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Marketing of Information and Library Services in Nigerian University Libraries: The Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

University libraries in Nigeria exist to support teaching, learning and research needs of their parent institutions. This is done through the provision of up –to-date information resources to their clientele –students, teaching and non-teaching staff. This mission can be best accomplished through effective marketing of information and library services to their respective users. This paper examines marketing of information and library services in Nigerian university libraries; the current situation and the way forward. Marketing of information and library services is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others. The use of Marketing mix (the 7p's) and other marketing strategies such as exhibition, segmentation and use of Internet were seen as means which could be used to market information and library services to various users in Nigerian University Libraries.

Keywords: Marketing, users' satisfaction, library services, information, university libraries, Nigeria.

1.Introduction

Society has come to regard information as a commodity and the possession of it as an asset. Information has now become an important element of commerce. With the evolution of Internet, and the shift from manual to digital operations, new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information have been created. Libraries in recent times have been under pressure to mobilize resources and repackage such resources to meet the information needs of their clientele. Gupta (2003) has said that the notion of service has changed, from basic to value added, from staff assisted to self-service, from in-house to out-reach, from free to priced, from reactive to pro-active, and from mass customization to individualized service.

Librarians and information professionals need to find new ways of serving their clienteles more efficiently and effectively. Marketing is seen as having the capability to serve this purpose

1.1 What Is Marketing?

Marketing according to Rowley (2001) is an exchange process through which individuals, groups and organizations, obtain benefits and value, defined in their own terms.

Kotler (1999) offers the following definition of marketing. Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organizations

Offering in terms of target market's needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets.

According to him, seven major points could be emphasized in this definition.

- (i) Marketing is a managerial process involving analysis, planning, implementation, and control.
- (ii) Marketing is concerned with carefully formulated programs not random actions- designed to achieve desired responses
- (iii) Marketing seeks to bring about voluntary exchange
- (iv) Marketing selects target markets and does not seek to be all things to all people.
- (v) Marketing is directly correlated to the achievement of organizational objectives.
- (vi) Marketing places emphasis on the target market (consumer's) needs and desires rather than on the producers preferences.
- (vii) Marketing utilizes what has been termed the marketing mix or the '4ps' product, pricing, place, distribution, and promotion / communication.

According to Weingand (1999), today interpretation of marketing leans a full 180 degrees from the "selling" definition. Rather than the design of a product from which is then sold to a potential public (whether) they want or not, marketing now consists of an approach to product design that reflects the identified needs of the target population. This definition of marketing of information and library services falls in tandem with the writers' perception of what marketing should be. In libraries and information practice, library and information practitioners should design products, to meet the users' needs instead of spending time to attempt to persuade the users that they should use what the library has because it is valuable. There is an inter relationship quality to today's view of marketing; both the user's needs and library service must have a symbiotic relationship. If one element is absent or present without the other element, then marketing cannot be said to have taken place.

1.1.1 Is MARKETING A NEW CONCEPT TO NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES LIBRARIES?

Marketing is not a new concept to Nigerian libraries. Renborg (1997) has noted that marketing is not new to libraries; especially when considered outside the concept of buying and selling. The library as an entity or organization has been offering services and products and can be regarded as information market whilst the library users who are the consumers of information can be regarded as buyers or the consumers of information. Gupta (2003) has noted that marketing in modern librarianship dates back to the 1870's. According to him approaches of experts in library science like Melvil Dewey and S. R Ranganathan were marketing oriented. Ranganathan in 1931 formulated normative principles in library work which was published and called Ranganathan's five laws of library science. He stated them as follows

- (i) Books are for use
- (ii) Every reader his book
- (iii) Every book his reader
- (iv) Save the time of the reader
- (v) Library is a growing organism

These five laws when correlated with the marketing concept of information and library services can be discussed as follows:

- (i) Books are for use (Books should be used maximally)
- (ii) Every reader his book (The reader or user is the main factor and his needs must be satisfied.
- (iii) Every book a reader (Ensures that every book is given to a reader, that is a reader is found for every book)
- (iv) Save the time of the reader. (Organize the material such that the reader can easily find it)
- (v) A library is a growing organism (A library and its activities must undergo change at different times.

