

MARKETING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN AN EVOLVING WORLD

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Abstract

The research explored marketing library and information resources and services in an evolving world. This paper used literature review as a methodology for conducting research. The literature reviewed exposed the decline to users' patronage of library service and resources. It also revealed the various strategies for marketing library services which include: adoption of social media, display and exhibition of resources, organizing library events, user orientation, use of website, newsletters and the engagement of press. Marketable library services discussed include academic databases, referral services/interlibrary loan, internet access service, literature search service, SDI, photocopying and binding service. The benefits of marketing library services was also discussed. The paper recommended that libraries should fully adopt various marketing strategies in order to remain relevant in the constantly changing world. Marketing and advocacy of library services should be incorporated into LIS curriculum so as to train future librarians on how to market library services and resources in an evolving world.

Keywords: Marketing, Library services, Information resources, 21st century, Library marketing

Introduction

Background

The advancement in technological development coupled with the invention of the internet has changed the way and manner in which information is created, stored and disseminated. This has also changed the behaviour of users in seeking for information as many can now access information in various formats from the comfort of their homes without necessarily visiting the library. To this end, it has been observed that there has been a decline in the patronage of libraries especially in developing countries like Nigeria. This was reiterated by Odunola and Tella (2019) who posited that there is no justification to the investment made to a library if the

library services and resources such as reference services and resources are not patronised by their intended users.

This is a wakeup call for library service provision in the 21st century as libraries no longer enjoy the supplier market where they have a ready and stable user community (Esan & Adeyemi 2022). For libraries to remain relevant and to justify their existence in a rapidly changing world of information, there is need to constantly market the various resources and services offered in order to keep the users abreast with what the library offers and to justify the investment by the parent body. Atuase and Malukeka (2022) described marketing of library resources as the basis for the effective delivery of services. They went on to say that libraries' ability to provide comprehensive services and resources to certain user groups determines how important they are. Libraries market themselves with the intention of offering high-quality services to entice users to use them.

According to Oyedipe et al. (2018), library information services can be described as the tools, events, programs, and guidance offered to help users meet their information needs and make wise and effective use of the library's many resources and services. Library services give users access to a variety of information resources, especially electronic resources, which support both personal growth and excellence in academics and research. Provision of access to these resources and services will be useless if there are no users to patronise them.

Improving the patronage of library resources and services in the era of competing information access providers in digital format due to the advent of ICT is not debatable especially if a library wants to remain relevant and to maintain the status as the heart of the institution. This is said to be achievable through the deployment of effective marketing strategies

Ubogu (2021). According to Gupta et al., (2013) marketing library and information service is a well-established subset of leadership procedures that recognizes and fulfills customer demands and wants within the organization's resources. It can be said that academic libraries and other types of libraries have been involved in some type of marketing over the years, this is evident in the use of new arrival shelves to showcase the newly acquired materials in the library, the display of current serials, through orientation activities and even teaching the use of library as classroom instruction to fresh undergraduate students (Eda&Ukubeyinje 2019). However the various marketing strategies that are currently been deployed are no longer adequate in the evolving information world therefore there is need for more innovative and ingenious ways to market library services. Librarians also need to get necessary skills to enable them cope in this era, so that they can continue to provide needed information services for the users.

Libraries have for a very long time enjoyed the constant influx of users without necessarily engaging in activities to bring users like other service providing companies. This freedom is currently being threatened especially in developing countries like Nigeria with the advent of ICTs and broadband technologies. Users who could have potentially used the services rendered in the library are now seeking alternative sources of information. The situation is worrisome and has made librarians to decry on the low patronage of library services and resources in recent years. For libraries to remain relevant and for them to continue to meet the stated and implied needs of users in an effort to justify their existence, there is need for librarians to adopt what other companies have been involved in for a long time which is the marketing of their services and resources so as to improve patronage. It is on this premise that this study seeks to explore marketing library and information resources and services in an evolving world.

