

## UTILIZATION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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### ABSTRACT

*This study deliberate on the problems bedeviled the use of marketing strategy in academic library as the means of promoting academic libraries. Similarly, concept of marketing, academic libraries and the challenges that hinder effective use of library were discuss*

**Keywords;** *Academic Library, Marketing Strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Library is an institution that provides society with necessary knowledge for the betterment of community at large. The libraries that are attached in tertiary institution are called academic libraries. Academic libraries worldwide are experiencing low patronage (Kiilu and Otikey, 2016). Their roles as custodians of information are no longer attached to the libraries alone. They now have to compete for customers with the internet, bookshops, online book dealers and demand for more efficient services and needs of users (Odine, 2011; Emezie and Nwaohiri, 2012). To provide efficient service there is need for marketing for library service. Marketing, in the context of library, is considered as the art and science of finding and keeping readers and users of the library and information center. This concept was first introduced by Kotler and Levy in 1969. In 1982 he again elaborated the marketing strategies for Non-profit organizations like libraries. According to him, nonprofit organization like library is basically engaged in the production of services rather than goods. Services are distinct in nature primarily due to the characteristics of being intangible, inseparable, variable and perishable. Thus there is also need of different approach towards marketing of services vis-à-vis marketing of goods. Within different kind of services, Information service is not only considered as valuable commodity but also as marketable commodity (Eagleton 1992). Information products/services, like any other commodity, are demanded in the market and the demand is affected by factors like price, reference, income, expectations, populations, seasons, technology, and price of other goods. Marketing intended for not-for-profit organizations such as libraries is referred to as "the societal marketing" (Adeloye, 2003). Marketing library services is significant in any dynamic competitive environment. Libraries have historically been confident that their products had such intrinsic merit that users would automatically be attracted; they believed that people should use the library. Weingand (1999) considered this yesterday's thinking. Libraries need to market their services because Libraries are no longer the only information services industries. The online book dealers, information consultants, the Internet services providers, free web access providers and individual customers will not hesitate to market to potential library customers or users (Adekunmisi, 2013).

### Marketing Strategies

There are two broad strategies used in marketing. These are the push and pull strategies (Grundstrom, 2015). Push marketing strategies enables sending of marketing information and communication directly to the customer. This marketing strategy is used to target new users who might not have heard about services the library provides (Su, Johnson & O'Mahony, 2020). It focuses on pushing product information in front of the user. Examples of this strategy includes direct mail to the customer/bulk messaging, e-mail marketing, TV or Radio Advertisements, pamphlets and Billboards. The pull marketing strategy on the other hand, focuses on the needs of the users. Services are designed and tailored to suit the customers (Grundstrom, 2014). This marketing strategy takes into cognizance the needs of the library user and this is done with the aim of attracting the user to the service. This strategy entails being aware of the fact that users

are actually using the service that you offer but the library then makes it easier for them to find it thereby making satisfying their needs. Examples of this strategy includes social media marketing, word-of-mouth referrals and sales promotion and discounts. This strategy revolves around getting the users to want a service by increasing the demand and pulling the user to the service (Quesenberry, 2020).

### **Concept of Academic library**

Academic libraries are libraries established and maintained by higher institutions of learning such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, schools of nursing, petroleum training institutes and schools of health technology (Uwaifo, 2010). They support the curriculum of the tertiary institutions which established them and have for centuries played critically important roles in supporting research in all subjects and disciplines within their host universities and colleges (Jubb and Green, 2007). However, academic libraries worldwide are experiencing low patronage (Kiilu and Otike, 2016). Their roles as custodians of information are no longer attached to academic libraries alone. They now have to compete for customers with the internet, bookshops, online book dealers and demand for more efficient services and needs of users (Odine, 2011; Emezie and Nwaohiri, 2012). Users no longer depend on the academic library as an essential part of their learning and research. They see the library as one of those facilities a university or college should have. Libraries must strive to retain their patrons and be at the peak of providing information sources that suit the demands of present day information seekers. To do this, Libraries must market their services.

