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# REVIEW: MARKETING AND MANAGERIAL ISSUES IN LIBRARY SERVICES PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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## ABSTRACT

*Despite the advantage of academic libraries in confronting the challenge of efficiently marketing the resources, services, and products to potential users; still, successful marketing strategies need to be addressed in order to increase users' awareness, encourage engagement with library holdings and services, and bolster the library's reputation and the esteem held for its personnel. Again, for better understanding of the marketing strategies employed and obstacles faced by librarians in state university libraries in Nigeria, further investigation into these areas is necessary. The study revealed that the potential benefits of effectively marketing library services are numerous. Firstly, it can lead to an increase in customer patronage in using the library's products and services. This increased patronage can also result in higher profits for the library, as turnover rates often determine an organization's profitability. Additionally, effective marketing can lead to the expansion of library firms, creating more employment opportunities for the community. By instilling confidence in the industry and its customers, effective marketing can also increase customer retention. Furthermore, effective marketing can reduce ignorance and encourage people to embrace the reading culture, ultimately reducing risks in various areas of life, such as health information. Finally, effective marketing of library services can contribute to the holistic development of library patrons and the nation as a whole.*

Keywords: Library Marketing, Library Management, Library Services

## 1.0 Introduction

In contemporary library discourse, marketing information has emerged as a significant theme. Marketing encompasses various strategies aimed at managing demand for goods, concepts, and services to facilitate exchanges between consumers and offerings. As a deliberate, strategic methodology, it brings together audiences and resources in diverse ways. The application of marketing principles to library resources and services extends across numerous domains, including printed works, electronic journals, databases, books, and additional digital content. Beyond these tangible assets, marketing also involves providing instruction on information literacy, reader services, reference assistance, educational programming, copying facilities, and circulation support, amongst other services. Despite the potential benefits of marketing within the library context, some professionals remain skeptical about incorporating such practices into their work due to misconceptions regarding the appropriateness of marketing techniques for non-profit institutions like libraries. Nonetheless, an increasing number of librarians recognize the value of employing marketing methods to raise patron awareness, stimulate curiosity, and encourage usage of library resources and services (Saunders, 2020).

Libraries in Nigeria can optimize resource utilization and strengthen community connections by implementing strategic marketing approaches. Jone's (2018) assertion highlights the importance of marketing in ensuring patrons are informed about the extensive array of materials and services provided by libraries. Inadequate marketing efforts have resulted in insufficient awareness among users concerning the wealth of resources and services available within libraries, contributing to underutilization. Nigerian libraries face specific challenges when it comes to marketing due to various factors such as a lack of interest in marketing

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concepts and principles among librarians and library leadership, which could stem from deficient marketing content in library school curricula. As information professionals, librarians require proficiency in marketing principles, a thorough comprehension of their significance, and the ability to apply them to persuade and entice users towards library collections and services. Academic libraries in particular bear the responsibility of providing timely access to relevant information resources, both printed and digital, meeting the educational requirements of students and faculty members. Additionally, they deliver information services like manual, electronic, and web-based assistance; material circulation; reader enquiries; user education programs; reference services; and electronic access to resources and services. Ensuring optimal usage of acquired information resources and services is another vital task for academic libraries. A study conducted by Osinulu , Daramola and Okewale (2017) revealed that Nigerian public universities receive substantial funding annually via the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), enabling them to procure abundant print, non-print, and electronic resources, along with hardware and software applications for library development. Despite this advantage, academic libraries still confront the challenge of efficiently marketing these resources, services, and products to potential users. Successful marketing strategies increase users' awareness, encourage engagement with library holdings and services, and bolster the library's reputation and the esteem held for its personnel. To better understand the marketing strategies employed and obstacles faced by librarians in state university libraries in Nigeria, further investigation into these areas is necessary. By doing so, library and information science professionals will gain valuable insights in improving marketing practices and overcoming existing barriers to guarantee the longevity and success of libraries

**2.0 Library Marketing Strategies**

Marketing in the context of libraries involves the provision of library resources and services, using different tools and technologies to create awareness, attract and improve library patrons' use of the library resources and services. Libraries must use certain strategies to promote their services, such as making a library website, emailing users, setting up exhibits and displays of new arrivals, using flyers and posters, planning user education, offering electronic access to information, and planning library week. Marketing strategies can be described as a plan of action designed to achieve stated goals of promoting a library product or service to its users (Adekunmisi, 2017). The Library's marketing tactics will be based on the "Four Ps": Product, Place, Price, and Promotion. The success of academic library marketing lies mainly on convincing users that the tools or databases are worthwhile, they must understand what the services are, and be enthusiastic about how they will be helpful.