Etukudo and Aliu (2019) elucidated that we are in an era of explosion of information output and information sources. It is known as the beginning of the knowledge age. Expert knowledge is no longer contained in books, categorized into disciplines, or kept in the minds of specialists. Library workers must be able to quickly find, evaluate, and present new information, they need to communicate this to others, be adaptable, creative and innovative and be able to understand things. The introduction of ICT has changed the role of libraries in academic settings in the twenty-first century. Information can no longer be stored on print materials alone. The norm these days is online information retrieval (OPAC), automated cataloguing, CD-ROM databases, electronic document delivery, and circulation systems. ICTs has also redefined the behavior of information seekers as they now access information in various media without visiting the library. Libraries however need to justify their existence by ensuring constant patronage and one way of achieving that is by marketing the services and resources.

According to Sharma and Pathak (2020), marketing helps the library give patrons better access to information, which in turn helps the library's visibility, accessibility, and reputation grow. They revealed that usage and utility of the library services and products can be improved through effective marketing tools. More so, marketing can act as a mechanism to improve the services and enhances the activities of a library. Marketing connects the library with potential users and encourages them to use its services, saving time and bridging the communication gap between staff and users.

This paper uses literature review as a methodology for conducting research. Literature was reviewed to reveal the current decline to patronage of libraries, the various marketing strategies that can be deployed to surmount the decline, the services that are marketable and will

help improve the patronage of libraries and the benefits libraries will get from engaging in marketing. Adeyemi and Issa (2020) recommended this narrative review to ensure the identification and summarization of previously published empirical findings in a particular research area or theme. To strengthen arguments based on the study's findings, the authors draw on their experience as an academic librarian in addition to the conclusions drawn from the studied literature. Subsequently, the conclusion and recommendations were drawn based on the findings that emerge from the study.

Libraries in a bid to remain relevant in the changing world must adopt ingenious ways of creating awareness about the various services and resources rendered in the library. One way of doing this is by marketing library services. There are several strategies to adopt for marketing library services in the 21st century some of which include.

Strategies for marketing library services and resources

Adoption and use of social media: The influence of social media in our society today cannot be relegated, several organisations, government agencies and even private businesses have taken to social media to keep their customers and followers abreast on the various services they currently offer. Social media platform like Twitter now X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn have become platforms where organisations now interact with their customers. Libraries should also follow this trend by opening social media accounts and using the account to promote the various services and resources in the library. This was supported by Polger and Okamoto (2013) who found in their study that most libraries (70%) are now using social media to reach library users and non-users. This also corroborated a study on promotional techniques used as marketing strategies for library resources and services by Agboke and Effiong (2020). According to the

researchers, social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are now frequently utilized by libraries in their marketing campaigns since it provides users with the means to interact, converse, and collaborate with others online.

Display and exhibition of Library resources and services: Many libraries have adopted this strategy to promote the resources and services rendered as it is common to have some shelves designated and tagged ‘NEW ARRIVAL SHELVES’ where libraries display the items they have recently acquired. The aim of the display is to attract and stimulate the interest of users to the displayed materials. Pasting of new services on notice boards and other strategic places will also catch the attention of users. For example, if a library just recently starts rendering photocopying service, the information can be pasted on notice boards and other areas around the library to get the attention of users and potential users. This was corroborated by Dauda and Daksiri (2020) who reported that exhibitions and display of new arrivals, access to internet and computers, amongst others are prevalent strategies used to market library services. This also supports Adegoke's (2015) earlier claim that exhibitions can increase patron knowledge of the library's current holdings by letting patrons know that certain materials are available. Displaying library items to patrons is a potent way to promote the resources and learning objectives of the organization as a whole and the library specifically.

Organizing promotional and advocacy event: Another method of marketing library services is by organizing promotional events like seminars, workshops, book exhibitions and so on. The services and resources the library offer might be advertised during these events. Libraries are also to take advantage of the various library celebrations like the library week, annual world book and copyright day to promote library services. This is in addendum with the findings of

Baro and Ebhomeya (2013) who revealed that organizing seminars and workshops are one of the marketing strategies used to market library services and resources to users. Dauda and Daksiri (2020) also listed events and activities such as workshop and seminars as one of the promotional tools for library services. Libraries are therefore advised to organized events that we create awareness and awaken the consciousness of users about the services and resources available in the library.

