services. Academic libraries must also ensure that acquired information resources and services are best utilized by patrons. A study by Osinulu and Daramola (2017) indicated that the Nigerian public university libraries, through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) have yearly access to a huge amount of money for procuring both print,



non-print and electronic resources, including hardware and software applications for library development. The authors acknowledge that TET Funds disbursement have greatly enriched and improved collection development. With an abundance of print and electronic resources, academic libraries are now facing the challenge of having how best to market these information resources, services and products to potential users. Popoola (2008) succinctly captured the scenario when he remarked that a major sector of the potential market in academic libraries are not aware of all the services available or have little understanding of what services and products are available in the library. However, continued financial support for library operations and survival can only be guaranteed through demonstrated use of library products, resources and services a library provides. Martey (2009) observed that a service that is not used does not need financial support. Effective marketing strategies improve users' awareness and promote use of library holdings and services and consequently the value of the library and image of the library personnel. Marketing is thus essential to overcome these and guarantee the existence and survival of libraries. Library and information science professionals need to investigate marketing strategies used and challenges encountered by librarians in state university libraries in Nigeria.

Library Marketing Strategies

The concept of marketing has variously been defined by scholars in librarianship. The bottom line of these definitions is that marketing in the context of libraries involves provision of library resources and services, using different tools and technologies in order to create awareness, attract and improve library patrons use of the library resources and services. Another definition that draws rapt attention is that by Morgan (1998) who succinctly describes marketing as an exchange process whereby two or more individuals (or groups) exchange goods or services for items of value, in this case, the item of value being information and information services exchanged for a perception of worth - a rating valuing the services rendered, a highly intangible and difficult thing to measure, which users of library services pays, not to libraries and librarians, but to administrators and decision-makers. Adekunmisi (2017) shares this view and the perception of the worth of information services and products decreases as financial and administrative supports to libraries declines.

The author further points out that the much needed financial and administrative support make marketing principles and strategies more germane to academic libraries and

librarians especially in the current information age crippled by dwindling library budgets. LIS professionals must therefore adopt marketing principles and strategies and apply them in order to exist and remain relevant in the current and emerging new information age. This is because marketing is very crucial in determining and satisfying the needs, wants and demands of the targeted clients. Das and Karn (2008) expressed that marketing assists in management of libraries, makes libraries more committed to users' needs and satisfying those needs and, understanding users. Marketing also improves the image of librarians. Jestin and Parameswari (2002) assert that effective marketing increases library funds, increases usage of services, educates customers and non customers, changes perception and enhances the clout and reputation of the library and staff.

Strategy can be described as a broad statement of goals to be achieved by an individual or organization. It could also be viewed as a long-term, forward-looking approach to planning with the fundamental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. In the library world, marketing strategy can be described as a plan of action designed to achieve stated goals of promoting a library product or service to its users. Sharma and Bhardwaj (2009) define marketing strategy as instruments through which raw and processed information are transmitted to users. Dann and Dann (2011) view marketing strategy is essentially about lofty visions translated into less lofty and practical goals. This is in essence to attain competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is the leverage or attribute a business has over its competitors, allowing the business to generate greater sales or retain more customers than its competitors (Mutongi and Chiwanza, 2016). Competitive advantage could be gained by offering clients better and greater value. Successful companies usually face actual competitions so they must have compelling reasons to compete effectively against competitors (Saloner, Sherpard and Podolny, 2001).

Libraries as gateways to information should use the power of competitive advantage to attract and retain patrons in the face of potential competitors such as Internet services providers, online book dealers and mushrooming cyber cafes and many others. LIS professionals in academic environments must strategically reorient themselves and their libraries as information superhighways that user communities cannot do without. To attain this feat, library professionals must embrace leverages that skillfully allow them to compete favorably with competitors to generate more profits while retaining more customers. One of such means involves using competitive advantage approach that are unique and which library competitors cannot easily copy or imitate.



