

Impact of Marketing Library Resources and Services in Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the impact of marketing information resources and services in academic libraries. It basically focused on the need for marketing, strategies and tools used for marketing, the skills and competencies required by library staff members to market information resources and services in the most efficient manner to enhance patronage. The paper further discussed effective measures for marketing and some challenges hindering effective marketing of information resources and services in academic libraries. The paper concluded that academic libraries need to revamp efforts to adopt all relevant marketing strategies in promoting information resources and services available in their libraries so that users can maximally utilized the resources and services towards the realization of the institution's goal and avoidance of wasting huge financial resources used to make them available.

Keywords: marketing, library resources, library services, academic libraries

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are established in the institutions of higher learning mainly to support the parent institution towards the realization of its aim and objectives. It is known that institutions of higher learning are saddled with the mandate of teaching, training, producing the human resource that are needed to various fields of endeavor to drive all the sectors of a nation towards nation building. Knowledge is power; likewise information is a key driver of any organization that intends to remain relevant in this 21st century. Academic libraries are the custodian of all knowledge/information resources in all fields of study required to enhance the academic capacity of the entire community it is meant to serve so that the goal of the parent institution can be achieved, thereby making the library an integral part of academic institution. According Eberhart (2010) library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is organized by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole. Looking at the fourth point of the above, the importance of regularly informing and educating staff, students and the entire academic community about their availability, how they can be accessed and benefits towards enhancing their capacity in their academic pursuit cannot be overemphasized.

The resources in academic libraries-both print and non-print, relevant and current kept that provide in-depth knowledge about a specific subject which if judiciously utilized may enhance the capacity of the academic staff for effective service delivery. In the same vein, the students will be more exposed to the in-depth variety of knowledge about their course of study as they assist them better to understand what they are being taught in the classroom. Lecturers due to time factors, workload in terms of the number of students they teach and supervise and other official engagements may not be able to go into detail of the course outline of each subject they teach. There is no doubt that the students who are exposed to, aware of and judiciously use the numerous resources available both in print and non-print will have in-depth knowledge about the course they are studying and perform better during their examinations than the students that are not exposed to and

aware of the resources available in the library. To support this assertion David-West (2020) posits that library user education is an important part of an academic library's service, as it guides both students and staff to become better informed and effective library users. It also enables them to make use of the best library resources available. If library services and resources are not fully utilized it is good as not having a library. Hence, the need for academic libraries to be more proactive towards informing and educating users about the resources and services that are provided to enhance patronage. If users are aware of and how beneficial the resources and services will positively impact on their academic pursuit, a high percentage of the academic community will patronise the library which may lead to judicious usage thereby its purpose for establishment is realised which is to support the institution in achieving its aim and avoid wastage of financial resources which is the crux is this paper.

Some information seekers need one or the other that will assist them to do better but do not know that some of this vital information is available in the library. This may be because of the inadequate or lack of marketing strategies needed to promote the information resources and services and laxity of the staff in the library. Consequently, users may be deficient in terms vital information need, therefore, perform poorly and inefficient service delivery by students and staff respectively.

Library resources and services available for marketing

The resources in the library are basically grouped into print and non print. Vij (2012) lists some of the resources and services that can be marketed in libraries which are: books, periodicals, reports to electronic document to other allied services from traditional ones like circulation, inter-library loan, reference services, access to international databases, online researches and CD-ROM searches. In addition, Umoh, (2017) mentioned some services provided by academic libraries which are as follow; circulation services/borrowing services, reference services, bibliographic verification services, current awareness services (CAS), reprographic services, extension/community services, technical services, inter-library cooperation, condensation services, literature search and compiling a subject bibliography, document delivery services, translation service, user training services, referral services, information technology (IT) services.

Marketing of information resources and services

Marketing is an integral part of every organization that strives to remain in a business competitive environment and libraries and information centres are not exceptional. Marketing is important for everyday life just as food is important to human for survival. Marketing of library services is a managerial activity that puts librarians on the task of identifying the needs and wants of library users and making sure those needs are adequately provided within the resource capacity of the institution (Gupta, Koonzt & Massisimo, 2013). Gupta (2017) pointed out that, marketing of library and information service is the effective execution of all activities involved in increasing satisfaction of users by providing maximum value to them.

