

THE NEED TO MARKET LIBRARY SERVICES AND ITS CHALLENGES TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS: THE CASE OF DELTA STATE POLYTECHNIC LIBRARY, OTEFE-OGHARA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the need for the Delta State Polytechnic Otefe, library to reshape the promotion techniques of her library's products and services for improved service delivery to fit in the present global information society. This has become necessary as the world experiences continuous technological development. The study therefore sought to determine the challenges to effective marketing and to identify strategies to effectively market library services at the Delta State Polytechnic, library, Otefe. The study is qualitative research and adopts a descriptive research design method. The study made use of a combination of case study and survey research methods. The study population includes all the seven (7) professional librarians of the Polytechnic library. Data collection was done through interview of all the target population. Data generated were analysed using content analysis. The findings of the study indicate that the librarians consider the existing promotion/marketing practices obsolete and none effective. The study therefore recommends the adoption of core marketing principles of library services and products to reach out to customers to gain their confidence and remain relevant in the present dispensation.

Keywords: *Delta State Polytechnic, library, Otefe; marketing; technological development*

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of information and information resources as well as technological advancement have changed the global

information landscape which have impacted greatly the access, use/intake of information globally. The internet, WWW and soaring technological

innovations have given leverage to information access/retrieval and have considerably reduced hindrances to information access to a great level. With the present global trend, the awareness of the importance of information among people in all works of life have grown especially among students. Members of academic communities are aware of alternative sources of information which are mediated by modern technology and their advantages. As a consequent, information seekers have developed appetite for the changing ICTs and expect the academic library within the tertiary institutions to provide latest ICTs and media technologies, innovate and upgrade their information services. In the face of these factors that are capable of stripping the library of her users, it becomes imperative for academic libraries to reshape her strategy, be preemptive and device processes to make the library attractive ounce again to both present and potential users, if they must remain relevant in the present global information society. Following the current global occurrences, Sondh (2021) points out that those who wish to stay afloat and remain competitive must be innovative

and adjust their business models to match the demands of her costumers. According to Agada (2019) academic librarians and information science professionals should initiate competitive marketing approaches to strategically reorient themselves and libraries as information superhighways that the academic community cannot ignore. Moreover, the library is service oriented, it is meant to be used else its establishment is needless. Maximum and effective use of the academic library especially in the face of alternative sources of information can be promoted through marketing. Like in every other business organization marketing is crucial in promoting library services in order to perform a user driven service. Chuabey and Lal, (2016) found that library and information products/services have been recognized as saleable and have a ready market.

Moreover, it is evident that the service sector to which the academic library belongs (education) contributes significantly to GDP and serves as a source of employment in every society globally (Johann, 2015). Payne (1993) in his classification of service

marketing categorised communication and information services as uppermost on the list of saleable services. Payne's classification recognizes that the principles of marketing can be applied to library services. According to Chaubey and Lal (2015) in the present post-industrial age knowledge is considered the most valuable asset. Invariably, the awareness and use of information is on a steady increase and so information seekers will source for information through sources that appeal to them that will satisfy their needs in the most convenient way. As mentioned earlier with the availability of diverse sources of information academic libraries run the risk of losing patrons which will have adverse impact on their sustainability. However, with increase awareness on the importance of information, Library and information literature indicates that, the academic library may be able to retain her place of relevance and continue to convey its integral role in supporting teaching, learning and research in tertiary institutions if they apply appropriate marketing principles to promote their services (Edewor, Okite-Amugboro, Osuchukwu and

Egreajena, 2016; Chegwe and Anaehobi, 2015; Kennedy, 2011). This study therefore seeks to study the need to market library services and its challenges to academic librarians using Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe-Oghara as a case in point.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The marketing of library products and services have been identified as crucial in the present information age with its characteristic features of information explosion, technological advancement, the internet and www and multiple webs based commercial information services providers (Adekunmisi, 2013; Adegoke, 2015 and Aderibigbe and Farouk, 2017). This phenomenon has increasingly reduced the turn out rate of users to the library's physical space, low use of information sources and other library's products. If this continues, the academic library may lose its relevance, as it may no longer be able to capture the attention of the educational community as occupying a central position within the institution and its function as the link between the information seeker and his/her information needs may no longer be

appreciated. This trend may further reduce the standard of research output, students' academic performances and decline in the image of the institution. As the saying goes, "an institution is as good as its library".