For the library competitive advantage may include high level of ease of access to resources and services in the preferred format, highly skilled library personnel, ease of location, high level of access to ICT applications, resources and services, fascinating library equipment and facilities. Others may include neat and noiseless library environment, clean toilet facilities, adequate and ergonomic chairs and tables, good ventilation and illumination, training programs, use of highly innovative library technology, applications and services and innovative marketing strategies. Better still are incentives like, advertizing information products or services, providing services at lower prices or with higher quality to attract interests of clients. Nicholas (1998) advised librarians to use quality procedures in attending to users' needs, establishing personal relationship, responding positively to users' complaints and welcoming suggestions. The author further advised librarians to know research interests of all the university community members and visit various departments to establish key players. Adegoke (2015) identified public presentation, direct marketing, advocacy, bulletins, newsletter, readers' awareness training, display strategy, library web page, lectures, library tours and use of Web 2.0 tools as strategies for promoting library information products and services. Adekunmisi (2017) emphasized that the use of Web 2.0 applications has made possible online information accessible anytime, anyhow, anywhere thereby allowing libraries to bring library services and resources to the doorstep and convenience of library patrons. Mutongi and Chiwanza (2016) equally encourage libraries to use social media tools to enable community-based input, interaction, content sharing, discussion and collaboration.

In terms of empirical studies, Igbokwe (2009) argue that library orientation, increased users' awareness, in-house displays, exhibitions and Internet services are major marketing strategies used by 280 librarians and para-professionals in 12 universities in Nigeria. The fee-based services (binding and photocopy) and non-fee based (compilation of bibliography and retrospective services) were also used as strategies to market library services. Bamigbola (2013) note that e-mails, telephone, library websites, faculty / departmental meetings and selective packaging of relevant information to users were prominent among marketing strategies used by selected university libraries in Nigeria. Edewor, Okite-Amugboro, Osuchukwu and Egreajena (2016) surveyed marketing strategies used by twenty (20) universities in Africa. The study found that library publications (memos, bulletins, and newsletter), orientation programs, websites, flyers and posters are key strategies used across the libraries in marketing library services but usage of social media is low.

In all of these instances, it is advisable for librarians to use quality leverage that are unique and not easy to imitate by surrounding libraries and other competitors. Mutongi and Chiwanza (2016) averred libraries to use differentiated strategy, a situation whereby libraries distinguish own products or services from all other libraries' products and services while capitalizing on competitive advantage. The authors consider the differentiated strategy an exceptional advantage over other libraries and other competitors offering the same product or service. Tomlison and McToghe (2006) posit that differentiated strategy calls for the development of a product or service that offers unique attributes that are valued by customers. This study recognizes that there is no limitations to what strategies libraries and librarians can use to promote library information services and products and subsequently challenges to effective marketing. When these promotional strategies are honed, LIS professionals are able to attract users back to libraries, survive in the midst of competitors, get support of the different stakeholders and finally profit from competitive advantage. It is against these backgrounds that this study investigated marketing strategies and challenges encountered by librarians in Olabisi Onabanjo Universities in Nigeria (O.O.U) in the promotion of library services and information products.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research of the ex-post-facto design was used in this study. The study population consisted of all academic librarians at Olabisi Onabanjo University Library in Nigeria. 'Marketing Knowledge of Librarians Questionnaire (MKLQ)' instrument was pre-tested on ten (10) academic librarians from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.69 was reported. The instrument is divided into three sections. Section one is the demographic scale which requested for bio-data of respondents. Section Two is tagged, 'Marketing Knowledge Scale (MKS)' and contained questions pertaining to respondents' knowledge of marketing concepts, identification of information products and services of the library and strategies deployed by the librarians to market these products and services. Section three is the 'Marketing Constraint Scale (MSC)' and it contained items on possible factors that could limit librarians from effectively marketing activities. Twelve (12) copies of the instrument were administered to all the twelve (12) librarians of the selected institution. All the copies of the administered questionnaire were



returned. This was a 100.0% response rate. The data obtained were collated, cleaned and analyzed to generate frequency tables and percentages and descriptive statistics.

