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KNOWLEDGE AND USERS' PREFERENCES OF CONTEMPORARY MARKETING STRATEGIES USED IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This study investigated knowledge and users' preferences of contemporary marketing strategies used in academic libraries. It is a user study innovation characterized by granting users' with the information appropriate for better library usage and their feedback to analyze how what is presented to them makes an impact towards their attainment of academic goals.*

Methodology: *This study carried out in University of Calabar Library adopted survey research design on a population of 1804 registered users. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 600 undergraduate and postgraduate registered users. Accordingly, 600 copies of questionnaire were distributed in the reader services units, which comprised Social Sciences, Medical, Africana, Humanities, Law, Reference as well as Science and Technology/Annex 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 428 usable copies were returned and these were analyzed for the study.*

Findings: *Study revealed users' knowledge of marketing strategies in the following sequence Digital media marketing 423(98.83%), Awareness services marketing 377(88.08%) and Conducive environment marketing 224(52.34%). The result of preferences showed Digital media marketing as most preferred with 421(98.36%), Awareness services marketing had 398 (92.99%) respondents and Conducive environment marketing 204(47.66%). On the challenges, two respondents (5&34) frankly indicated their lack of understanding for the term conducive environment. This has a great implication for the result altogether but other respondents revealed their challenges with regards to inappropriate time fixed for library use of e-library, epileptic power supply, low bandwidth, that causes the network to show while pages were unable to open and staff negative attitude. Suggestions were given to encourage the publications of local news and magazines, which would help to intimate users of issues relating to library use among others.*

Originality: *This article offer valuable insight on the users' knowledge and preferences of contemporary marketing strategies in academic libraries. This indicate that, it is only when users' are given what they desire, that they could be said to be satisfied.*

Classification: *Research paper*

Keywords: Information, librarians' empathy, Knowledge, users' preferences, Contemporary

Librarianship, Marketing strategies, Academic libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary librarianship focuses on giving users' the needed information at the right time and place. This is because actual and potential users' of information are busy people who have diverse needs at any one point in time or the other. In addition, in every age, there are changes in technological expertise which affects the way things are being done (and in library, how information is being searched for and utilized) about their clients. Librarianship has grown as a service profession to the extent that it could be sustained as the needs of clients are taken seriously.

While several authors have different views on marketing strategies, Sharma and Bhardway (2009) pointed out that librarians' personal skills in receiving users either personally or during phone calls was important. This is because it might make users feel relaxed enough to make suggestions at whatever complaints they may have or provide e-mail alerts which staff should be prompt to grant reply. However, market specialist typically favor their own area of expertise and perform tactics well but they are not necessarily the best resource in determining strategies – “the right things to be doing”. It is also important to state that until the users' applaud the services presented by librarians', it cannot be said to be fulfilling. Therefore, the critical question, which needs constant evaluation, is; which library marketing strategy really help users succeed academically, focusing on users' preferences of the many strategies already used in academic libraries. These include; conducive environment marketing, print media marketing, awareness services marketing, and digital media marketing.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Knowledge, which is popularly held as power is an enabler in all facets of life that aids humans to distinguish where they have been, the progress line and the final destination. To this effect, library users' who are today's learners and the hope of tomorrows scholarship needs to be

given a better foundation so as to learn the tenets required for academic stability. This would help for scholars' present development as well as the basis for catering for future generations of scholars otherwise; the creative progress, which is essential for academic innovation, would remain elusive. Considering therefore the challenges to library services due to changes in educational approaches, technological effect on users' daily life, interest of University management concerning budget cuts and the librarians' settlement on marketing ideas for delivering quality services, the researcher formulates the following objectives to guide the study.

1. To find out users' knowledge of contemporary marketing strategies in academic libraries
2. To determine users' preferences of contemporary marketing strategies in academic libraries
3. To identify challenges users' face with these marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conducive library environment marketing strategies and utilization of e-resources

By definition, a conducive library environment as in the context of this study is a platform, devoid of both physical intimidation and emotional frustration, which allows for a free exchange of ideas and encourages learning. Key proponents of the learning process are librarians and learners, whose freedom of interaction, safety and respect is equally guaranteed within the physical and emotive environment they find themselves.

