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Appraisal of the Synchronous and Asynchronous Techniques of Marketing Library Services in University Libraries

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APPRAISAL OF THE SYNCHROUS AND ASYNCHROUS TECHNIQUES OF MARKETING LIBRARY SERVICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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Abstract

For optimum utilization of information materials & access to information, libraries have changed strategically and that is the aim of this paper to appraisal of the Synchrous and asynchrous techniques of marketing library services in two university libraries. Five specific objectives guided the study which was what are the library services for marketing, techniques use in marketing library services, the extent to which the techniques have improved the services, challenges & strategies to enhance the library service. Descriptive survey design, questionnaire was used for data collection & was distributed to 74 librarians in the two universities. Mean & tables were used to clarify the findings. It was found out that majority of the library services for marketing were online information services, library publication, reference services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, referral services, user education & indexing & abstracting services. In techniques used in marketing library services it was discovered that is mostly Synchrous means like instant messaging, chats, digital references services e.t.c. Asynchrous means like texts, emails, & face to face marketing strategies were

seldomly use. On the challenges are lack of autonomy of libraries, lack of funds, poor internet access, power outage & so on. While some strategies were profound for the challenges like autonomy of libraries to run its affairs without fear or favor & interference with the parent institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries are no longer the only information providers; they now have to compete for customers with the internet, bookshops, online book dealers and demand for more efficient services and needs of users (Gall, 2011). Libraries must understand client's needs, plan service provision, promote the available services and deliver them efficiently and effectively. To achieve this, marketing is the essential tool. Information explosion has created new sources of information and new ways of providing information by passing the orthodox way of information management. In other words, the concept of library has expanded from a collection of books and print materials to include digital library and virtual library resources. These refer to the vast collection of information people gain access to over the internet, cable television or some other type of electronic device. This is the channels users now prefer to turn to for information mostly instead of coming to the library.

Marketing Library Services

Marketing is about keeping the clients in touch and informed about resources and services that match their interests. The success of library marketing lies mainly on convincing the clients that the tools or databases are worthwhile, they must understand what the services are, and be enthusiastic about how they will be helpful (Gupta, 2013). A library without users is useless. To succeed, there is need to let the users be aware of the benefits of the library in provision of information resources and services (Baro, 2013). Librarians need to market their services and resources for students and potential users to create awareness of the academic library's values.

Marketing is the process of building lasting relationship through planning, executing and controlling the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create mutual exchange that satisfy individual and organizational needs and objectives (Dickson

& Holley, 2010). The nonprofit organization like a library is basically engaged in the production of services rather than goods. Services are distinct in nature primarily due to the characteristics of being intangible, inseparable, variable and perishable. It is an integral part of library service, because it has to do with basic principles of librarianship i.e. to develop good collection and user-oriented services and organizational objectives. Patange (2013) added that marketing approach is mainly useful to academic libraries to improve their image and to attract more and more users.

Synchrous and Asynchrous Techniques of Marketing Library Services

Synchronous technique is a data transfer method in which a continuous stream of data signals is accompanied by timing signals to ensure that the transmitter and the receiver are in step (synchronized) with one another (Edewor & Omosor 2012). This transaction takes place in 'Real-Time' with an immediate response to the query i.e. the interaction between the user and librarian is live. Examples: instant messaging, video conferencing, text based chat, digital reference robots, virtual reference desk, 24/7 references & collaborative digital reference services. In contrast, asynchronous transmission works in spurts and must insert a start bit before each data character and a stop bit at its termination to inform the receiver where it begins and ends. This mode involves a time delay between the receiving questions and providing answers such as e-mail reference services & web forms. The term asynchronous is used to describe the process where transmitted data is encoded with start and stop bits, specifying the beginning and end of each character.