Findings and Discussions of Results

This next -section presents the findings and discussions of key findings in line with the objectives of this study.

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution / characteristics of respondents. This is in terms of a age range, sex and job status .

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age Range (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
35-40	0	0.0
41-45	2	16.67
46-50	3	25.00
51-55	5	41.67
56-60	2	16.67
Total	12	100.0
Gender		
Male	5	41.67
Female	7	58.33
Total	12	100.0
Job Status		
Librarian II	1	8.3
Librarian I	5	41.7
Senior Librarian	4	33.3
Principal Librarian	1	8.3
University Librarian	1	8.3
Total	12	100.0

The respondents were asked to indicate the university library branch and age group they belong to; their gender, job status and work experience. The data as presented in Table 1 shows that age range of the respondents was between 41 to 60 years.

It further indicated that none of the respondents was in the 35-40 age range. 2 (16.67%) are in the 41-45 age range 3 (25.0%) are the 46-50 age range years, 5 (41.67%) are in the 51-55 age range while 2 (16.67%) we are aged in the 56-60 age range. 5(41.67%) of the respondents were male and 7(58.33%) were female. Therefore this study had more female than male. This is not surprising because until recently this profession was female dominated. Further, 1(8.3%) of the respondents holds the position of Librarian II officer, 5(41.7%) are

Librarian I, 4(33.3%) are Senior Librarian. Only one (8.3%) was a Principal Librarian and 1(8.3%) was the University Librarian. This shows that most staff hold the position of either Librarian I or Senior Librarians.

Research Objective 1: Identify marketing strategies used by librarians to market university library services and information products.

Table 2 presents marketing strategies used by the librarians to market O.O.U. Library services and information products.

Table 2: Marketing strategies used by librarians

Statements	VL (%)	L (%)	N (%)	H (%)	VH (%)	Mean	
User survey studies	33.3	-	8.3	58.3	-	33.30	25.00
Maximize the use of books as products	16.7	-	16.7	41.7	25.0	25.03	11.79
Interlibrary loan services	41.7	-	16.7	33.3	8.3	25.00	15.23
Improved borrowing privileges	33.3	16.7	-	41.7	8.3	25.00	15.23
Bindery and photocopy services	33.3	16.7	-	41.7	8.3	25.00	15.23
Reference services	25.0	25.0	-	33.3	16.7	25.00	6.78
Involvement in journal publication	25.0	-	8.3	58.3	8.3	24.98	23.57
Mailing / newsletter	33.3	25.0	-	33.3	8.3	24.98	11.79
Internet connectivity	16.7	16.7	16.7	33.3	16.7	20.02	7.42
Monthly book display	33.3	16.7	8.3	25.0	16.7	20.00	9.49
User education program including ICT training	25.0	8.3	8.3	41.7	16.7	20.00	13.97
Book reservation service	25.0	8.3	16.7	41.7	8.3	20.00	13.97
On request service	16.7	25.0	16.7	33.3	8.3	20.00	9.49
Conducive physical environment	25.0	8.3	16.7	41.7	8.3	20.00	13.97
Good disposition to users	25.0	8.3	16.7	41.7	8.3	20.00	13.97
Library website	25.0	16.7	41.7	8.3	8.3	20.00	13.97
Selective dissemination of information	25.0	16.7	25.0	25.0	8.3	20.00	7.46
Collaboration with other libraries	33.3	8.3	16.7	33.3	8.3	19.98	12.63
Suggestion boxes	33.3	8.3	16.7	33.3	8.3	19.98	12.63
Web 2.0 technologies and services	33.3	25.0	25.0	8.3	8.3	19.98	11.19
Compilation of bibliography	33.3	25.0	8.3	25.0	8.3	19.98	11.19
Weighted Mean						22.30	