Oyedum (2006) in the findings of her study reported 81.4% of respondents to be dissatisfied with the reading areas of their university library, while 18.6% were satisfied with the reading areas of the library. Similarly, 16.4% of the respondents indicated the library seats to be good for reading, while 83.6% indicated the library seats to be poor. Her study equally exposed the library to be bright for reading after the response of 21.4% respondents, while 78.6% of the respondents stated

the library not to be bright for reading. Equally, Inyang and Lawal (2015) in their study found 72.9% of users to have reported an uncomfortable study environment due to epileptic power supply and heat, while 76.9% reported inaccessibility of library resources, because these resources were not found on shelves and this of course was very frustrating to library use.

Adegoke (2015) upheld that knowledgeable and enthusiastic members of staff constituted conducive environments, because they became great promotional and persuasive tools to the library users. The second import to formal learning was a library environment, which was neat, well ventilated and spacious to allow free movement. Adams (2008) revealed that reading could be effective and interesting if done in such conducive environments.

Conducive environments to this end meant settings in which students felt essentially, physically, socially, psychologically and ethnically secure and could work cooperatively and independently as they deem fit. Such an environment maintained acceptable levels of student conduct, and used disciplinary strategies that resulted in a positive environment conducive to student learning. Hence, it was important to have academic libraries that showed mutual respectfulness. It helped Students with the need to understand when they needed to be quiet and when they needed to collaborate with others (Blog@ wordpress.com, p2).

The Herald (2013) hypothesized as a strategy, a marketer was quick to remind his customers that though a good product sold itself, its reputation could be heightened through repackaging and constant advertising; and it was indisputable that an experienced marketer of the library was a safety assurance to library users. Trustworthiness sold the library, thus a competent librarian would be aware that users were not dullards, as they could easily discern mediocrity from excellence; hence, librarians needed to know that some students had different learning styles and needed to be respectful towards them.

Omekwu and Echezona (2008) reiterated that for the university library to be conducive, they were expected to be where their users were, and to fully recognize the fact that the world was living in virtual realities where library services were in cyberspace and were not affected by opening and closing hours. According to Ajogboye (2010) therefore, a conducive environment entailed satisfaction of users' desires. Users in academic libraries now assumed they could be given what they needed, when they needed it and from whichever location it may be. Hence, Okiy (2005) asserted that when University libraries fulfilled the expected roles of providing to users a range of information communication technologies and e-resources necessary for retrieving such information quickly from both immediate and remote databases, and to create a needed library cooperation and consortium initiatives, it could be said to be a conducive environment.

The Herald (2013) in its report identified emotion to play a significant role in any learning process; thus, mutual respect to it remained indispensable in exploitation of academic libraries, therefore the library user must have it while advancing for a conducive environment. This means that a user, who feels disrespected in the process of utilizing library materials, may easily get frustrated and as such disengage from consuming information materials in the library.

Consequently, Oyedum (2011) enjoined Libraries to endeavor to keep the reading environment inviting and attractive. Inferentially, users are to be made to feel relaxed, respected, trusted, accepted, friendly and safe. Hence, an un-intimidating, tolerant and accommodating environment may be described to be conducive. According to the author, environmental factors such as good ventilation, noise-free reading areas and physical facilities like furniture and lighting / illumination were necessary for adequate utilization of university libraries to be achieved.

Nwalo and Oyedum (2007) suggested that the reading environment of libraries be improved through the following means; provision of adequate reading space, chairs, tables, toilet

and good ventilation. For effective marketing of the library, too, the environment would need to be quiet to make for reading and study activities. A study of selected university libraries conducted by Kavulya (2004) in Kenya accentuated libraries' prerequisites to be implementation of extra systemic techniques for collecting data on users' needs if they were to design and deliver services that fit their user's requirements.

Furthermore, adequate illumination of libraries according to Idachaba (1998) could be derived from two sources: power (electricity) and natural light (energy). Without adequate lighting, academic libraries he reiterated cannot perform their functions, particularly when they open into the night. Therefore, it was good to consider the eminence, concentration and rate for mounting it and its continual impending up-keep from the on-set. He supported the use of Fluorescents which though, costly, last longer and produced brighter illumination. In other words, bulbs brought out incandescent lighting and were costly to maintain.