In the light of this it is obvious that Marketing is a long time concept which existed a long time. It must be seen in the light of service delivery instead of buying and selling

1.1.2 WHAT ARE THE INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR MARKETING?

Marketing of a product or service depends on the quality of the product. Marketing has a direct relationship with the quality of the product. The better the quality of the product or service, the easier it is to market the product or service. There are a number of information products and services that are available in Nigerian university libraries. . *These are lending and information services, reference services, indexing /abstracting services, user education, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), inter-library lending, electronic resources, E-classroom facility, On-line Public Access Catalogue(OPAC), books, digital products, films, the Internet, advisory services, bibliographic and reprographic services, Current Awareness services(CAS)*

2. WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR MARKETING INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES?

Nigerian university libraries have very good reasons to effectively market their services:

- ◆ University libraries rely on Government and government agencies for funding. There are several other faculties and service departments which the library has to compete with for the little available funds. Thus marketing information services will place libraries in a better position to attract the needed funds from the parent institution
- ◆ In this digital age, libraries have ceased to have monopoly of information and its resources. There are several information brokers, providers, consultants, and fee - based websites that can provide various types of information to various users. Therefore, marketing is required to showcase the potentials of the library and attract users to use their resources.
- ◆ Marketing will improve the image of the library and Librarians and change perception of users towards the library.
- ◆ Marketing will help the library to maintain its relevance especially in this digital age and keep them focused to serving their users.
- ◆ Libraries and Librarians are valuable sources of information resources which are not recognized. Marketing will help solve this problem.
- ◆ There is a general and erroneous belief that Librarians do nothing and may not serve any useful purpose when employed in organizations. Therefore, Librarians need to market themselves and their potentials to be able to convince employers of labour that they are worth their salt.

2.1.MARKETING OF INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: THE CURRENT SITUATION

Marketing of information and library services in Nigerian University Libraries has been at very low ebb. Apart from the fact that university library managements may not have given it a priority, poor funding from government has contributed to what marketing is today in Nigerian university libraries. Ijjeh (2011) has

observed that government owned university libraries are suffering from low budgetary allocation. According to him, an analysis of the federal government allocation to the education sector in the last nine years is discouraging. Between 2000 and 2008, the Nigerian federal government allocated an average of only 9% of its budget to education (Mordi, 2008). In 2008, of the N737b (55.2b), the federal government allocated to the education sector between 1999 and 2007 the federal ministry of education spent about N472 billion or (53.5b) on salaries and wages, leaving a meager sum of N265b or \$1.7b for infrastructural development in federal universities over a period of eight years.

Only last year 2013, lecturers in Nigerian Universities under the aegis of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) undertook a long strike (over six months) over issues of funding, facilities and infrastructural deficiency. Academic Librarians are members of ASUU. As a result of poor funding most Nigerian University libraries have found it difficult to maintain regular subscription to various databases. Print resources are sometimes too old to be useful in the current dispensation while available electronic resources are few to take care of increasing number of users. In addition regular power supply needed to power electronic systems is a problem.

It is obvious that with this scenario, not much marketing has taken place.

3. WHAT SHOULD NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES DO TO TAKE MARKETING TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

For marketing to be taken to another level, Nigerian university libraries would need to:

Create conducive environment: a good and conducive environment is required for users to access and relax to use various information resources. The provision of functional air conditioners to cool reading rooms and halls is considered a necessity. Adequate natural lighting and cross ventilation should also be given serious attention. Arrangement should be made for separate reading rooms for post-graduate students, teaching and non-teaching staff respectively. A conducive environment will attract users

Provide alternative source of power supply: In Nigeria, the attainment of constant power supply has remained a mirage Nigerian university libraries would need to source for alternative source of power supply. Constant power is needed to power electronic systems as well as provides artificial lighting. The use of inverters and generators can be provided to supplement electricity from the national grid.

Undertake annual and constant subscription to print and electronic databases: Nigerian libraries would need to maintain regular and up-to date subscription of print and electronic databases. This will ensure continuous availability of information resources to the various users.