The strategy refers to a comprehensive plan that outlines the objectives an individual or organization aims to achieve. It is a forward-looking approach to planning that seeks to establish a sustainable competitive advantage. In the library world, marketing strategy refers to a plan of action designed to promote library products or services to users. Libraries, as gateways to information, must leverage their competitive advantage to attract and retain patrons in the face of potential competitors such as online book dealers, internet service providers, and cyber cafes. To achieve this, library professionals must embrace unique competitive advantage approaches that set them apart from their competitors. These may include ease of access to resources and services, highly skilled personnel, access to ICT applications, innovative technology, and marketing strategies. Incentives such as lower prices or higher quality services can also be used to attract clients. Various marketing strategies such as flyers, handbills, leaflets, newsletters, and orientation programs have been identified as effective tools for promoting library products and services (Ofori et al, 2020). Adekunmisi, 2017 asserted that the use of Web 2.0 applications and social media tools has

also made it possible for libraries to bring their services and resources to the doorstep of their patrons.

Librarians are advised to use unique and high-quality leverage that cannot be easily imitated by other libraries and competitors. This is known as a differentiated strategy, where libraries distinguish their products or services from those of other libraries while capitalizing on their competitive advantage. This strategy is considered exceptional and gives libraries an advantage over their competitors. There are no limitations to the strategies that libraries and librarians can use to promote their information services and products, but effective marketing is a challenge that needs to be addressed. Studies have found that irregular updates and a lack of marketing policies affect libraries' marketing strategies. While increased knowledge of library services and resources may lead to increased use, there is also evidence of students' misconceptions about libraries and social media. Inadequate funding, data security, copyright issues, a lack of library marketing skills and policies, and limited access to marketing media are identified as impeding factors to library marketing strategies (Mohammed and Ibrahim, 2021). These challenges sabotage libraries' efforts to provide quality services and restrict the scope of library services for wider usage. This results in students exhibiting negative attitudes and behaviors about using library resources and services. Inadequate library marketing policies hinder the marketing process and marketing of library services by academic libraries. The effective use of library resources is entirely dependent on the skills development of learners. Other research findings indicate that students lack experience in using information retrieval tools such as Boolean logic operators to access required information resources, navigate the library's website and databases, formulate effective searches, and access needed information (Shohana, 2020). Therefore, librarians need to address these challenges and develop effective marketing strategies to attract users back to libraries, survive in the midst of

competitors, get support from different stakeholders, and ultimately profit from competitive advantage.

### 3.0 Marketing Strategies in Library Services

#### 3.1 The Use of Social Media

To put it simply, social media is a powerful tool that libraries can use to connect with their users and meet their needs. It is especially important for non-profit organizations like libraries to market themselves and reach out to potential customers. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn are being used to interact with library users who are not physically present. Libraries have created accounts on these platforms to keep in touch with their users and provide them with the latest information. Social media also allows users to access information from different sources and share it with others, making it a valuable tool for learning and growth. Overall, social media is an effective strategy for libraries to engage with their users and enhance their learning experience.(Anwar and Zhiwei, 2019).

#### 3.2 Library Newsletter

The library newsletter is a valuable tool for public libraries to market their resources and services. It serves as a reminder of the library's existence and provides information to both current and potential customers. Additionally, it helps enhance the credibility of the library's resources and encourages readers to communicate their needs and receive feedback (Hudak, Kianickoro and Madlenak, 2017). By circulating newsletters, libraries can create a broader awareness of their services and products, as well as encourage readers to learn more about the library's operations. Furthermore, newsletters are effective in promoting library products and

services, as they can be used to communicate special offers and reinforce the usage of various information resources available in the library's collection (Linton, 2020).

### 3.3 Library Promotion and Cooperation

In a library context, effective promotion and cooperation are essential components of the marketing mix strategy. Promotion refers to the methods used to inform library users about the available services and resources, with the aim of increasing awareness and usage. Library staff members should actively promote and cooperate with users to market their services. The primary objective of promotion is to educate users on how to use the library and its resources, as well as to enhance their knowledge by providing access to information from various sources available in the library (Agboke & Effiong, 2020).

### 3.4 General Reference Service

The importance of library reference services as a marketing strategy lies in providing personal assistance, referral services, and document distribution to users, ultimately reducing the time and effort spent accessing information resources (Eda & Ukubeyinje, 2019). Additionally, online reference services can serve as a bonus for users who are unable to visit the library. These services are essential for promoting the utilization of library resources and increasing user appreciation of the services offered. Marketing reference services is crucial for promoting library services, engaging users, and communicating the library's value in a rapidly changing environment. Various strategies, such as user orientation programs, social media use, general reference services, and library promotion and cooperation, have been identified as effective marketing strategies for public libraries. (Kumar, 2017). Marketing information resources and library services is essential for making potential users aware of the

available products and services and improving user awareness of library products and services. Therefore, it is important for librarians to adopt various marketing strategies to remain relevant in this competitive world.