### **Marketing in Library surroundings**

Marketing in library setting is the designing and presenting a library's information resources and services in terms of the needs and desires of the users of the library and using effective techniques to motivate, inform and service the library clientele both present and potential (Nwegbu, 2005). Weigard (1995) views marketing in library as a process of exchange and a way to foster the partnership between the library and the community. Marketing of library and information services includes user priorities, expectations, individuality, responsiveness, relationship, quality of services, professional skills, competencies and value added services etc. Basanta & Sanjah (2008) stated that the ultimate aim of marketing is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time. However, libraries market their services to their users without a thought for the non-users (Sridar, 1994). More so, the marketing strategies used by libraries are generally done using the "Pull" marketing strategy. This strategy depends mostly on and targets the demands of the user (Sarbjit, 2017). This strategy hardly reaches the non-user categories in the higher institutions that house these libraries.

### **Challenges associated with Marketing Information Services in Academic Libraries**

Some challenges that hinder effective marketing of information services in academic libraries include lack of funds and the lack of adoption of technologies.

Igbokwe, Ezeji, and Obidike (2010) investigated librarians and library officers level of perception of problems of marketing library services in the era of technological change. The approach adopted was to discuss the problems that hinder effective marketing of library services in selected university libraries. Three geopolitical zones namely South-west, North-central, and South-south zones were selected through the principle of random sampling technique. From each zone two states and two federal were randomly selected giving a total of four universities per zone and making a total of 12 universities. Two hundred and ten (210) questionnaires were distributed and 186 were returned and out of which 163 were found usable. Mean and standard deviation were used to collect data for discussion. The study found that the major problem hindering effective marketing of library services were inadequate fund, irregular power supply, inadequate infrastructure like photocopier, computers, air conditioner for the marketing of library services,

unavailability of staff, low computer literacy among staff, lack of professional training in marketing, under staffing, limited media access, death of library materials to market, and also library management do not have marketing policy. The study then recommended that there is urgent need to increase fee-based services in order to generate funds. It is not sufficient to install equipment or services. It is vital to market the services in the same way a private firm markets its products in order to make users aware. This becomes more urgent with several business centers/cybercafés operating on most university campuses.

In her thesis titled "Marketing Library Services in Selected Private Universities in Ghana" Lamptey (2016) investigated the attitudes of library staff towards the marketing of library services, available marketing strategies and plans, how they are applied in the promotion of their services to patrons and challenges encountered in marketing of services and resources in the universities under study. A total of 21 professional and para-professional library staff from three private universities participated in the study. The main data collection instrument was semi structured interviews. The findings revealed that the study participants are fully aware of benefits of inculcating marketing activities into their daily routines and were making efforts at making their users aware of their products and services with the use of various strategies including social media. Some of the challenges that hindered the success of marketing in the libraries are lack of funds, lack of knowledge of marketing techniques by staff and a lack of marketing policy to guide marketing in the libraries. The study then recommended creation of marketing policies, organization of seminars on marketing for library staff as well as proactively advocating for more funds from the right people within the university community is suggested to improve marketing of their services and resources. This study showcased the lack of marketing techniques of librarians in the universities under study. It highlighted the critical place of marketing techniques in improving patronage of users to the library. This present study also advocated for the adoption of push technology for marketing of information services.

Aderibigbe and Farouk (2017) examined challenges associated with Marketing of Information Resources and Services in Federal University Libraries in North-West zone of Nigeria. The qualitative research methodology was employed for the study. The Participants chosen for this study were the Heads of Readers services in (5) five Federal University Libraries studied. Interview method was also used as the data collection instrument and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The major challenges associated with marketing of information resources and services by the libraries include low patronage, inadequate funds to provide relevant resources and services as well as to support the marketing activities, inadequate support from the parent institution, inadequate staff to provide the necessary services with professionalism among others. The study then recommended that Academic libraries should develop marketing plans that will help to ensure that the strategies are put in place and managed for the benefit of the libraries.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study also concluded that all the libraries market their services using the pull strategies like the noticeboard, and orientations/seminars/workshops. More also, the study concluded that marketing influences patronage of libraries; with the right marketing strategies patronage will increase. Similarly, lack of skills are the major inhibitor to the adoption of strategies in marketing of libraries.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Academic Libraries studied in Kaduna should put forward staff development programs and the librarians in these libraries should help library staff secure TETFUND scholarships to study abroad. This will enhance the capacities of these staff members. More also, Training on marketing strategies should also be conducted by libraries studied and marketing consultants can also be

contracted to give talks on what works in marketing around the globe.

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