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**Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services:
Problems and Prospects**

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Abstract

Effective marketing of library services is an important aspect of Librarianship that helps achieve necessary growth and development in the education industry. Library and Information Science offers different services to its clients but in doing so, it has been noticed that the industry is faced with a lot of challenges. Therefore, this work x-rays the problems and prospects of effective marketing of library and information services and come up with the findings that effective marketing of library services are faced with a lot of challenges and that effective marketing will bring about holistic

development to the library profession, students, researchers and the nation at large. Recommendations were made that strategies of marketing library and information services should be expanded and developed with the current trends to withstand all these challenges and meet the changing need of the prospective clients for sustainable development of the Nigerian Libraries.

Key words: Effective Marketing, Client, Information, Challenges, Prospect, Development.

Introduction

Effective dissemination of valuable information is a key instrument for the development of any nation. No country can grow without adequate information. Laws and regulations are made to protect the people who are the policy holders of the education industry, and their interest, to keep the market afloat and observe some professional ethics. Library and Information Science is an educational industry that creates awareness to individuals and corporate organization that needs to market its services to the customers who need them. In achieving this, library marketers are faced with a lot of problems in especially Nigeria. So this work focuses on the problems and prospects of effective marketing of library and information services.

Historical Development of Library Science

Libraries have over the year's undergone stages of historical developments. The term, library, which is derived from the Latin word *libber*, meaning book has been commonly used to mean a collection of books, whether for public or private use. Although the word library may still be used, it is incorrect to use the word library to merely mean or describe a collection of books. This is because the managers of libraries now work with many other kinds of materials that communicate information. Today's collection often contains not only a variety of printed materials, such as books, magazines, and pamphlets, but non-print resources such as tapes, records, films, slides and a variety of other formats produced by the explosion of technology. Added to this is the computer, the virtual library which stores enormous amount of information that can be retrieved instantly. In keeping with the trend, some libraries have changed their names to media center, information managers, educational resource center, etc.

The library has attracted various definitions, there are almost as many definitions as there are experts in the field of librarianship, however, those definitions have common focal point and mean almost the same thing.

During these periods of historical sojourn, they engrossed different kinds of definitions to reflect their original aim or purpose for their establishment, which was purely for the preservation of recorded materials, which is made up written history of ancient culture and knowledge of humanity at various times. Libraries in some form

were then regarded as mere repositories and store houses of knowledge. They were the prerogative of the cream of the historical society, the wealthy and renowned scholars. Prior to modern library practice, there existed (and some still exist) forms of traditional libraries that helped society to spread the news or information within themselves, thereby, reducing the burden of ignorance on individuals and the society.

Today, since the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW) in particular, information has rapidly grown in volumes, and has become more accessible, especially in digital format. The two disciplines of Library Science and Information Management have been converging towards a common focus on information discovery, organization, and management. The significant contribution of external experts into the teaching of the programme helps keep it topical and oriented towards practice therefore the effective marketing of library and information services cannot be overemphasized.

Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services; Problems and Prospects

Librarianship is recognized as a profession in so many countries of the world. In Nigeria, it became a profession by the enactment of Decree 12 of 1995 which signalled the birth of the regulatory body known as the Librarian's Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) for the regulation and enforcement of standards in library and information science practices in the country. The enactment of this law was necessitated by the need to ensure professionalism, to accelerate the training of Nigerians in the field of librarianship, improve standards in library education and quality marketing of library practices to meet the changes and challenges of the 21st Century. One of the mission statements of librarianship is to be the centre of excellence in teaching and research and in the total development of the individual person in tune with the socio-cultural environment and technological realities of a dynamic world, to foster the growth of knowledge for the advancement of the society (Ifidon, 2007).

Every social institution today strives to introduce novel ways of marketing their products and services. A variety of forces, most specifically economic changes and technological developments, have reshaped and redefined our notions of what constitutes a bank, a service station, or a bookstore. Libraries and librarians must as a matter of utmost commitment get actively involved in embracing those changes in order to attract more clientele to the library. Changes to libraries are inevitable, and if librarians do not get actively involved in effective marketing of library services and products, it is likely that the 21st Century library may lose relevance and the core missions and values which the Librarian's Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) fought for may also be compromised.