### 3.5 Library Competitive Advantage

To maintain a strong competitive edge for libraries, it's crucial to foster maximal competitiveness through enhancing several key aspects of their advantages. These elements encompass:

- Ease of access to resources and services in various formats
- Highly trained and skilled library staff
- Convenient locations
- Advanced information and communication technologies (ICT), including resources and services
- Engaging library equipment and facilities
- Aesthetically pleasing and quiet environments
- Clean restroom amenities
- Ergonomic furniture like chairs and tables
- Good lighting and ventilation
- Training programs
- Innovative library technology, applications, and services

By providing an optimal combination of these features, libraries are better equipped to compete with other entities offering similar or alternative services, such as internet service providers, online book dealers, and expanding internet cafés. This approach ultimately leads

to patron satisfaction and loyalty towards public libraries (Osinulu, Adkunmisi, Okewale, & Oyewusi, 2018). .

The search results provide insights into the significance of marketing reference services in libraries and the various strategies that can be adopted to promote library services effectively. The results emphasize the role of reference services in reducing the time and effort spent by users in accessing information resources and the importance of marketing strategies in increasing user awareness and appreciation of library services.

### 3.6 User Orientation Program

To ensure that new patrons can effectively utilize libraries' vast resources amidst growing collection sizes and advanced technology in information management, a comprehensive library orientation program is essential. Libraries serve as critical organs responsible for gathering, refining, arranging, distributing, and safeguarding both print and digital data to cater to various segments within society—including professionals, students, and researchers. As these repositories continue to expand and evolve due to technological progressions, providing proper guidance becomes increasingly important. Without such an orientation, locating, accessing, and navigating through libraries could become challenging for diverse patronage groups. The absence of this crucial step might hinder users from discovering available resources, leading to frustration and reduced engagement with the library. By implementing library orientation programs, institutions foster greater client interest, enhance efficient utilization of library resources, reduce librarians' and users' time spent on assistance, and improve comprehension of library regulations (Agyeiku, 202; Abdulsalami, Ekhaguosa, & Adeh, 2021).. These initiatives ultimately contribute to fostering a more engaged and informed community.

### 3.7 Library Website

Library websites serve as pivotal marketing platforms, consistently evolving to showcase library activities and functions. These digital portals provide entry points to electronic resources like journals, books, and databases that the institution has acquired. According to (Waral, 2020). Through online catalogs, patrons gain immediate access to the library's collection offerings. As innovative technologies emerge, these sites become accessible via diverse mobile devices from any location. By uniting services and resources into an integrated experience, library websites foster connections between libraries and their targeted user groups—such as students and academics—while offering channels for communicating with potential clientele (Owusu-Ansah et al, 2018). Additionally, some traditional promotion methods, including flyers, brochures, and posters, may be utilized alongside web content to advertise events and programs within the library context.

## 4.0 The Problems Militating Against Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services

The challenges facing the effective marketing of library and information services in Nigeria are numerous. These include irregular power supply, lack of reliable internet services and hardware, difficulty in importing books and journals due to high foreign exchange rates, inadequate ICT manpower, intangibility of library services, difficulties in measuring and evaluating performance, difficulty in convincing people to change their minds, level of illiteracy, and poverty. The erratic nature of electric power supply in Nigeria is a major problem that needs to be addressed for a successful and effective marketing of library and information services. The process of digitalization and subsequent maintenance of modern ICT components depends on constant electricity. The difficulty in importing books and journals from abroad due to high foreign exchange rates has deterred many libraries from acquiring current and relevant texts that would support academic programs. Inadequate ICT manpower is also a challenge, as many librarians and information managers have only

peripheral knowledge of information technology. The intangibility of library services also makes marketing difficult, as these services are not recognized and appreciated in nature. Additionally, difficulties in measuring and evaluating performance and convincing people to change their minds pose challenges to effective marketing. The level of illiteracy and poverty in the country also make it difficult to market library and information services effectively. Illiterate individuals may not understand the importance of library services, and poverty may prevent people from understanding the benefits of these services even if they are convinced to accept them. Overall, addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from stakeholders in the library and information science field, as well as government and private sector support to improve infrastructure and funding.

**5.0 Prospects of Effective Marketing of Library Services**

The potential benefits of effectively marketing library services are numerous. Firstly, it can lead to an increase in customer patronage as more people become aware of and interested in using the library's products and services. This increased patronage can also result in higher profits for the library, as turnover rates often determine an organization's profitability. Additionally, effective marketing can lead to the expansion of library firms, creating more employment opportunities for the community. By instilling confidence in the industry and its customers, effective marketing can also increase customer retention. Furthermore, effective marketing can reduce ignorance and encourage people to embrace the reading culture, ultimately reducing risks in various areas of life, such as health information. Finally, effective marketing of library services can contribute to the holistic development of library patrons and the nation as a whole.

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