Abbasi, Tucker, Fisher and Gerrity (2014:5) revealed library spaces perceive to make conducive environments: quiet and peaceful environment- 242, Good furniture-224, nice and clean environment- 200, conducive for motivation and concentration- 194, and air-conditioned/pleasant indoor temperature- 194. Zakaria and Daud (2009:6) summed a conducive environment to be meaningful and logical if viewed and discussed under four sectors: teaching, students, facilities and research. They advocated that, to produce quality teaching, lecturers' competencies should not be compromised. More so, Westwood (2011) noted that it was necessary more than ever before, for librarians to provide quiet study spaces, for a retreat from noise and bluster from voices of the commercial world loudly competing for attention. He noted that often times, the greatest leisure one could have was to enjoy silence for a short while.

Awareness services marketing strategies and utilization of e- resources.

Although awareness services are popularly described as complex with difficulty to draw a sharp line of demarcation, they have been in use for a very long time. Earlier authors, (Guha, 1968 & Bottle, 1970) called it, general alerting services. Scholars have used the following words to explain its meaning: annotated documentation, local documentation, advanced information, appetizer, express information and early warning. Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) gave the following data on how users got aware of information resources: 137(34.9%) personal search 83 (21.1%) reference services 51 (13%) and library use instruction.

It is described as speedy in the dissemination of information and comprehensive in coverage. In this age of information and communication technologies, (ICTs) coverage includes and remains not limited to new books, tables of contents alerts, Blogs, Really Simple Syndication / Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds, Facebook, Twitter, social bookmarking and citation. Libraries endeavor to provide effective and efficient services to users who when satisfied refer their friends and acquaintances to them.

Popoola (2008) conducted a study on faculty awareness and use of library information products and services in South – West Nigeria universities. Systematic random sampling was used to select 446 members of the faculty from a population of 4459 in the universities. The study found out there was a significant difference of 77(28%) in faculty awareness of available library information products and services. In addition, it did not have sufficient knowledge of those library products and services pertinent to their teaching and research activities (90-33.5%, 100-25%, and 210-52.5% representing rarely, occasionally and most frequency in use of library products). Again, the study proved that the 190 faculty members (47.5%) who rarely used library resources were unaware of such. The survey also revealed that the level of knowledge of faculty staff had positive relationship with the frequency of use of the library. The researcher

recommended that user education program and public relations should be embarked upon to improve faculty awareness of library information products and services.

Odine (2011) defined library services as a set of activities that a library performs in order to satisfy users' information needs. In library marketing, library and users' demands are the market, users the consumers, commodities exchanged the documents and library services, sellers the library staff; and buyers the users. Therefore, a discussion with any of these channels will result in giving information that grants awareness to patrons. Recent study by Inyang and Lawal (2015) revealed that library publication/university bulletin, orientation, personal assistance, referral services, online database searches and counseling were seen as strategies to cater for the awareness of knowledge interrelatedness of users.

McClary (2014) presented matters on visual story telling. In his opinion, 'writing would become ever more important, but those words would not be confined to the pages'' (p.1). Stories told through video and images to him, have a growing digital experience. Scholars represent their ideas, articles and works in pictorial forms so that e-resources could be viewed through YouTube, which is highly acceptable to users. Powers and Shedd (1995) submitted that awareness services could accomplish three goals, which were image, action, and philosophical goals.

Adegoke (2015) presented exhibitions and displayed current awareness service, electronic billboard, selective dissemination of information (SDI), and audio-visuals as the screen to reveal information on e-resources in academic libraries. Ogunsola (2011) revealed that librarians could answer patrons 'enquiries through personal e-mail and mailing lists. By so doing, they could provide specialized backups for those on the enquiry desks. A digital library carries out electronic searches for its users for their course work, assignments, and projects.

In the view of Olaosun (2007), acquisitions were done with computers, with online selection, payment, and subscription. Technology has made awareness on acquisition, processing, storage, retrieval of information faster, indexing more interesting, cheaper, understandable and more efficient. Manjunatha and Shivalingaiah (2004) presented awareness service quality characteristics to be access, tangibles, competence, reliability, communication responsiveness, courtesy, security, credibility, and understanding. These were further consolidated into five, which were tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Authors observed that managing service quality was not a fashion, but a commitment from top management for continuous improvement in the library.