Statement of the Problem

The existence of libraries is being challenged. This is because access to information is now very fast and relies on technology. Users now prefer to turn to the internet to source for information

than coming to the libraries. Libraries must redesign their services to cope with this era of information technology. Libraries must change from the traditional to digital method of providing information to users. Major sectors of the potential market for the library's services are probably not aware of all the services available or have no understanding at all of what is offered. Understand the changing relationship between the library and its immediate and broader environment. These have resulted to non -utilization or under-utilization of services available in the library. The consequences of these are enormous. It results to users not able to locate access and recognize their information needs. This can also result to low quality of teaching, learning and research activities in our higher institutions. As a result they are unable to meet up with development in the global society. These services when utilized will help them in their careers and also make them life -long learners. Although there are many works on marketing of library services in university libraries in terms of manual and digital means but currently, it seems no study has been carried out to determine how efficient and effective synchronous and asynchronous techniques has helped in marketing library services which this work intend to find out.

Objective of the Study

- To know the library services for marketing in your library

- To ascertain the techniques use in marketing library services in the library

- The extent to which the techniques has improved marketing library services in the library

- To know the challenges faced with marketing library services in your library

- Strategies for enhancing marketing of library services in the library.

Literature Review

At the door of twenty first century lay a new awakening! The world was buzzing with a plethora of new concepts like reforms, innovations, reengineering, remapping. At the same time every sector of knowledge stared buzzing with the new managerial concepts of core competency, vision & mission, innovations etc. Yes this was the wake up call to change managerial gear. Libraries also stared glittering with new ICT techniques, e-services, digitalized & virtual libraries and so on (Adekunmisi, 2014). Multifold factors influence the library and information science filed for overcoming the users' expectations, changed world of ICT, its services and sustainability. The library & information professionals started developing themselves with knowledge, ethos and technical skills to adopt innovative practices for delivery of information in the present digital era. Marketing a library is also a process where research, strategy and action are continually taking place at various stages of the process with the purpose of achieving customer satisfaction (Ebhomeya, 2013). Regular interaction with customers enhances greater understanding of customer information needs. Purposeful action to increase the visibility of the library and its services creates constant awareness among customers, which in turn encourages greater use of the library. This then enables a library to go beyond customer demands and expectations leading to the path of achieving customer satisfaction.

Baro and Ebhomeya (2013) carried out an empirical study of 20 university libraries in Nigeria; the objective was to identify the different strategies used in marketing library resources and services to staff and students. Respondents were asked to indicate the marketing strategies used in their libraries. Eighteen (81.8%) of the 22 respondents indicated that they used library publications, while 14 (63.3%) used campus radio programmes, 11 (50%) used university intranets and 9 (40.9%) e-mail alerts. Respondents also indicated using other marketing

strategies such as orientation talks, seminar/workshops, library instruction in general studies, university bulletins, library week, newsletters, staff meetings and library committees. Only 8 libraries (36.4%) indicated using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace to market the library resources and services to users.

Similarly, Dube (2011) revealed that to popularize and market library services in South Africa, libraries have a dedicated division for library marketing and works closely with the relevant university structures to ensure marketing of services to regular and potential clients by using sign posts and exhibitions, brochures, plasma screens, the library and university websites. She however, stated in her finding that only one library in particular uses services such as Ask-a-Librarian. Others conduct regular visits to academic departments while others market their services during training interventions, when they conduct client surveys and programmes scheduled during library week celebrations. Commenting on the benefits of marketing library services, Spalding and Wang (2006) observed that by using marketing principles and techniques, librarians are discovering that they can understand better their users' needs, justify funding, communicate more effectively with a variety of external audience and achieve greater efficiency and optimal results in delivering products and services that meet the identified needs of their clients.

Gupta, Koontz and Massisimo (2013) outlined several factors militating against the effective marketing of library and information resources and services, such as poor marketing strategy, absence of marketing policies, lack of skilled manpower and infrastructural constraints. Other militating factors include lack of funds to engage in marketing activities as well as lack of exposure to adequate marketing training in library schools (Baro and Ebhomeya, 2013). There is no gainsaying the fact that librarians should be exposed to adequate marketing training in order

to drive the marketing process in university libraries. University libraries need to identify target users, what services are required by these users and in what format as well as identify competitors in the information service business. User studies help university librarians to understand the needs of users to be able to design appropriate services for them.