Respondents were asked to indicate marketing strategies used to market library services and information products on a 5-point Likert scale as shown in Table 2. Respondents indicated that they conduct user survey studies to improve library services and information products ($\bar{x} = 33.30$) ranked highest followed by maximize use of books as products ($\bar{x} = 25.03$) and then interlibrary loan services ($\bar{x} = 25.00$) and improved borrowing privileges ($\bar{x} = 25.00$) amongst other strategies. The least indicated strategies are collaboration with other libraries ($\bar{x} = 19.98$), suggestion boxes ($\bar{x} = 19.98$), use of Web 2.0 technologies and services ($\bar{x} = 19.98$) and compilation of bibliographies ($\bar{x} = 19.98$). Using the weighted mean ($\bar{x} = 22.30$) as the benchmark to determine marketing strategies, it can be deduced that user survey studies to market library services and products, use of books as products, interlibrary loan services and improved borrowing privileges amongst others are prevalent strategies amused by respondents. Internet connectivity, monthly book displays, selective dissemination of information is moderately used by respondents. This is because the mean values of the indicators are lower than the weighted mean score. Collaboration with other libraries, suggestion boxes, use of Web 2.0 technologies and services and compilation of bibliographies are not so prevalent.

It can thus be inferred that academic librarians in O.O.U. libraries predominantly conduct user surveys, purchase and use highly relevant and current books as information products, render interlibrary loan services and improved borrowing privileges to market the university library's products and services to user communities. It can also be inferred that strategies such as collaboration with other libraries, suggestion boxes, use of Web 2.0 technologies as well as compilation of bibliographies are least used. Information obtained from these findings indicate that librarians at O.O.U. use various strategies that involve the use of the digital media, print media and events to market their library services and information products. This finding is also share by Yi (2016) who demonstrated that librarians surveyed in his study actually use a variety of effective strategies to promote library services and resources to users.

User studies are used to promote usage of library services and information products to patrons and were ranked highest by librarians. This implies that the librarians are involved in some form of market research or surveys in order to understand, better identify and satisfy patrons' needs and wants. Satisfying students and staff especially lecturers' needs will draw

them to the university library. This finding confirmed assertions of Kanaujia (2004) who found that market research involves the study of the actual and potential market size, user market segmentation and identification of users' needs. The finding however was not in agreement with the findings of Kutu and Olajide (2018) who indicated events as the pronounced promotional strategy used by public librarians in South-West, Nigeria.

Overall, the study indicated that print media and manual services are predominantly used. Internet connectivity, user education programs involving ICT training, use of library websites as well as Web 2.0 technologies and services are not ranked among the prevalent strategies used by the librarians. This finding do not agree with the findings by Bamigbola (2013) which revealed e-mails, telephone, library websites, faculty / departmental meetings and selective packaging of relevant information are prominent marketing strategies used by librarians in selected university libraries in Nigeria.

Objective 2: Identify factors that constitute barriers to marketing of library services and information products in academic librarians.

Table 3 presents factors that constituted barriers to marketing of library services and information products in academic librarians.

Table 3: Barriers to marketing of library services and information products

Factors	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	STD
Unstable Internet connectivity	16.7	16.7	-	41.7	25.0	25.03	11.79
Inadequate fund	8.3	8.3	-	41.7	41.7	25.00	19.28
Uncooperative staff attitudes	16.7	16.7	16.7	33.3	16.7	20.02	7.42
General lack of marketing know how	25.0	16.7	8.3	33.3	16.7	20.00	9.49
Notion that marketing is not applicable to libraries	16.7	8.3	16.7	33.3	25.0	20.00	9.49
Complex and complicated tasks involved in marketing processes	33.3	16.7	8.3	25.0	16.7	20.00	9.49
Lack of ICT skills	16.7	16.7	8.3	33.3	25.0	20.00	9.49

Failure to recognize the importance of marketing to libraries	25.0	8.3	16.7	25.0	25.0	20.00	7.46
Lack of time to devote to marketing	25.0	16.7	8.3	33.3	16.7	20.00	9.49
The rise of Internet and technology	25.0	16.7	8.3	41.7	8.3	20.00	13.97
Increasing end users expectations	25.0	16.7	25.0	25.0	8.3	20.00	7.46
Poor management support	16.7	8.3	16.7	33.3	25.0	20.00	9.49
Weighted Mean						20.77	

Field Survey, 2017; Key: SD = Strongly Disagreed; D = Disagreed; N = Not Sure; A = Agreed and SA = Strongly Agreed.

