

INFORMATION ON MARKETING STRATEGIES THAT COULD BRING BACK LIBRARY USERS

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ABSTRACT

Marketing of library services are important for modern librarianship considering the developmental trend in the profession. The value of marketing is to ensure library survival and growth especially because with the increase in new demands on service provision and the rush for Google and other search engines brought forward through information and communication technologies (ICTs), there exist a threat on users' visits to the library which reveal doubts about the physical library. This paper revealed that marketing has been on for a very long time in libraries with many strategies already adopted but this study high lights more strategies from patrons opinion specially focused on bringing back users to the library. Study reveals inaccessibility to current information materials (72.9%) and uncomfortable study environment due to epileptic power supply (92.8%) as major problems necessitating marketing hence marketing is imperative because of changes in users 'needs, cyber competitions, changes in library resources and knowledge interrelatedness that libraries must continually cater for. These include library publication/University bulletin, orientation, personal assistance, referral services, online database searches and counseling. Regrettably, no strategy reflect on the emerging trend of social networking like Twitter, face book, MySpace etc. Study revealed respondents opinion of what should be done to bring back users hence, researchers recommend adherence to that; in addition to the opening of library face book page to announce continuous updates of library activities, researches and services at any one point in time.

Keywords: Libraries, Marketing Strategies, Bibliographic Information Services, Public relations.

INTRODUCTION

The ordinary meaning of marketing implies the activity of presenting, advertising and selling a company's products in the best possible way. However, in its exact and real application in the library world, the marketing concept connotes making the process of access to knowledge simplistic and all-embracing in attracting users of information resources to materials available. The Library is presented as a hub of learning in the plethora network of knowledge. In its thematic application, marketing is an instrument for promoting knowledge services in an aesthetic environment of the Library. Books and journals constitute the realm of knowledge transfer and information foraging. Hence, Library and Information Science is a special area that informs and influences the citizenry of the need for knowledge promotion.

The professional services offered are intricate because knowledge is diversified in all disciplines and requires great skills to seek information resources, organize them and provide equitable access to users. Libraries operate in different establishments (Industrial, Community, Schooling and Recreational), it is essential that for proper marketing to be done infrastructure must be on ground so as to facilitate acquisition of Information resources, their processing and timely display for users' utilization. This infrastructure includes Information Technology components with security facilities such as standby generator, air conditioners and a snack area to cater for users' refreshment. The quintessential idea is that one cannot market what one does not have (Lawal, 2015).

However, librarians' involvement in marketing can be viewed here as the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently. Thus the essence of marketing involves finding out what the users want, then setting out to meet those needs. Librarians are participating in this process of assessing their users' needs and trying to fulfill them. Recent development in this aspect includes use of conversational tool such as knowledge café situated in the library as a positive marketing strategy (www.gurteen.com). Thus, we are already marketing our library information skills but to what extent is it done? Therefore, the necessity to research on strategies that would bring back users to the library is the concern of this study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Traditional Library practice has of recent, been marked with many attendant problems ranging from poor funding which resulted in meager purchases and scarcity of scholarly materials to outright stagnation of journals

subscriptions. Nwali (1991) had observed that Nigeria shared with other developing countries a variety of problems in providing adequate number of high quality books. Jegede (1992) concurs in an examination of the origin and effect of shortage of books in Law libraries and the legal profession in Nigeria.

Apeji (1998) had decried the preponderant use of foreign research literature in all aspect of curriculum researches. Similarly, Apeji and Obe (2012) in their survey proffer the reasons behind this scarcity. The results showed lack of funds as topmost on the list 90.9%, inadequate production facilities 76.36%, Non-existence of a national book policy and poor equipped libraries among others 14%. This had been quietly maneuvered by political corruption as Obe (2008) revealed that the history of book scarcity could be traceable and attributed to the collapse of the Nigerian economy and noted that in 1966 when the Nigerian military took over the government of the country, the acute and endemic culture of basic goods and service became the order of the day and this reverberated extensively in the book industry.