User Orientation: Users might not exactly be aware of the services and resources available in the library and that might be contributing to the low patronage of library services, however, one very sure way of promoting awareness which will later translate to usage is through library orientation to users. Orientation can be done in several ways which may include classroom instruction, guided library tour, group orientation and so on. Classroom instruction is achievable in school and academic libraries as users will be taught the use of library as a subject which will acquaint them with requisite knowledge on the services and resources available in the library. Guided library tour involves taking a group of library users on a guided tour in the library which will get them familiar with the services and routines in the library. User orientation has been proven to be a reliable means of marketing library services. Aderibigbe and Farouk (2017) listed user education as one of the techniques to be adopted in order to improve the efficient marketing of library services. Other strategies include public relations and publicity, as well as posting new information on the notice board. This was also supported by Adegoke (2015) and Dauda and Daksiri (2020) who agreed that classroom instruction and orientation activities are one of the ways of marketing library services and resources.

Library website and newsletter: Websites helps to increase visibility of an organisation, websites gives detailed description of the services and products offered by the organisation. Libraries can also increase their visibility and reach wider audience by building and maintaining functioning websites which will be used to promote the services and resources in the library. These websites should be updated regularly for this aim to be achieved. Libraries can also produce newsletters so as to inform the users of the recent developments in the library. The link to this newsletter can be attached to the library website. The study of Esan and Adeyemi (2022) revealed that the methods of marketing adopted by the library personnel in marketing the services majorly include the use of library website and university/library bulletin. This was previously supported by Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2018), who disclosed that, among other things, staff friendliness toward users, exhibitions and displays of new arrivals, building a library website, and planning user education are some of the strategies being used in marketing library and information services. Also, 81.8% in the study by Baro and Ebhomeya (2013) revealed that they used library publications as a strategy for marketing library services which shows that library bulletin is a major tool for marketing library services. More so, in a study by Edewor et al., (2016) it was discovered that library publications, such as memos, bulletins, and newsletters, as well as websites, posters and orientation exercises were the most often employed tactics for marketing library and information services in African libraries.

Press engagement: It is no news that many organisations engage the service of the press media in promoting their services, this could be print media like newspapers and magazines or electronic media like radio stations and television stations. The engagement could be in form of radio or television jingles, newspaper advertorial, press releases, press conferences and show or

programme hosting. For libraries to remain relevant in the ever changing information world, they need to constantly be in the faces of their users and this can be achieved through press engagements. Ukwoma (2014) listed good communication skills, using bulletin boards, seminars and workshops, newsletters, publicity through advertisements and announcements, and websites are identified by the author as the major strategies for effective marketing of library and information services by library and information science (LIS) professionals in Nigeria. In the same vein, Benson et al., (2016) listed press release and use of mass media for advertising as some of the strategies that can be used for marketing library services.

Marketable library services in an evolving world

Decline to the use of library resources could be as a result of users not being aware of the services and resources available in the library and how it can be of benefit to them, it is germane to note that all library services are marketable, however, some library services that will drive engagement and increase library patronage include:

Access to academic databases: According to Obiamalu et al. (2021), academic databases are now recognized and established part of the collection of any academic library. Among other things, these databases frequently include conference papers, seminar reports, e-books, periodicals, and reference materials. They are either available freely or subscribed for by the libraries. Users of the library especially researchers may not know the benefit of using academic databases as opposed to finding information on the internet via the general search engines. Works in academic databases usually follow a peer review process of publishing and thus the contents in academic databases are more reliable than those gotten from the general search engine. Obi and Nsirim (2022) disclosed that databases, whether online or offline are rich and

reliable information resource but are yet to be fully utilised by patrons hence, the need to market them becomes imperative. Several marketing strategies such as promotion through social media, email, publications, blogs, institutional websites and library websites could be utilised to market library databases.