Several studies in library and information literature have shown the extent marketing of library services is practiced in various libraries (Adekunmisi, 2017; Okon and Umoh, 2014; Aderibigbe and Farouk, 2017; Terver, Doo and kwaghga, 2015; Ubogu, 2021). However, much cannot be said of Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe, regarding the issue of marketing of library services. Moreover, the issue of low turnout is evident in the library use statistics of the Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe. As, Ogungbeni, Adeleke and Opeke, (2013) point out information vendors' direct marketing to end-users and the rise of the Internet threaten librarians' traditional role of serving as an intermediary between information and the end-user. If not addressed, the continued decline of the use of the library and her resources and services will have adverse effect on the Polytechnic and her

products. This situation has motivated this study. The purpose of this study therefore is to examine the need for and challenges of marketing library services in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe-Oghara and determine the perception of the librarians regarding library services marketing.

The outcome of this study shall contribute to the ongoing discussion on library services marketing and also serve as a benchmark for library services marketing for Polytechnic and Monotechnic in Delta State.

THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study objectives include:

1. To determine the challenges to effective marketing of Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe, Library services
2. To identify strategies to effectively market library services at the Delta State Polytechnic, library, Otefe

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing generally is defined in business as a social and managerial process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want by creating and exchanging value

with others (Armstrong and Kotler, 2011; Cravens and Piercy, 2003). According to Ibrahim (2010), marketing is seen as any activity that is undertaken in order to provide goods or services that can satisfy the needs of customers. Perreault, Cannon and McCarthy (2010) define marketing as the performance of activities that seek to accomplish an organization's objectives by anticipating customers' or clients' needs and directing a flow of need satisfying goods and services from producers to the customer or clients. To Vij (2012) marketing is the activities that an organization put together to connect the organization to those parts of its outside world that use, buy, sell or influence the output it produces, the benefits and services it offers. From the definitions it can be drawn that marketing is centered on customers (clients) satisfaction.

It is based on the idea that whatever goods one has to sell must be what will satisfy the need of whoever needs it. On the other hand, the producer of the goods or service being sold already has an objective which can be termed a need that also has to be met. In this scenario the producer is conditioned to present his/her

commodity in such a way to attract customers as there may be other alternatives. Hence Akinawo (2018), explains that marketing is the process by which individuals or groups obtain what they need by creating, offering and exchanging products and services with others. Perreault, Cannon and McCarthy (2010) point out that in marketing, the needs of the potential patrons should be considered first before the process of production. According to these authors marketing should try to anticipate needs and then marketing rather than production determines what goods and services are to be developed to satisfy anticipated and current needs that have been identified.

Although, academic library services may not be considered tangible goods that are often exchanged directly for money between organizations and their customers, in management the same marketing principles are applied in marketing services. It should be noted that library services are paid for indirectly by user. The library also offers some fee-based services which may include charging membership fees, fines from overdue books, photocopying services, printing,

scanning, space allocation, consultancy services etc. (Abiola, 2016).

To be more specific in management, services is regarded as economic activities offered by one party to another; Often time-based, performances that bring about desired result to the recipients... service customers expect value from facility, professional skills, labour as the case maybe in exchange for money, time or effort (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). Another definition by Palmer (2004) sees service as the production of an essentially intangible benefit, either in its own right or as a significant element of a tangible product, which through some form of exchange, satisfies an identified need. With regards to academic library services, the recipients (library users/information seekers) of the services expect to be satisfied (value/information needs met) from the facilities (information resources/reference services/conducive reading atmosphere/support services) provided by the library in exchange for their time/effort and money as the case maybe. The intangible benefits derived by library patrons include the

satisfaction derived from fast and easy access/retrieval of information, guidance and support in the use of information resources. Tangible benefits are those benefits derived from satisfaction derived from services such as reprography, bindery, printing and photocopy, bookshop etc. it is important to note that service marketing as a concept recognizes the uniqueness of all services; it is an aspect of marketing that is applied specifically to the service industries (Morrison, 2010), hence professional librarians therefore have deemed it worthwhile to incorporate services marketing techniques to promote library services as the library is service oriented.