These resulted in high level mutilation and display of deviant attitudes as in hiding of materials in different shelves, not original location of the materials; and users' refusal to return borrowed materials for fear of losing its use when needed. Another major problem was private subscription to journals and the inability of librarians to renew this subscription as at when due thus leaving the library with archaic information materials. This scenario did not appeal to users any-more as most of them consistently left the library in a dissatisfied and frustrated mood hence the search for better ways to satisfy their information needs curiosity.

Consequently, before libraries were able to adopt use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), some computer operators working in e-bercafe had privately started the use of these modern trends, sold the innovation to users, captured them out of librarians' grip and projected themselves as sharing the professional space of librarians as keepers of the gateway of information. However, libraries have now adopted and are utilizing ICTs for service delivery which gives rise to changes in information, its scope, demand and method of handling. Challenges to library services from changes in educational approaches, the impact of technology, new methods for information provision and declining budgets have meant that marketing is now so essential that it cannot be considered a separate function and many libraries have come to appreciate the contribution and application that marketing concepts can make in quality service delivery. The following objectives were formulated to guide the study;

1. To identify and access problem areas in the marketing of library and information services.
2. To determine dimensions of marketing information services.
3. To identify marketing strategies and ascertain whether they are helping to bring back users.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumber (2004) submits that the history of marketing library services began long before the concept was born, as improved personal relations between librarians and readers. According to Kotter, "Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of target markets needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets. It is a long-term and continued information management process (Kotler, 2006).

The concept of bringing back users can be traced to poor facilities that engineer poor services and a de-motivational work force that no longer put in their best in terms of service rendition. Ironically, the marketing undertakings and progressions inside any library cannot be said to be complete unless the clientele interchange their livelihood for the services rendered by the library and its staff as well as the institution by also expressing their needs. This would boost up personal and collective ideas in place to achieve a combination of marketing elements to satisfy the users (target) market. Dillon (2011) states that marketing of library and information resources can lead to a deeper and richer relationship with library constituents, new library partnership with organizations, additional funding of resources, new and expanded roles for libraries within the community and increases in the morale among library staff.

One of the many reasons and challenges for marketing library services had anchored on the creation of positive image- Some users perceive librarians as trained and skilled but not as professionals and users have no idea about their qualification and training requirements hence perceive librarians as retrieval clerks of low social status, not competent to help users. This attitudinal behavior is however not verified in professional literature.

According to Patton (2012), many researchers blame librarians for not being proactive hence it is important that professionals communicate skillfully as this elicits information about users' needs.

Steadley (2003) specifies some reasons for marketing library services to bring back users as follows: competition for customers, competition for resources, it enables librarians to maintain their relevance in the profession and avoid being taken for granted, it promotes an updated image of librarians, it ensures their visibility and they are seen as valuable community resources, it ensures their survival, and it is beneficial to library image. In complementing this viewpoint, Das & Karn (2008) point out that there are unique reasons why marketing orientation is required and they include: to enable the librarians understand customers, commitment to customers' satisfaction, to enable the library to grow, to improve the library image, for management of our libraries, to attract more funds from the parent institution since management is motivated by the output of its sections and also provides justification for the proper utilization of the funds provided.

However, the present writers submitted that in order to effectively strategize, librarians need to embrace aspects of marketing function in research. In designing the marketing mix and developing its plan, Sharma & Bhardwaj (2009) reveal the seven P's (7Ps) which have become central to libraries – product, price, place, promotion, participants, physical evidence, and process and analysis, service planning and promotion. These are a combination of Koontz and Rockwod's 4ps on one side as well as Rafiq and Ahmed's 3ps. They are explained as follows;

Product-products or services (concerns customer needs and wants) of the general Reference and information services department and involves the information, reference and ancillary services that add value such as personal assistance, referral services, online databases searches, document delivery and inter-library loan.

Price-pricings in use of the library is usually that of the time and effort the user spends traveling to the library as well as the time and effort spent searching literature.

Place- place of service, based upon knowledge of the market of a library is essential in order to identify users and their discrete information needs and want. To expand the service area, the library may have branches, book mobiles or electronic access, etc.

Promotion-promotion includes utilizing persuasive information about general information services and communicating this information to target market segments that are potential users. Publicity, public relations, personal representative, advertising and sales promotion are the five kinds of promotion. **Participants** - The library person- all actors who play a part in reference and information service delivery.