Need for marketing library resources and services

Information resources are those information bearing materials that are in both printed and electronic formats such as textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CD-ROM, database, the internet/email, video tapes/cassette, diskettes, magnetic disk, computers, microforms, audio visual materials, and so on (Okiki, 2013). They are the materials acquired by a library to meet the information needs of library users while library services are the direct and indirect services provided by libraries and information centers to their users and clientele in person and through communication technologies. Such services includes; current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, reference services, informational services, translation services, indexing and abstracting services, circulation services etc. Ukwoma (2014) averred that showcasing the resources available in the library, promoting the image of the library, sustaining the survival of the library, creating awareness among the university community as well as

ensuring the visibility of the library are the major reasons for marketing library services. While Chinwe and Shabi (2011) reported that students' academic work suffer due to failure of the students to patronize the library resources to its fullest. It is therefore pertinent to note that marketing is an important aspect of academic libraries that enable users to know the available resources and services and therefore satisfying their information need in the library.

Strategies and tools used for marketing library information resources and services

Libraries' owned materials and resources; brochures, flyers, library e-mail, library websites, reading lists, bibliographies, newsletters, posters and programmes/events; users' education, library orientation, workshops, seminars, library display, exhibitions, social media and others.

- **Material techniques**

Libraries produce some materials as tools for promoting their resources and services. They are brochures, flyers, library e-mail, library websites, reading lists, bibliographies, newsletters, posters etc. A good website helps to bring services and resources together in a unique way, because it is a direct link between the library and its specific users (for example students and academics) and the services it is seeking to promote. It also provides a channel for communication with target clients. Some media can be cross functional, for example, traditional tools, such as flyers, brochures and posters, can be used to produced events and promote events and programs, which are promotional tools in themselves. Newsletter can introduce new developments as well as highlight current services. Target audiences can be easily and effectively targeted through mail lists and the internet. These services are cost effective, as they require little investment in resources and reach the intended client directly.

- **Special programmes and events**

Libraries organize special programmes and events like library orientation, workshops and seminars to educate their users about the activities of the library. As far as library activities are concerns, the users are illiterates. Tremendous increase in the volume of publication as resulted in the complexity of libraries and the methods by which literature is organized and disseminated necessitate the users' education. Users need assistance and guidance (user education) to know how to effectively use various information resources and services provided by the library.

- **Display and exhibition techniques**

Library display is the technique of collecting and arranging the information resources like books, serial articles, theses, photographs, diagrams others on a central theme in a prominent place for a short time in order to attract the attention and arouse the interest of users in the topic presented. Displaying and exhibiting means that the library is demonstrating or showcasing what it has to offer to the students, staff and researchers. Library display helps draw attention to the items or program the library is promoting. It helps to draw the attention of users to new books, special collections, under-circulated titles and services that are offered within the library that are unnoticed.

- **Social media technique**

The library and its users have gone virtual in this 21st century. To keep the pace with evolving information technologies, librarians use a group of software applications including blogs, wikis and podcasting, media-sharing tools like Youtube, Flickr and social networking such as Twitter and Facebook (Hinchliffe and Leon, 2011; Moulaison and Corrado; Yi, 2014) to market their services and resources with mixed success. Blogs and wikis, as well as social networking and information sharing sites such a Facebook, Flickr and

Youtube, create new types of content. Information professionals use tools such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication), tagging and bookmarking as a means of promotion. Youtube is a video sharing site which allows people around the world to communicate and interact, making it a distribution point for user-created content (Youtube, 2015). The high percentages for the social media techniques used indicate that the era were considered to be only a depository of information has passed and current libraries as interactive hubs where users gather to seek and share information and find entertainment have come to be. Social media as tools, platforms and applications that enable customers to connect, communicate and collaborate with others online are now often used by libraries in their promotion campaigns because social media can support user-generated content that can be distributed among the participants to view, share and improve. (Polger & Okamoto, 2013).

Social media is the best tool to create a virtual environment to bring close the library users and fulfills their demands, needs and wants. Several media like facebook, twitter, whatsApp, MySpace, WeChat, QQ, Instagram and LinkedIn are being use to interact with remote library customers. Swain and Barlik (2016) endorsed that nowadays every institution e.g libraries have created their account on Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace to keep in touch with library users and make a communication bridge to update them about the latest and newest information about the library.

Skills and competencies required for marketing library resources and services by librarians

Skills and competences are vital ingredients for effective and efficient marketing of information resources and services in library environment. Anyanwu, Chikezie & Ossai-Onah (2012) submitted that the wrong marketing behavior will result to consumer dissatisfaction, in view of this, the behavior of library users should appropriately be studied because the marketing approach used in one type of library may not necessary work when applied to a similar library. This to them call for a thorough study of library users behavior in marketing of library information resources and services. Information service providers should ensure they possess the right behavior which is one of the pre-requisite for marketing in library environment as it mainly deals with users. In Ukwoma's (2014) study on strategies for marketing library services by library and information science, the researcher pointed out some salient competencies, good such as communication skills, face to face interaction with the user community, networking among professional colleagues as the major strategies for effective marketing of library and information services. Adekunmisi, (2013) submitted that library personnel requires professional knowledge and skills in order to market and attract users to the library and these include: perception of users' needs and ability to obtain feedbacks from users, technical knowledge such as ability to use the internet and other electronic resources and databases as well as knowledge of various marketing strategies for promoting information skills.