Tella, Owolabi and Attama (2009) indicated that libraries provided facilities and services necessary for the success of all formal programs of an instruction. They provided access to the world of knowledge that lay beyond the boundaries of a field of study and brought information materials, students and scholars together under conditions that encouraged reading for pleasure, self-discovery, personal growth, and sharpening of intellectual curiosity. In addition, Igbokwe (2009) study revealed that library orientation, in-house use display, exhibitions, and internet services increased awareness of users.

Nwalo and Oyedum (2007) emphasized that new services be introduced by Librarians. Apart from new services, make improvement on the already existing services in the library. Sharma and Bhardwaj (2009) specified newer services to include online version of past examination papers and e-print archive of researches. Recham, Shafique and Mahmood (2011) stressed that user satisfaction and optimizations of resources had become important areas for libraries to maintain awareness.

Digital media marketing strategy and utilization of e-resources.

The word digital is a machine-readable media, which predates the internet, and modern computers; a technical term, which refers to a type of circuit that performs operations at discrete voltage level. Inyang and Lawal (2015) upheld the success of any library to depend on its ability to satisfy its users and entice them to keep coming back to use the resources. Aina (1983) studied access to scientific and technological information, and explained that out of 7014 papers published on the matter from 1990-1975, 5607 (79%) were journal articles, 1116 (20%) journal article not indexed or abstracted making them inaccessible and, 77% of the un-indexed to be published in Nigeria.

Crawford and Daye (2000) cited in Togia and Tsigilis (2009) found most of the students were using search engines and a relatively fewer number of them were making use of online databases like Medline or PsycLit. Adewale, Olatundun, Yemisi's and Adewale's (2015) study concluded that 73% of the respondents found library services effective: 53% agreed that its resources were adequate, but only 11% used electronic resources.

Ukachi (2009) had reiterated that nowadays, many users' especially students' preferred the use of electronic resources to prints versions, because e-resources tended to give them satisfaction and improved their attitude towards library utilization. To achieve this, many strategies were employed by librarians and information professionals. McClary (2014) advised the trend towards providing useful, relevant contents to always continue; therefore, information on resources and activities of the academic libraries were turned into bite-size tips on Twitter, blog post, and e-books.

Adegoke (2015) recommended online dissemination of information to users through the internet, by creating links for current information on academic library portals, interactive websites and good media relations. Ntalkos, Kambourakis and Damopoulos (2014) presented the use of mobile devices as powerful tools and new communication channels potential users. This, they called

“mobile marketing” and revealed that many of such applications were already in use with the aim of increasing sales of products and services.

Dadzie (2005) found that a greater number of students and faculty members surveyed ideally choose Google and Yahoo, for their search engines, while very few of them were making use of the OPAC and of the scholarly databases, the library subscribed to. In another instance Shuling (2006), revealed that post-graduate students, who most passionately used electronic resources, were frequently using the full-text databases purchased by the library, but they also preferred resources offered online free of charge.

James-Gilboe (2010) study found that 86% library customers were often unaware of services available to them, although 94% of them thought of the collections so carefully assembled and funded but not explored to the fullest. Yemi- Peters, Omoniwa and Achunma (2013) held that with the advent of technologies like the internet, electronic books and CD-ROM, library services were made easily available and accessible to users who were faced with multiple channels of information delivery.

Adeloye (2003) presented a number of practical ideas: the use of promotional techniques comprising online brochures, library guides and blog exhibitions. Ashcroft’s (2002) study presented seminars for students, alphabetic list of e-journal titles, which are shown on the library web pages, advertisements, leaflets and e-mail alerts (p.151). The internet was used to promote library services and the techniques used to promote lending library Website were cross search, circulation expiration alert, library portals and live digital reference desk. (Ju, 2006).