Referral service/inter library loan: Libraries always strive to satisfy the information needs of all the users and so they invest in the acquisition of various information resources to achieve this objective, despite this investment, no library in the world can claim to have all the resources needed to satisfy their customers and so for users to get optimum satisfaction, libraries need to go into collaboration with other libraries and this can come in form of agreement to engage in inter-library loan and referral services. Users will be delighted to know that they can be referred to other libraries or other sources of information if they are unable to get what they need in their library. Users will also be happy when reference librarians take the extra effort to borrow materials on their behalf from other libraries. The user will most likely be willing to patronise such library again. It is therefore important for users to be aware of services like referral and inter-library loan. This supports the findings of Fabiku and Tomcik (2017) who stated that inter library loan is not adequately used by new, novice, or intermediate users. The researchers further stated that very few libraries focus their marketing on inter library loan and it is important for users to be aware of this service as this gives them access to collection beyond the holdings of their individual libraries.

Internet accessibility: The internet and other broadband infrastructure have changed the way and manner in which information is created, stored and disseminated, access to internet

especially in developing countries like Nigeria is still very low. Creating awareness about this service will encourage continuous patronage of the library.

Literature search service: Literature search is a systematic search for knowledge and information contained in resources of the library on a topic or theme. This is especially common in special libraries because they are usually small in number and their research interest is homogenous. Users will most likely want to use this library if they are aware that their search for literature will be made easy by the library staff. According to Arachchige (2002), online searching, ILL, reference services, and the circulation of library materials can all be viewed as product lines within the library's services. This indicates that the library's online literature search is a viable product that should be marketed by libraries.

Selective dissemination of information (SDI): Information dissemination, in the words of Dhawan (2018), is a proactive information service intended to enlighten and educate diverse user groups about possibilities and challenges related to social, economic, and educational issues. Information must be organized, gathered, and stored in a methodical manner in order for the intended recipient to get it. Information dissemination, according to Bello and Aghadiuno (2019), is the means by which facts are connected to the legitimate individuals and organizations who seek them. Without the required technology, it might not be possible to accomplish any of them. According to a study by Shonhe and Jain (2017), it is important to highlight that prospective library patrons have positive attitudes toward technology, are proficient with mobile technology, and regularly access information via it. It has been noted that the delivery of library services is under increased pressure due to changes in user information needs.

Since the internet has made the globe a smaller place and has made it a global village, librarians today are expected to administer digital libraries, organize digital knowledge and information, and spread digital information (Okike, 2020). SDI is common in Special libraries with relatively small users. With SDI the user is relieved of the problem of sieving through several documents before getting the relevant documents. Thus, the user's time is saved for other purpose. SDI is a customised library service in which the library staff, on a regular basis, searches through a mass of literature from which those that are of interest to a user are selected and are made available to him/her. In an attempt to find out the services rendered in an academic library by Arumuru (2015) only 56.6% of the respondents which is just a little above average indicated that the library carries out selective dissemination of information. This shows that so many users are not aware of the existence of this service and thus more awareness should be created by the library staff.

Photocopying and binding service: Asides reading books and accessing other library resources, users need to be aware that they can make copies of pages of information materials they might be interested in at a reduced rate in the library. Users should also be informed that they can mend their damaged materials or even bind their information materials like final year project or dissertation in the library. Sharma and Pathak (2020) carried out a study on Simple Marketing Strategies for Promoting Library Resources and Services where they listed reprography as one of the services that could drive patronage. The researchers went further to explain that reprography service include various document services such as scanned documents, photocopy, print and binding on a subsidy base.

Benefits of marketing library services in an evolving world in developing countries

There are several benefits associated to marketing, hence profit making organizations always take out time to carefully plan and execute various strategies to keep their customers interested in patronizing them. Libraries can also benefit from marketing their services despite not being a profit making outfit, some of the benefits that libraries can enjoy include the following;

Increased library patronage: marketing library service is a way of promoting the awareness of the various services and resources available in the library, the low patronage currently been experienced in libraries in developing countries has been associated to lack of awareness of the services rendered in the library. If users are aware it is then expected to lead to the improvement in their patronage. One of the advantages of marketing library services and resources, according to (Madhusudhan 2008 as cited by Edewor et al., 2016), is that it will encourage the use of information resources and guarantee that they are used to their fullest potential in the library.