According to Munyoro and Mutula, (2018) the LIS profession is being compelled to revise its service philosophies which, in turn, have revolutionized its service models, practice, standards, professional tasks and routines. This according to them is spawned by the advancement in ICTs developments which have moved the communication culture, business operations, modes of information production and dissemination radically into

cyberspace. Hence, in response to these ongoing changes that characterized information handling globally, Ahire, (2018) avers that the concept of marketing in libraries will be introducing a new dimension to the profession. Komolafe, Opadeji and Haliso (2012) also see marketing as an important weapon for handling the ongoing competition in the global information society.

Baro and Ebhomeya (2013) have suggested that tertiary institutions libraries can enhance and promote their services through the application of marketing strategies to their clients.

Adekunmisi, (2013) is of the opinion that library and information centres have realised that with the adoption of marketing principles and techniques, they can understand better their users' needs, justify funding, have a wide outreach with a variety of external audiences and achieve greater efficiency and optimal result in delivering products and services that meet the individual needs of patrons. According to these authors the academic libraries' function as information and knowledge super higher is being threatened, it is therefore crucial

for them to come up with innovative approaches to serve their customers. It is important to add that the academic library is not an autonomous institution; its success is dependent on the level of satisfaction her clients get. This influences the degree of attention (funding) the library gets from the educational system within which it operates. To achieve this, a dynamic and powerful marketing structure in the library that focuses on users interests and satisfaction is required (Aderibigbe, 2015). According to Armstrong and Kotler (2011) marketing concept claims that the achievement of organizational goals depends on knowing the needs and wants of target market and delivering the desired satisfaction better than competitors do. In their opinion, marketing concept advocates customers' focus and value are the paths to 'sales' and 'profit'. Kotler and Keller (2006) point out that the core concept of marketing encompasses the marketer's knowledge and understanding of the target market's needs, wants and demands. The understanding of these factors will assist an organisation in the choice of what to offer. One of the competences of a librarian is the ability to

provide for potential patrons as well as anticipating current user's needs. Commenting on the "survival of a library" Abiola, (2016) points out that the image of a library is dependent on the ability of the library to offer quality and effective services by anticipating the desires and requirements of actual and potential users and their fulfilment. This points to the fact that the success of the library is dependent on the testimonies of the library users which agree with the concept of marketing (which is focused on customer's needs).

The laws of librarianship by Ranganathan upon which library services are developed, clearly project the interest of the library user. The concept of services marketing according to Davis, (2013) is focused on customers' satisfaction. Marketing principles have been embedded in the five laws of librarianship (Patil, and Pradhan 2014, and Abiola, 2018) as the laws were made to accommodate the continuous changes that prevail on libraries to adapt to the challenges of a changing society where information plays a determinant role (Tirziman, 2020). According to Sen, (2008), Ranganathan presented these laws to emphasise

that preservation of the book should not be uppermost but its access and use, as the book is worthless without the reader. Hence the implication of the first law, (books are for use) is that efforts at ensuring efficient use of library resources should be prioritised by the library. Abiola (2018) is of the view that the low use of library resources and services recorded by most libraries can be attributed to the fact that most present-day librarians no longer guide themselves with Ranganathan's laws. This invariably means poor marketing of library services and products on the part of the libraries. Several studies on the extent of library use within and outside Nigeria have recorded low use due to lack of awareness of the existence of desired resources and services (Kumah (2015); Okite-Amughoro, Makgahlela and Solomon (2014); Idoniboye-Obu (2013); Liu and Luo (2011); Zha, Li and Yan (2012); Tomaszewski (2012). Liu and Luo (2011) in his study discovered the lack of awareness of services and resources as a leading factor of non-use of library services and products at three universities in China (Zhongshan University, South Normal University and