Physical Evidence -The environment in which the reference and information services are delivered that facilitates the performance and communication of the services.

Participants - All human actors who play a part in reference and information services delivery, namely the library's personnel.

Process - The procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities by which the reference and information services are acquired.

Based on the above Taxonomy, Sharma & Bhardwaj (2009) further reveal that these call for various activities in marketing such as marketing research and customers' analysis, development of products and services as well as pricing, distribution and evaluation of products and services. That these activities are equally applicable in the area of information products and services, methods remain the same while policy varies.

Information professionals should market their services in order to actuate use of the library. Once the users' needs and future trends are identified, the place and the time of operation and the strategies required to achieve them, become realizable. Marketing plan ensures that library's services and products are viewed from a clear and focused form (Sharma & Bhardwaj, 2009).

In a recent publication, to Ukwoma (2014) states enormous benefits of marketing but which are often confronted with challenges from users and management, Librarians, it was argued, should know that users want to be informed about subject matters that are of value to them but are turned off by continual library marketing campaign of a service that may not be right/good or available for them. Steadley (2003) had previously enumerated the problems of lack of training and education, the complexity of marketing,

librarians' attitude especially in reluctance to borrow ideas from the private sector and their confusion of the practical meaning of the term 'marketing'. Since the library is not a profit-making organization the conservative feeling is that users should always seek assistance for enquiries. Singh & Shukla (2011) comparatively observe that marketing allows organizations to use their limited resources and opportunities to increase sales and achieve sustainable competitive advantage. For the library, they identified the function of marketing as;

Analysis of users; planning new products, marketing plans and target markets; implementation of the plans related to marketing; control with regard to standards, quality and progress of marketing goals; identification of objectives in line with parent Organization's goals; promote demand of existing products and services; and execution of preparatory analysis which assist staff to develop a customer oriented outlook.(p.641).

In strategizing to bring back users to the library, Lawal (2015) outlined the following; Book exhibition at least 2-3 times a year, hosting of book display, improving relationship with booksellers as well as book donors', organize an open day for users to come and see what the library has while professionals would give advice and information; and, increase radio and television show talks on the advantages of libraries on the development of the community. Curry & Copeman (2005) opine that quality reference services involving a relationship between the user and librarians within a "Cycle of Dimension of service", willingness to assist users; knowledge (how to assist users), assessment (of users' needs) and action (physically moving with the users) is important.

In the submission of Sharma & Bhardwaj (2009) referred to earlier, the following strategies are important for consideration.

- * Personal skill of the library staff. This indicates the manner of reception of users either personally or by phone calls which will engender interaction on the challenges of the library service. This would encourage a library-user relationship to bring sustain users interest in the library.

- * Users can be encouraged to use e-mail facility to transact library business for a prompt attention by the staff.

The provision of internet facilities is a norm for service delivery. This improves the library image as it delivers enhanced services and guarantees rewards in terms of user services and satisfaction. A library home page can serve as a promotional tool for advertising services. There should be a network spread such that in every library division users can be connected. Creation of a welcoming environment to users which requires being patient with them in their expression of needs as this would build their confidence and friendliness.

It is reported that the personality of the librarian determines the rate of utilization of the library by its users. If he /she is friendly and professional, the user would be convinced that there is an approachable and reliable information expert in that library. If the users are drawn to the library by the mien of the librarian, they will then be able to browse through the books and thus become aware of the availability of materials relevant to their studies and research and the use of the collection increases (Ajileye-Laogun, 2004).

Librarians should know how to communicate well with users from different cultures and also show respect for cultural differences as they learn ways of styles of communication because the way people communicate varies. Du Praw & Axner (2002) held that some words and phrases are used differently and Sharma & Bhardwaj (2009) gave an example of users who had huge fines to pay for a book he borrowed because he misunderstood the concept of returning a book to mean –“putting the book back on the shelf” hence, librarians must learn to be good listeners and communicators especially with people from different cultures. Again, librarians must consider divers approaches to communicating with users.