Increased library users: marketing library services will also awaking the consciousness of non-library users who might not perceive library has been useful. This will lead to a change of mindset and will most likely lead to the increase in the number of library users after a period of time. This corroborates Ternenge (2019) claim that the online community is opened to all as long as there is internet connectivity. In Facebook, for instance, the activities of a friend or user of a library page are known by friends connected to that friend or user. As a result, when a fan of a library page leaves a comment or likes a status update or post made by the library, others may become aware of the marketing and promotion efforts the library engages in. This can motivate a friend of a library fan to join the library. According to Patange (2013), marketing is essential in determining the information needs of non-users and assisting in the provision of that information.

Justification of investment by parent body: libraries are operating in the period of dwindling economy especially due to economic recession and inflation, most libraries in Nigeria do not enjoy stable allocation of funds. It is however important for libraries to justify the investment of the parent body and that can be achieved by increased patronage through marketing of library resources and services. According to Patange (2013), information managers and librarians should market their services as an essential component of the company and attempt to substantiate the assertion that their users and clients could not perform their jobs successfully or efficiently without the assistance of a library. Marketing strategies will assist libraries and information services in obtaining additional financing from their users and parent body in this way.

It creates room for feedback: Marketing library services provides an avenue for libraries to get feedback or responses from their users. This helps not just to create awareness but to build lasting relationships between the library and the users. These users can then become library advocates who will always clamour for improvement in library services through their influence.

Guide the implementation of library policies: social media marketing for example gives room for feedback as users will be able to bare their concerns about the type and manner of service they are receiving and how it can be improved upon. This will lead to libraries making more informed decision and policies that will positively affect the growth of the library. This is in line with the summation of Patange (2013) who revealed that marketing helps librarians and information managers make wise management decisions by helping them comprehend users' true demands, which ultimately helps them provide users with the greatest amount of information services in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Increased revenue: more users equals more revenue. So when several users start patronising the services in the library, the revenue generated in the library will also increase. Services like photocopying, binding, scanning and printing will fetch more income for the library. This corroborate Patil and Pradhan (2014) submission that because of the limited budget for library there is need to market library services so as to generate funds for the library.

Conclusion

Libraries are established with the aim of providing information services to the user community. For a long time libraries have enjoyed continuous patronage of the services rendered without necessarily making effort to attract users, this freedom is currently being threatened due to the advent of ICT and most especially the internet which has led to information explosion. Users now have several alternative to meeting their information needs and most of them feel they do not need the services provided in the library. This has led to a decline to library patronage, and for libraries to maintain their relevance and to justify the investment of the parent organization, the services and resources must be utilised. This can be achieved through carefully planned marketing activity which will lead to a change of mindset and also increase in awareness of the benefits users can get from using the library.

Recommendations

For libraries to continue to remain relevant in the ever changing world of information, the following recommendations are hereby suggested.

1. The curriculum of library and information science should be reviewed to include courses like marketing and advocacy. This will help prepare students and future librarians to deal with the current realities facing libraries by the time they graduate.
2. Libraries should actively adopt various marketing strategies in order to change users' mindset and to also attract users, so as to increase the patronage of the resources and services provided in the library. The strategies listed in the body of the work is a good starting point for libraries.
3. Libraries are also advised to enhance community engagements through their programmes and events such as hosting workshops, book clubs, author talks and also collaborate with local organizations, schools and businesses to offer programs and services that meet community needs.
4. Libraries are also encouraged to leverage on digital channels like Facebook, X, Instagram to reach different demographics and develop a strong brand identity by sharing updates, events and using catchy taglines to engage with the user community
5. Librarians should be trained so as to equip them with the relevant marketing skills. This can come in terms of workshop, seminars and related conference attendance.

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