The concept of marketing has widely been discussed in literature and accepted professionally but this acceptance has not found its way into most library schools' curriculum yet there is no substitute for the performance of individual librarians in the workplace.

Theoretical framework

Network theory of marketing

Network theory proposes that there are often more than two parties in a buyer-seller relationship and that exchange processes take place through interaction between a number of individual actors within firms and in many cases between a numbers of different firms. Network theory is actually a theory applied to math, which is why it isn't a part of mainstream marketing practices. Math is one way to describe the world around us. Network theory is the study of systems and the interactions within them. Usually you see visualizations or graphs of these systems. LinkedIn introduced network theory into social networking when they offered to visualize a map of people's connections. They showed that a person's connections aren't one cloud of points surrounding the user, but a few clusters (k-modes) of which the user is a part. When the user is operating within those clusters, he is contributing to the influences and also being influenced.

Network theory studies relationships of all sorts, whether between people, animals or things. Social network analysis is an overlapping tool for learning about patterns that develop within social networks and how they influence behavior. The "Harvard Business Review" reports on a

social-network study conducted at Columbia University. Researchers -- two of whom authored the "Harvard Business Review" article -- found that the success of entertainment products is impossible to predict based on traditional factors such as plot or star power because "hits" are the result of the influence consumers have over each other's decisions. Digital marketing channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and Group on are useful in this regard, as they allow marketers to listen to what consumers are saying, and they allow marketers to leverage the power of influential users to spread messages throughout their networks. Research shows that the most powerful users are those with the most influence across a number of differentiated networks. I believe that when you reach the right one, you reach many!

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was descriptive survey design & the study was carried out in two university libraries in south east Nigeria. The population of seventy four (74) professional librarians was used for the study which was considered too small to be sampled. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which has 54 items in 5 clusters with answering mood of ticking the appropriate answer on each statement on the column & was distributed with the help of one research assistant. The data collected was analyzed using mean, frequency count, percentage & tables for clarifications.

Research Question 1

To know the library services for marketing in the library?

Table 1: Mean scores of the respondents on the library services for marketing in the library.

S/N	Items	Total weight	X	Rank	Decision
1	Online information services	258	3.4	1st	A

2	Library publication	222	3.0	2nd	A
p3	Reference services	208	2.8	3rd	A
4	Current awareness services	202	2.7	4th	A
5	Selective dissemination of information	198	2.6	5th	A
6	Indexing and Abstracting services	193	2.6	6th	A
7	Referral services	192	2.5	7th	A
8	User education	188	2.5	8th	A
9	Lending services	180	2.4	9th	R
10	Reservation services	112	1.6	10th	R
11	Document delivery services	83	1.5	11th	R
12	Translation services	79	1.1	12th	R
13	Inter library loan	51	0.6	13th	R

From the table above, result shows that the following services were ranked highest 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 with 3.4,3.0,2.8,2.7,2.6,2.6,2.5,2.5 respectively indicating that online information services, library publication, reference services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, indexing & abstracting services, referral services & user education were ranked highest & acceptable while 9,10,11,&13 were rejected implying that most of the services for marketing are connected with online services.

Table 2: Response on the techniques use in marketing library services in the library

S/N	Items	Total Weight	X	Rank	Decision
1	Through websites	258	3.4	1st	A
2	Exhibitions and display of new arrivals.	255	3.4	2nd	A
3	Through social media	251	3.3	3rd	A
4	Face to face interactions to users	245	3.3	4th	A
5	Networking among professional colleagues	210	2.8	5th	A

6	Seminars, workshops & publicity	198	2.6	6th	A
7	Staff friendliness to users	184	2.4	7th	R
8	Organizing library week	129	1.7	8th	R
9	Good communication skills	130	1.7	9th	R
10	Use of leaflet& posters	98	1.7	10th	R
11	Provision of suggestion box	90	1.2	11th	R
12	Sending out brochure or flyers	82	1.1	12th	R
13	Sending persona letters to users via text or email	80	1.0	13th	R