Some scholars (Hinchliffe & Leon, 2011; Moulaison & Corrado, 2011; Yi, 2014) were of the opinion that to keep pace with evolving information technologies, librarians use a group of digital media applications. These they said should include blogs, wikis, podcasting, and media-sharing

apparatuses like YouTube, Flickr, and social networking services in the form of Twitter and Facebook to market their services and resources with mixed success. Blogs and wikis, as well as social schmoozing they said would help users meet people and information distribution sites by means of Facebook, Flickr and YouTube and create new types of content. Information professionals' use according to them tools such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication), tagging and bookmarking as a means of promotion.

Admad and Abawajy (2014) in their study reported only digital services to have direct impact on users' perception and satisfaction as digital end-users, although they agreed that such services as interlibrary loans, reference services, Bibliographic search were important in conventional library settings. To them, new services, which make for access to digital collections like e-journals, e-books, online reference and document delivery and online library skills, have been introduced by libraries.

Philips (2011) thus summed up these findings as a confirmation of concerned librarians' voice about disconnection between what libraries offer and what was their users' awareness about that. She therefore suggested the use of Facebook since it was fundamentally about relationships. She stated that the relationship users may have with the library might differ from those enjoyed with peers on Facebook though she upheld that Facebook could help to cultivate a more valuable part of personal networks. This constituted a relationship, which extended beyond books to help users discover the library more relevant and approachable than they had already perceived in the transitional periods.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was used for the study carried out in University of Calabar Library. The population of the study was **1804** registered users. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 600 undergraduate and postgraduate registered users. Accordingly, 600 copies

of questionnaire were distributed in the reader services units, which comprised Social Sciences, Medical, Africana, Humanities, Law, Reference as well as Science and Technology/Annex 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 428 usable copies were returned and analyzed for the study. Somehow, this constraint may possibly constitute limitation to the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1: Knowledge of contemporary marketing strategies

Contemporary marketing strategies	Known	Unknown	Total
Conducive environment marketing	224(52.34%)	204(47.66%)	428
Awareness services marketing	377(88.08%)	51(11.92%)	428
Digital media marketing	423(98.83%)	9(2.10%)	428

Result in Table 1 showed that 423(98.83%) respondents had knowledge about Digital media, 377(88.08%) knew about Awareness services and 224(52.34%) knew of conducive environment marketing. This result tallied with Adegoke (2015) who recommended online dissemination of information to users through the internet, by creating links for current information on academic library portals, interactive websites and good media relations.

Objective 2: Users' preferences of contemporary marketing strategies.

Marketing strategy's order of preference	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Digital media marketing	421	98.36%

Awareness services marketing	398	92.99%
Conducive environment marketing	204	47.66%

Result in Table 2 indicated that users' mostly preferred Digital media and Awareness services with 421 (98.36%), and 398 (92.99%) respectively. This study tallied with Admad and Abawajy (2014) who reported digital services to have direct impact on users' perception and satisfaction as digital end-users, although they agreed that such services as interlibrary loans, reference services, Bibliographic search were important in conventional library settings.

Objective 3: Challenges users' encounter in the process of accessing knowledge materials.

Respondent 5&34: Do not understand what you call conducive environment marketing.

Respondent 89 &420: Students are not allowed into e-library before 12pm. This limits the extent of exploration when there are multiple assignments to do.

Respondents 18&113: The network seem to be very unstable as it shows but pages would not be opened.

Respondent 356: Epileptic power supply often hinder the accessibility of library materials.

Respondent 8, 65 & 379: Some library staff are very hostile to answer students' questions.

These findings tallied with the observation recorded by Okiy (2005), Ajogboye (2010) and the Herald (2013). While the first two authors specified what conducive environment entailed in users' satisfaction, the Herald report identified emotion to play a significant role in any learning process; thus, mutual respect from library staff attitude towards users 'was suggested to remain indispensable in exploitation of academic libraries, therefore the library user must have it while advancing for a conducive environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Library users have begun to appreciate the application of marketing in libraries although with so much still to be known. There should be publications of local news and magazines to

disseminate information related to the programs and activities of the library. These would give clarification of events, and purposes. Library homepage using the digital, should also be made very attractive to catch the eye of the users in simple language- this homepage should have a space for feedback and users' suggestions, especially to explain concepts in relation to library use.

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