Gordon (2011) also identified networking through listservs professional meetings and conferences, advertisements, websites, printing flyers and newsletter, e-mails, business cards, church and community newsletters as well as printing the library's name on pens or pencils as gifts to people who visit the library. Ukwoma (2014) further suggest that the excursion and visits to other libraries which is already in practice is important as a strategy to bring back users.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was used for the study carried out in University of Calabar Library. The population was 1804 registered users. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 500 undergraduate registered users. Accordingly, 500 questionnaires were distributed in the reader services units which comprised Social Sciences, Medical, Humanities, Law, Reference as well as Science and Technology Divisions of the library. Questionnaire was distributed with a condition that only registered users who use the library often (at least thrice a week) were eligible to respond. Only 221 usable copies were returned and analyzed for the study. Somehow this constraint may constitute limitation to the study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information of Users: Out of the 221 respondents, 50(22.62%) were from Social Science, 89(40.27%) from Law Reference, 28(12.67%) from Science and Technology divisions of the library. Also, 127(57.47%) were males while 94(42.53%) were females.

TABLE 1: PROBLEMS THAT NECESSITATE MARKETING LIBRARIES

S/N	ITEM	Highest problem	High problem	Moderate problem
1	Inaccessibility to current information materials	161(72.9%)	47(21.3%)	13(5.9%)
2	Inaccessibility of professional staff.	-----	187(84.6%)	34(15.4%)
3	Inaccessibility to special collection because of mutilated materials not replaced.	37(16.7%)	139(62.9%)	45(20.4%)
4	Inaccessibility to books that are catalogued but not on the shelves.	40(18.1%)	170(76.9%)	11(5.0%)
5	Uncomfortable study environment due to epileptic power supply and resulting heat.	205(92.8%)	16(7.2%)	-----

Respondents rated as the highest problems, the inaccessibility to current information materials 161(72.9%) and uncomfortable study environment due to epileptic power supply and resulting heat. Also, rated as high problems include inaccessibility to professional staff 187(84.6%) in accessibility to special collection because of mutilated materials not replaced 139(62.9%) and inaccessibility to books that are catalogued but not on the shelves 170 (76.9 %).

TABLE 2: DIMENSION OF MARKETING LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES.

S/N	ITEM	Highly Marketed	Moderately Marketed	Lowly Marketed
1	The library benefit s from provision of print /non-print materials by authors, private and institutional donors.	20(9.0%)	183(82.81%)	18(8.1%)
2	There is a professional linkage of authors & users as brokered by Librarians.	-----	34(5.2%)	187(84.6%)
3	The library collection is current & covers the knowledge areas of the Institution.	56(25.3%)	130(58.82%)	35(15.8%)
4	Teaching of library skills strategies promotes use of library in all disciplines.	190(85.97%)	31(14.0%)	-----
5	Self direction is moderated by staff recognition of the user in guiding use of library information.	-----	49(22.2%)	172(77.8%)

From the responses analyzed in table 2, the most highly marketed dimension is teaching of library skills with 190(85.97%) responses. The provision of print and non-print materials 183(82.81%) and current collection covering the knowledge areas of the Institution 130(58.82%) are rated as moderately marketed while professional linkage of authors and users as brokered by librarians 187(84.6%) as well as self direction moderated by staff recognition of the user in guiding use of library information 172(77.83%) is rated as lowly marketed.

TABLE 3: MARKETING STRATEGIES IN LIBRARIES

S/N	ITEM	Yes	NO	Undecided
1	Library publication/ University bulletin	59(26.7%)	150(67.9%)	12(5.4%)
2	Orientation	200(90.5%)	15(6.8%)	6(2.7%)
3	Campus Radio programme	-----	180(81.5%)	41(18.6%)
4	Personal assistance / professional time & effort spent to search literature for users.	192(86.9%)	9(4.07%)	20(9.0%)
5	Flyers	-----	32(14.5%)	189(85.5)
6	Referral services	167(75.6%)	30(13.6%)	24(10.9%)
7	Online database searches	202(91.4%)	3(1.4%)	16(7.2%)
8	News letters	7(3.2%)	100(45.3%)	114(57.6%)
9	Document delivery	27(12.2%)	8(3.6%)	186(84.2%)
10	Counseling(Librarians identification of users discrete information needs)	174(78.7%)	8(3.6%)	39(17.6%)
11	Suggest other strategies you feel can make you comfortable to use the library	174(78.7%)	8(3.6%)	39(17.6%)