Include marketing in their yearly plan: Managements of libraries would need to include marketing in their yearly plan of action. Efforts should be made to allocate funds to marketing no matter how small on an annual basis

Look for alternative sources of funds: University Libraries in Nigeria relies solely on government funding for their existence. Unfortunately, funds from Government has never been sufficient to sustain libraries, hence there is need to find other sources of income. Managements of libraries with the permission of their Parent institutions can rename their libraries after wealthy Nigerians and corporate organizations within their communities. This will give these individuals and the corporate organizations the impetus to always support the libraries in terms of finance and other needed resources.

Train their personnel on ICT skills: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a major tool that drives most activities in today's world. Several studies, Umeji, et al(2013), Ademodi and Adepoju(2009) and Adomi and Anie(2006) have indicated that most Librarians in Nigerian University libraries have low computer skills. Therefore, it has become imperative that University library managements must consider the training of their personnel a must, for a society who lacks ICT literate workforce cannot compete in the global economy. Acquisition of the requisite ICT literacy skills would enable library personnel to assist their users to access and retrieve information timely.

3.1 Nigerian University Libraries - A Brief History: The establishment of university libraries in Nigeria is synonymous with the evolution of the university. Universities in Nigeria are classed by generation based on their year of establishment. The first generation universities in Nigeria were established between 1948-1960, the second generation between 1970-1985, the third generation between 1985-1999. The state universities established by state governments and private universities allowed by a law in 1993 in which FGN allowed private sectors to establish universities following prescribed guidelines by the government. The first university in Nigeria, the university of Ibadan and its libraries were established in 1948. As observed by Aguolu (1996), since independence there has been an unrelenting upsurge in the establishment of educational institutions at all levels, but especially at the university level. University libraries, as integral academic part of universities, generally emerged simultaneously with their parent institutions.

3.1.1 POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF MARKETING TO NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Potential benefits likely to accrue from marketing to Nigerian university libraries

- ⇒ Increase funding from funding agencies
- ⇒ Increase in usage of services
- ⇒ Users will be educated
- ⇒ Perceptions about the library and its staff will change
- ⇒ Users will be more satisfied and can visit the library again and again.
- ⇒ The library will maintain its relevance
- ⇒ efficient use of information resources
- ⇒ Save library from devaluation
- ⇒ Introduce cutting edge Information and Communication Technology in library and information service.
- ⇒ Concentrate specially on acquiring information resources that are needed by their clientele; and not just any information resource.

3.2 BARRIER TO EFFECTIVE MARKETING IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

- i. **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. The truth is that most library staff for one reason or the other does not show a positive attitude to the users thereby making the user to feel unlikely to return to the library.
- ii. **Lack of funds:** Lack of funds constitute a major hindrance to marketing of information and library services in Nigerian university libraries. Under normal budgetary allocation some library management do not make provision for marketing in their budgetary plans. As a result, they find it very difficult if not impossible to source for funds to undertake this very essential aspect of library routine.
- iii. **Low level of knowledge:** Lack of marketing knowledge by library personnel has been identified as a barrier to effective marketing of information and library services in Nigeria university libraries. Alemna (2001) has observed that one of the problems hindering marketing of information and library services is the relatively low level of knowledge of library staff.
- iv. **Diverse nature of services and clientele:** University libraries have a wide range of services and clientele. Marketing of these varieties of services and attending to various clienteles has not been easy.
- v. **Non-realization of information value:** Information resources and services constitute an intangible value to research and development. However, this value has been overlooked thus marketing a resource which value cannot be evaluated has been difficult.

4. Market research

Market research is the first step involved in marketing. It is the systematic gathering, recording and analysis of data relating to the demand for a service or product (Katz 1988). The library needs to be analyzed in terms of funding sources, the contribution the li makes to the mission of the parent. A market research is used to determine

- (i) User needs (ii) Services available (iii) Operation and cost (iv) Longevity of demand

4.1 MARKETING MIX IN MARKETING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Marketing of information and library services in Nigerian university libraries will require a critical analysis of the marketing mix. This would help to identify the features, possible benefits and value of the products and services to the customers/users.