In the same vein, Chandra (2011) identified the major impact of staff competency to marketing;

1. Transparency and dynamism in library administration
2. Closer and positive relations
3. Innovation I library and information services
4. Effective team work
5. Enhanced self confidence among library's professionals
6. Flexibility and adaptability in attitude
7. Increased strong interpersonal relations
8. Organizational development

Effective measures for marketing library resources and services in academic libraries

Libraries need to develop a blueprint that will help guide towards achieving an effective marketing of library resources and services. Lukas (2015) is of the opinion that there cannot be effective marketing, if

libraries do not have marketing plan. He therefore identified two forms of marketing plan. The first is the creation of user awareness to the resources and services, and the second is the need to understand the needs and expectations of users. Each user or group of users has their unique needs and preference and librarians hold responsibility to maintain current users, while attracting potential users. Librarians can effectively achieve this, if a good marketing plan is set up. Dubicki (2009) indicates the need for evaluating a marketing plan and emphasized the importance for continuity. The evaluation, according to the researcher comes in two ways, either by feedback obtained through measurable objectives or direct comments from patrons.

Challenges hindering of marketing academic libraries information resources and services

Every field or profession has its peculiar challenges as it works towards achieving its aim/objectives where marketing academic information resources and services are not exempted. In Ukwoma (2014) it was revealed that inadequate funding, lack of training and education of librarians on marketing, lack of ICT infrastructure and lack of internet facilities to reach out to the global world are some of the challenges hindering effective marketing of library services. In spite of the benefits derived from the use of social media tools in marketing of library and information resources and services, there are other factors hindering marketing of library and information resources and services on social media. To support this, Tofi, Tondo, Ugba and Gbaaikye (2018) revealed electricity failure as the greatest problem in using social media for marketing library and information resources and services. They further revealed that lack of time to use social media, lack of privacy and identity theft, too many social media tools to learn, lack of knowledge on how to use the social media tools, slow speed of internet, inadequate funding for libraries, inadequate and lack of qualified staff and inadequate training opportunities are the major problems in using social media for marketing library and information resources, products and services. Furthermore, Kaushik (2016) identified a lack of proper policy and implementation, lack of security and privacy, lack of proper skills, awareness about social media and willingness to use from library staff. Lack of marketing skills, one constraint in operating profitable information is lack of business expertise among librarians. Marketing is a comprehensive term which stipulates all the processes and interactions that result in satisfaction of the users and revenue for the library. This implies that skillfulness is necessary both for meeting the needs of the users and profit maximization. In addition, Zuabair, Wan and Mohammed (2017) reported that financial challenges, inadequate training on marketing activities, low internet bandwidth, lack of policy plan on marketing were identified as major factors affecting marketing activities in libraries. Their findings corroborated with Chegwe & Anaehobi (2015) who found similar challenges, however, found improvement in staff knowledge and skills as the only difference.

In a similar manner, Okon and Umoh (2014) highlighted the following as some of the challenges of marketing information resources and services in academic libraries;

1. Attitude of library staff: marketing also deals with improving customer's experience to the library. On a regular basis the library staff interacts with the users but the truth remains that some libraries for one reason or the other do not show a positive attitude to the users. With this treatment, users would unlikely return to the library.
2. Low level of knowledge: lack of marketing knowledge by some library personnel has been identified as one of the barriers to effective marketing of information resources and library services in Nigerian university libraries.
3. Non- realization of information value: information resources and services constitute an intangible value to research and development. However, this value has been overlooked by some staff thus marketing a resource which value cannot be evaluated has been difficult.

CONCLUSION

The importance of the impact of marketing in creating awareness to information resources and services in

academic libraries to enhance usage cannot be over-emphasized. Academic libraries as part of their duties, is to ensure the resources and services available get to their users for judicious utilization. It is therefore imperative that they put more efforts to adopt all relevant marketing strategies in promoting information resources and services available in their libraries so that users can maximally utilized the resources and services towards the realization of the institution's goal. Consequently, avoidance of wastage of the huge financial resources used to acquire such resources in academic libraries. Furthermore, academic libraries need to ensure that all the problems militating against the smooth running of marketing information resources and services identified are adequately planned and prepared for to avoid re-occurrence.

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