Guangdong University of Technology). According to Tomaszewski (2012) marketing of library resources and services are required to reach the underserved library patrons at the Georgia State University, USA. Eyaufe and Mutula, (2019) also reported low use of libraries electronic information resources from their study of availability and use of electronic information resources (EIRs) by doctoral students in Nigerian and South African universities. Lack of awareness of available resources was found to be a major cause of the low use recorded. Tomaszewski's study recommended reconsideration of libraries' policies to give room for better advertisement of the library's resources and services to create awareness of and promote her services and resources among clients. In the words of Ogini (2016) services marketing is as an innovative kind of marketing and is well-known in helping business organizations promote their services. In a study of the impact of marketing library information resources in higher institutions in Nigeria, Ukpe, Akpe and Beetseh, (2015) attested to the benefits of marketing library resources and services. The study concluded that marketing of

library information resources is essential in making proper planning, designing and use of the services and products for the better and optimal use of the library. Yi, (2018; avers that marketing is an integral part of all short-term and long-term plan in any information centre and it propels the growth and success of an information centre.

Regarding the perception of librarians towards marketing, literature suggests that the concept of marketing to most academic librarians is not new. The studies by Ifijeh, (2011); Adekunmisi (2013); Ukwoma (2014) reveal that marketing is in practice in most academic libraries in Nigeria. Some of the marketing strategies applied by these libraries include library publications (memos, bulletins, and newsletters), orientation exercises, and website, flyers (Edewor's et al, (2016) bulletin boards, seminars and workshops, newsletters, publicity through advertisements and announcements and through website (Ukwoma, 2014). In the view of Daksiri and Dauda, (2020), marketing has gained increased prominence in library and information science (LIS) discipline, and it serves as a

strategic manoeuvre geared towards the promotion of academic libraries and help in achieving the overall objective of the institution. Gupta, (2017) sees marketing of library and information services as the effective execution of all the activities involved in increasing users' satisfaction maximally. Muruli and Kumar, (2013) summed it up by stating that marketing is an integral part of any library and one of the best ways to enhance the use of library services and products. The perception of librarians towards marketing can be said to be positive as reflected in the reviewed literatures. However, Kendadameta (2011) is of the view that there is still much resistance on the part of librarians concerning the adoption of marketing techniques to library management. In support of this view, Odine, (2011), found in her study that only three of the services in the surveyed libraries (academic libraries in Niger State) were marketed to a medium extent. These services include lending services, seating and study facilities and reference services. Other similar studies such as (Jacob and Olajide, 2018; Odunlade, Akinade, and Ojo, 2014; Igwela and Owate, 2016)

revealed that marketing practices in the studied academic libraries are not adequate. From these literatures it can be inferred that librarians have a considerable idea of marketing concept but they do not practice it fully. One may therefore assume that library services are not properly marketed hence the danger of losing patrons to other information providers. Abdulsalami and Salami (2013) therefore advised that librarians must begin to change their orientation about traditional approach to library services in order to experience the dividends of marketing library and information services.

In the words of Perreanault, Cannon and McCarthy (2010), the aim of marketing is to identify customers' needs and meet those needs so well that, the product almost sells itself ... and if the whole marketing job is done well, customers do not need much persuading. In Osinulu, Adekunmisi, Okewale and Oyewusi (2018) investigation of marketing strategies used for marketing by librarians, several factors were identified that constitute hindrances to effective marketing in academic libraries. Unstable internet connectivity

and inadequate funding are chief among them. Adekunmisi, (2013) also found that librarians' lack of professional understanding of the marketing concept and its applicability to librarianship as hindrance to effective marketing. Odine's (2011) study revealed inadequate fund, lack of effective communication between librarians and users and lack of facilities to market library services as major challenges to effective marketing of library's services.