From the results gotten, it shown that majority of the techniques use in marketing library services were through websites, exhibitions and displaying, networking among professional colleagues, seminars, workshops & publicity, of new arrivals, through social media, face to face interactions with users, networking among professional colleagues, seminars, workshops & publicity which are1,2,3,4,5,& 6 were the majority of the techniques used in marketing library services in the library   while staff friendliness to users, organizing library week, good communication skills, use of leaflets & poster, provision of suggestion box, sending out brochure or flyers & sending personal letters to users via text or email which are 7,8,9,10,11,12 &13 were ranked lowest & rejected.

Table 3: Mean scores of the respondents on the extents to which the techniques has improved marketing library services in the library.

S/N	ITEMS	TOTAL WEIGHT	X	RANK	DECISION
1	It has helped students & researchers develop skills in other to acquire information	230	3.1	1st	A
2	It has reached the library in a high level of clients satisfaction	228	3.0	2nd	A

3	Help in identifying information needs of researchers & students	220	2.9	3rd	A
4	Compete favorably with other information providers	218	2.9	4th	A
5	It has improved interpersonal relationship between librarians & users	214	2.8	5th	A
6	It has provide conducive environment for users to study & work	214	2.8	6th	A
7	Visibility of the library & the institution generally	211	2.8	7th	A
8	High turn up of users in the library	210	2.8	8th	A
9	It expose students & researchers globally	200	2.7	9th	A

All the items in this cluster were acceptable indicating that the techniques has improved marketing of library services in the libraries

Table 4: Response on the challenges faced with marketing library services in your library

S/N	Items	Total Weight	X	Rank	Decision
1	Lack of funds	257	3.4	1st	A
2	Inadequate telecommunication facilities	256	3.4	2nd	A
3	Lack of autonomy on the part of the library	252	3.4	3rd	A
4	Inconvenience location	251	3.3	4th	A
5	Lack of training in marketing trends	250	3.3	5th	A
6	We are not motivated in my library	248	3.3	6th	A
7	Functional internet access	240	3.2	7th	A
8	Management does not have marketing policy.	100	1.3	8th	R
9	Ineffective &inefficiency of library staff	90	1.2	9th	R

From the table above, result shows that only two items which are 8 & 9 were ranked lowest and rejected because they did not contribute to problems of marketing library services in the library while others were accepted.

Table 5: Strategies for enhancing marketing of library services in the library

S/N	Items	Total weight	X	Rank	Decision
1	Soliciting for funds by government & non governmental organizations	257	3.4		
2	Understanding the needs of users and matching with the organizational resources	256	3.4		
3	Publicizing value & benefits, public relations, advocacy	249	3.3		
4	Acquiring appropriate information materials & ensure service available	250	3.3		
5	Functional internet access	252	3.4		
6	Repackaging information into appropriate form	251	3.3		
7	Provision of telecommunication facilities	252	3.4		
8	Autonomy of libraries to run their affairs	255	3.4		
9	Organizing conferences & workshops on the current trends in marketing library services	246	3.3		
10	Recruiting seasoned personnel in the libraries	102	1.4		

From the result below, it shows that it is not recruiting of seasoned personnel that are the solution & that is why it is ranked lowest and not acceptable but by doing other items from 1 to 8 above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that library should have autonomy over the parent institutions in order to run its affairs without interference

- Synchronous means or techniques of marketing library services should be uphold for it is the best that has improved marketing in the library

- Libraries should be fully automated to as to incorporate some library services online

- Functional internet and constant light supply

CONCLUSION

It can also be drawn from the study that the application of mostly synchronous & in minimal asynchronous techniques of marketing library services is very important in improving the capabilities of library services towards attaining satisfaction of users. The library management should also focuses on the marketing philosophy which required the identification of user's needs rather than library's need, the librarians should understand the nature of information, needs of users, the transfer process between people & information & make library and information services most effective & long sustainable. Finally autonomy of libraries is very essential so as to run its affairs without interference by its parent institutions.

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