Respondents were asked to indicate level of agreement or disagreement on factors that constrain effective marketing of the university library services and information products on a 5-point Likert scale as shown in Table 3. The data indicated that unstable Internet connectivity ($\bar{x} = 25.03$) and inadequate funds ($\bar{x} = 25.00$) were ranked highest by respondents. Factors such as uncooperative staff attitudes ($\bar{x} = 20.02$), lack of marketing knowhow ($\bar{x} = 20.00$), notion that marketing is not applicable to libraries ($\bar{x} = 20.00$) as well as complex and complicated tasks involved in marketing processes ($\bar{x} = 20.00$). Further, increasing end users expectations ($\bar{x} = 20.00$) and poor management support ($\bar{x} = 20.00$) are not considered as challenges. One may therefore conclude that librarians at the O.O.U Library in Nigeria, considered lack of Internet connectivity and inadequate funds as challenges to effective marketing. It is also revealed that factors such as lack of marketing knowhow, notion that marketing is not applicable to libraries, complex and complicated tasks involved in marketing processes, increasing end users expectations, poor management support and many other factors are not challenges to librarians.

Unstable Internet connectivity and inadequate funds agreed with result of Opeyemi, Akinade and Ojo (2015) which revealed lack of funds, lack of time, inadequate staffing inadequate resources as impediments to effective marketing in selected academic libraries in South-West, Nigeria. These views are also share by Edewor et al (2016) who found that lack of facilities such as computers and accessories, lack of stable and reliable Internet connection as among other factors and challenges to effective marketing of library services and products in twenty (20) universities across Africa.

Conclusion

Marketing of a university library should focus on creating awareness on the available library, resources, services and information products to improve usage among the staff and students of the university using a variety of tools and techniques. This study however indicated prevalent use of print media and manual services among the librarians compared to electronic products and services. It also revealed that unstable Internet connectivity and inadequate funding are major challenges to effective marketing of library resources, services and products. Surprisingly, one would have thought that low usage of digital media could probably be due to lack of ICT skills and lack of marketing knowledge, experience and skills among librarians. The result however indicated unstable Internet connectivity and inadequate funding to purchase needed ICT facilities and resources needed to complement delivery of effective services and library products as major challenges. Unstable Internet connectivity and lack of funds is having far-reaching effects on the mode of delivery of library services, operations and information products. Thus, a university top management should strive to expand Internet connectivity bandwidth and provide more ICT tools needed by the university library. In like manner, library professionals should embrace skillful and innovative use of ICT tools and applications that suit the innovative marketing philosophy. This will enable the university library and its branches to offer world class and 24/7 services; and in the process meet increasing information needs and expectations of library patrons anytime, anywhere.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the study hereby recommends that:

1. The University Management should encourage the use of ICT tools and applications to enable the university library and its branches to skillfully and innovatively market information resources, products and services. In the same vein, the university library should purchase more computers, laptops, smart phones and other hand-held devices that will support the use of social media tools and services among library staff and users.
2. User surveys or market research as marketing strategies should be carried out on a regular basis in order to continuously understand, identify and satisfy varying and changing information needs of patrons. An annual survey of the actual number of library users, identification of users' needs, nature and extent of use of the library, its



resources and services, evaluation of existing services and products and development of new services and products could culminate into success of the library.

3. Finally, the University Library management should effectively utilize funding from the TET Fund to purchase needed, highly relevant, current and quality print resources. The funds should also be utilized to purchase and install electronic facilities and web-based resources to facilitate effective use of social media tools and services by library staff and the university community.

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