The Delta State Polytechnic library, Otefe, is not exempted from the occurrences in the global information society with the changes it has brought and its implication to academic libraries and librarians. As found from the literature reviewed present day library is experiencing steady decline of users due to users' preference for computer mediated procedures and services. This situation will be worse for a library whose products and services are predominantly manual like that of Delta State Polytechnic library, Otefe. It is evident from the literature reviewed that for an organization to succeed it must have sound marketing ability (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative research method to gather information about marketing of library products and services at the Delta State Polytechnic, Library, Otefe. The study made use of a combination of case study and survey research methods in a descriptive research design. The study population are all the seven librarians at the Delta State Polytechnic, Library, Otefe. (Note that librarians are library staff who have a professional degree (i.e., library and information science) either at first or master's degree level). This means a complete enumeration of the target population is taken as the size is small. This is recommended by Groves and Couper (2018) for a small population as it can easily be managed to produce data for all respondents in order to eliminate sampling errors and achieve high precision. The study therefore made use of in-depth interview to collect qualitative data as qualitative method focuses on a small sample. Data generated are analysed using content analysis.

FINDINGS

1. The findings of the study are presented below under the

themes discussed in the study objectives.

2. The perception of Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe librarians towards marketing of library services

As stated earlier seven librarians were interviewed to determine the perception of librarians toward marketing of library resources and services in the perception. A background information relating to the work experiences of the librarians were first examined. The interview results show that all seven librarians interviewed have more than 10 years working as librarians in academic libraries. This shows that they are supposed to have acquired experience enough to understand the concept of marketing as it relates to librarianship.

Respondent 1 stated that:

The library is meant to support the academic and research activities of the institution and so for us librarians to have more students and staff using the library instead of only internet, we are supposed to integrate the core principles of marketing into the practice of librarianship. Our profit in providing library services is not really in monetary form but in order to achieve maximum result which is library users' satisfaction, we must do rigorous marketing.

Respondent 2 stated that:

I was taught marketing in my

undergraduate study so I understand marketing of library services. In fact, I am in full support of applying proper marketing techniques in our services, this will help us to provide user centered information services to our patrons.

Challenges to effective marketing of Library services

The study also sought to determine the challenges to effective marketing of library services at the institution under survey. To get this the study examined the marketing techniques employed by librarians to market their information service. Face to face chat with users, orientation for new students and display of new arrivals were stipulated by all respondents as the major methods employed by the library. Talking about the challenges to marketing, the responses are summarized in the statements of respondents 5 and 6.

Respondent 5 stated that:

In our library the way we market our library services are limited. They have proved to be ineffective and insufficient especially in this era of ICT. We are challenged by many factors. Some of the factors include inadequate ICT facilities, absence of internet connectivity, inadequate professional librarians, low level information literacy on the part of librarians.

Respondent 6 stated that

The major problem we face is the lack of support from institutions management in the release of fund to upgrade the library. Staff need to learn new trends in their field; there is need for training and retraining. We are not sponsored to seminars and workshops to learn new skills in librarianship.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for any library to remain relevant in the present information age the library must be prepared to continuously change with the information age.

The result of the research has revealed that patrons cannot be adequately served without marketing of library products and services. The Polytechnic management has to wake up to the responsibility of equipping the library with human and technological facilities for the library to meet up with her task of information provider of the institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, we recommended the following:

1. The under studied academic library should endeavor to provide library products and services that meet the changing needs of the digital

age information users.

2. Staff should be sent for retraining to upgrade their knowledge in current practices in librarianship.
3. The delta state polytechnic should equip the library with adequate staff and ICT facilities as proper marketing cannot be done without these factors.
4. There is also need for proactive leaders with innovation to influence management to implement innovative marketing policy that can improve users' impression of the academic as an inescapable.
5. It is highly recommended that academic libraries should employ the services of ICT experts and work with them for proper installation of ICT gadgets.

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