Marketing can be achieved through the use of the 7p's element of the marketing mix (product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical environment. This will be discussed in table 1 below.

7p's	
Product	The product is what is offered that can satisfies the customer needs and not what is available whether the users want it or not. In designing the product the library management must take into accounts (i) who are the user groups? (ii) To whom the information product /service should be targeted? (iii) What should be the service that can be produced and marketed to the various user groups? In designing the product, care must be taken to weed out unwanted products introduce new ones and repackage others
Price	This is the price of the product or services which are determined on the basis cost as well as market factors such as competitors' prices, ability of the user to pay, distribution avenues. However it is important to note that in library and information service, the idea of price raises difficulties. In university libraries in Nigerian the parent organization examine the price based on the value of the services. In most cases, services are given free.
Promotion	This is the communication which relates o activities used to inform various groups about the organization and its product. It increases public awareness, educate users. Promotion includes advertising, public relation, personal contact, on-line activities, Internal bulletins, posters, newsletter, e-mail, library websites can be used for these activities.
People	This refers to the staff (library Personnel). It is a very important element in the marketing mix because only competent and skilled personnel can help drive the vision of the organization.
Process	The process involves the procedures, channel of activities by which the information services are acquired. .
Physical Evidence	This deals with the physical environments in which the service is delivered. The environment may influence the quality of service delivery, thus it is important to pay attention to design of the building, accessibility, lighting, seat arrangements, presentation of staff, cleanliness, and so on.

4.1.1 OTHER MARKETING STRATEGIES

i. Marketing Segmentation: libraries unlike commercial or profit organizations are expected to strife to serve all its potential users. However, to enhance service delivery, libraries should create or develop market segments from the potential population and concentrate on marketing information service to them preferably on faculty to faculty basis at a time until the entire population is catered for. In this case the management of these libraries must be careful to properly direct resources toward the target groups and to channel the marketing of this information service to meet the information needs of users in each faculty. In some cases, demographic or life-style segmentation, which seeks to segments customers not only on demographic characteristics, but also on attitude to life, beliefs and aspirations, activities and interests, may be adopted. Equally, there is a significant group of information products for which the most appropriate market segmentation is micro segmentation, in which various groups are treated as individuals

. It is also important to bear in mind the "80/20 percent rule" – 80 percent of a service is used by 20 percent of clientele (wood, 1984). Market segment according to (Rowley, 2006) must be

- **Measurable and identifiable.** so that they can be characterized (in terms of segmentation variables such as age or profession): the best situation is when members of the segment can be listed, and the size of the segment is known.

- **Sufficiently large to justify expenditure** associated with service and product delivery, promotional activities and in commercial contexts, to ensure a profit. However, not all segments need to be large. Sometimes small segments can have a significant effect on profit or on influencing funding decisions.

- **Accessible,** with an appropriate marketing mix and in particular, there must be channel of communication, such as newsletters, mailing lists and television channels which support targeted communication with this group. This criterion tends to constrain organizations to work within segments already identified by editors, producers and others involved with communication.

- **Relevant** to the type of market.

i. **Use of Internet:** The Internet has become a powerful tool for reaching millions of people across the globe. Libraries in Nigeria can create their websites and use the services of the Internet to market their products and services

ii. **Exhibition:** Book exhibition can help draw users to available library and information resources. Book exhibition can be taken regularly at intervals within the school session; or may be during library week. Library and information resources should be mounted at prominent positions preferably by a busy thoroughfare or outside the library building where it can be seen by many people. Techniques for designing exhibition are multiform, but there are three basic rules; keep it simple, make it clear, and ensure that it is attractive. An exhibition of this type, may require a display stand, but should be made standard to reflect the different aspects

of library services and mission.

5. CONCLUSION

The library is generally regarded as an information market and its users or clientele the buyer or consumers. Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to meet the needs of the user or clientele. Marketing is a belief in service and trying to achieve customer's satisfaction. Marketing depends on the types and quality of products and services showcase to the public. For Nigerian University libraries to use marketing to their benefits and that of their users, necessary facilities and infrastructures must be put in place. Human and material resources must be mobilized towards lifting marketing to greater heights.

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