59 (26.7%) of respondents agreed to library publication and University bulletin, 200 (90.5%) orientation, 192 (86.9%), personal assistance given to search literature for users, 167 (75.6%), referral services, 202(91.4%), online database searches and 174 (78.7%), counseling. Also, 150(67.9%) respondents disagreed to the strategies of library publication/ University bulletin, 180(81.5%) to campus radio programme and 100 (45.3%) disagreed to newsletters. Furthermore, 189(85.5%) respondents were undecided to the use of flyers, newsletter114 (51.6%) and document delivery186 (84.2%). Respondents were also granted opportunity to suggest strategies they feel could make them comfortable o use the library.

100% suggested constant power supply and the use of air-conditioner to be mounted in the library. Others, above 50% indicated the following;

- a) There should be acquisition of current information materials.
- b) Neatness of the vicinity especially the toilet areas.
- c) Employment of young friendly librarians.
- d) Adjustment of opening and closing time to be 7am -5pm with structured arrangement by management to pay staff for extra services.

Finally, the effect of marketing on library users reveals results below (table 4).

S/N	ITEM	Yes	No	Undecided
1	I use the library because of the marketing strategies used to make me aware of information resources	160(72.4%)	18(8.1%)	3(1.4%)
2	The strategies helped me to freely relate with Librarians	80(36.2%)	50(22.6%)	15(6.8%)
3	I have Librarians to trust when I have information needs	200(90.5%)	9(4.1%)	12(5.4%)
4	The Librarians do referrals for me	167(75.6%)	30(13.6%)	24(10.9%)
5	Coming to the library has benefited me in the search & utilization	208(94.1%)	-----	13(5.9%)

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that inaccessibility to current information materials and uncomfortable study environment due to epileptic power supply are the highest problems that necessitate marketing libraries. Respondents rate whatever hinders the proper use and satisfaction of library resources as high but this is only to be expected. This study tallies with Steadley (2003) who identified competition to resources among the reasons for marketing. Respondents rated the teaching of library skills as a high dimension of marketing but the provision of print and non-print was moderate. Study also reveals that strategies like use of library publication/university bulletin, Orientation, personal assistance online database searches and counseling are in adequate use. There are some disagreements about the effectiveness or otherwise of other strategies such as Campus radio program and newsletter publication. This finding tallied with Lawal (2015) who advised among other strategies, an increase in radio and television talks on the advantages of libraries to the development of the community.

The study further revealed user opinion of the strategies to be adapted to bring them back to the library and they these include; infrastructure. For example, -constant power supply and mounting of air-conditioners, provision of current information materials, neatness of the vicinity especially the toilet areas, employment of young and friendly librarians and the adjustment of both opening and closing time for library use as well as preparation of Management to cater for library staff welfare at the provision of such extra services. Finally, the study reveals that majority of present library clientele use the library because of the strategies employed to market library and information services.

Based on the result of the study, the researchers recommend that Institution's Management strive to quickly adhere to users suggestions so as to bring back more patrons. _More so, since this reflects the major objective of a library to its clientele, the researchers suggest that there be a redress of this scenario especially to reflect the information age. This is where the barrier of time and space is conquered with regards to the search and utilization of information resources in libraries.

CONCLUSION

Library and Information professionals are already involved in marketing strategies to help sustain the library in spite of the enormous challenges which seen to emerge every day. increase by day. From the review of literature, strategies have been adopted already but because librarians still seek to bring back to the library our esteemed customers, through self-evaluation, many more strategies have been highlighted to suit contemporary librarianship. An increase in library- users' relationship, maintenance of knowledge infrastructure of current book stock and analyses that even the clientele have a duty to perform for the success of marketing especially since they are the ones to be satisfied at the end of the day hence, they need to let the library know where they are not satisfied through polite communication processes. They are to open up to discuss their needs and allow the library serve them with their professional skills. The requirement of trust is necessary for this relationship.

One can conclude that Lawal's (2015) suggestion is instructive for the relationship described above which cannot be coherent if there are no materials to use to satisfy users needs.

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