Reasons for Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services in Nigeria

Library services are provided for the following reasons:

1. **Information / Data Protection:** Library services are provided to safeguard and protect important information and data against damage or loss, preserving them for posterity.
2. **Encourages reading:** Library services create a conducive environment for reading, encouraging the public to invest in education which will accrue in future.
3. **Provision of Employment:** Library services provide employment to certain people outside its field, such people are the lawyers, engineers, accountants, statisticians, etc., since these people pass through the library and the librarian before they graduate.
4. Effective marketing of library and information service enhances development; individuals can develop themselves by making use of the materials provided by the library and marketed by the librarian (Aneke, 2004).
5. **Library services encourage international trade:** No country would like to transact business or invest in another country without being adequately informed of the security situation, the laws governing the countries investment policies etc. These and other valuable information can be found in the library.
6. **Social benefits:** There are some social benefits that are derived from effective marketing of library services like education and scholarship. Information is the lifeblood of any society and vital to the activities of both the government and private sectors. Bell (2014, p. 4) holds the view that "the dependence upon information to create innovation and change, places a high premium on the ability of (developing countries) nations to access and use information to create advances in society". The development of countries globally cannot be achieved without the development of the people. This is because everyone need positive, relevant and prompt information in their daily activities. Similarly, a strong, shared sense of purpose alleviates many obstacles including internal politics (Harvard, (2015).

The Concepts of Marketing and Service Marketing

Marketing is a way of life or philosophy of life, a discipline, as well as an organizational function. As a way of Life, marketing is as old as man in the society. But as a full-fledged discipline and major function of organizations, it is of recent antecedence (Olakunori, 2005) when compared with other members of the managerial sciences. The modern marketing being advocated and practised today is much broader and more pragmatic than the classical one which was in vogue fifty (50) years ago. A marketer focuses on customer or focuses on organization's desire and then builds the products or service for a marketing plan to be successful; the mix of the four "ps"

(Product, Price, Place and Promotion) must reflect the wants and desires of the customers or shoppers in the target market. Trying to convince a market segment to buy something they do not want is extremely expensive and seldom. Successful marketers depend on insights from marketing research, both formal and informal, to determine what customers want and what they are willing to pay for. Marketing is focused on the task of conveying pertinent company and product related information to specific customers and there are a multitude of decisions (strategies) to be made within the marketing domain regarding what information to be delivered and where to deliver. Once the decisions are made, there are numerous ways (tactics) and processes that could be employed. The goal of marketing is to build and maintain a preference for a company and its products within the target markets. The goal of any company business is to build mutually profitable and sustainable relationship with customers. Evan and Becman (1995) defined marketing as the anticipation, management and satisfaction of demands through the exchange process. According to Olakunori and Ejionume (1997), marketing is seen as the identification and satisfaction of people's needs through the exchange process. It involves the performance of a broad spectrum of activities, right from the identification of people's needs through their satisfaction with the appropriate goods and services'; marketing is an interdisciplinary socio-economic activity. It is about people and organization and how they interact to identify and satisfy needs. Hence, marketing is the identification and satisfaction of people's need through the exchange process (Olakunori, 2002).

Reasons for Effective Marketing of Library Services

1. **The nature of the product:** Library products are intangible in nature and very sensitive ones which need to be marketed effectively.
2. **Creating awareness:** Library marketers help in creating awareness for library products and services. Be ICT compliant because that is the easiest way to reach out to more people within a short time.
3. **Boast of personnel:** Effective marketing of library services is necessary for boosting of quality human resources of libraries and its personnel.
4. **Necessity of marketing function:** The necessity of marketing function which when applied effectively has the potential of bringing a positive impact on library services.
5. **Improvement on quality service:** The level of services offered by the library and librarians needs to be improved upon and consolidated. This can be achieved by creating more awareness through library advocacy, talk shows and the like.

6. **Everybody's need:** Virtually, everybody needs one form of information or the other which is offered by the library. Therefore, there is need for its effective marketing to gain the anticipated momentum.

Various Ways of Marketing Library and Information Services Effectively

Library services can be marketed effectively through the following ways:

- 1 **Promotion (sales promotion):** This is something that can arouse interest, create a reading desire; spark an immediate reaction from customers, students, researchers, for example, book exhibition. The purpose of this sale promotion is to attract more users of library product thereby increasing the number of clientele.
- 2 **Market research:** This is another way of marketing. It is a process by which you can identify the needs and wants of the market before going into production of goods and services that would meet the needs and wants of the target audience.
3. **Advertising:** According to Osunola (1990), advertising is defined as any form of non-presentation of goods, services or ideas for action, openly paid for, by an identified sponsor. The main objective of this is to increase the number of units of product purchase by the public. Advertising can be affected through various channels e.g. television, radio, newspaper, and journals.
4. **Distribution:** Distribution here refers to the type of channel employed, its uses, advantages and disadvantages to the marketing of library service. Its role is pivotal since library services rely on intermediary to sell a significant proportion of its product. Under this loading, (distribution), we have two channels of distribution of library products.
 - i. Direct marketing channels whereby librarians are employed by the library to sell the services of the library.
 - ii. Indirect marketing channel is a process whereby intermediaries, not employed by the library, offer supposed impartial advice and recommendation to the public.
5. **Product:** The type of product available in a particular library determines whether there would be effective usage or not. That is having in stock the right resources for the right clientele. E.g. Law library, Science library, Engineering library, Children's library, public library, academic library, etc.
6. **Use of modern Information and Communication Channels:** For effective marketing of library services and products, librarians should apply the use of modern ICT facilities like LinkedIn, tweeter, face-book, 2go, WhatsApp, etc.

Libraries and information centres that are responsive to the influence of the external world are more likely to understand the value that digital transformation can bring.

The Problems Militating against Effective Marketing of Library and Information Services

Library and Information Science is faced with many challenges as regards marketing their services in the country. These among others are:

1. **Irregular power supply:** 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.
2. **Erratic/internet services,** lack of hardware and in most instances the non-availability of the said ICTs. The process of digitalization and subsequent maintenance of the modern ICT components depends on constant electricity. We need twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week (24/7) supply of electricity to be able to achieve a successful digitized library operation as it is obtained in developed countries.
3. **Foreign exchange:** Difficulty in the importation of books and journals from abroad due to the high rise in foreign exchange. This has deterred many academic, public and special libraries from acquiring current and relevant text that will support the academic programmes of their parent institutions. Thus, the efforts of most libraries in providing modern information services are thwarted by the existence of the aforementioned problems due to inadequate funding.
- 4 **Inadequate ICT manpower:** Information Technology literacy among librarians in most libraries is still at the peripheral level. Librarians and information managers should embrace the use of ICT in this electronic age to be reckoned with in the scheme of things. Freedom to experiment helps people prioritize, make informed decisions and rethink how they work.
5. **Intangibility of the products:** Library and information renders social service to its customer through its various policies. These services are not recognized and appreciated in nature. Therefore, marketing them is a bit difficult compared to the tangible products because individuals prefer to look for physical cash than to read. They believe that going to the library is a waste of time; so, to market such an intangible product, the marketer has to go as far as to define the type of the services library industry can offer people and also its importance to their well-being (Okonkwo.1999).

6. **Difficulties of measurement and evaluation performance:** Performance of the market could not be easily measured and determined to know the level of acceptance.
7. **People are difficult to convince:** It is difficult to convince people to change their mind when their minds are made up. The initial benefit of what the library offer is not seen immediately. The services of the library have a long time effect. So to convince users in the manner that will satisfy them and ensure their acceptance might be difficult sometime to the marketers.
8. **Level of illiteracy:** Before people can easily understand the importance of library service the person should be literate at least. To convince illiterate about library services and products are always tasking and more expensive compared to the literate ones.
9. **Poverty level:** The level of poverty in the country is another problem facing the effective marketing of library and information services. Even if the library marketers were also to convince people to accept their services, there may be the constraint of understanding the benefits. Therefore, leaving the demand pattern the same despite the marketing strategies the libraries employ.

Prospects of Effective Marketing of Library Services

1. **It increases customer patronage:** Through effective marketing of library services and products, many people will be aware and ready to embrace the library and use its products, thereby increasing patronage of library products and services.
2. **More profits:** Rate of turnover usually determines profit in any organization. Effective marketing of library services will enable libraries to increase their patronage and profit.
3. **More employment opportunities for people.** Effective marketing of library services usually leads to expansion of firms; thus, creating more employment opportunities for the populace.
4. It creates more confidence about the industry and their customers. Many people tend to have more confidence in their service and this will increase their customers and ensure customer retention.
5. **More risks will be insured:** Effective marketing of library services will reduce level of ignorance among people and thus, encourage most people to embrace the reading culture. This will reduce the total risk faced by majority of the people in every area of their life, such as information on health.

6. Effective marketing of library services brings about holistic development to the library patrons and the nation at large.

Conclusion

From the work so far, the author has been able to come up with the findings that; effective marketing of library and information services is faced with a lot of challenges among which are level of illiteracy, poverty level, poor reading culture and belief of people and so on. Library services and products are intangible in nature. That is, library only offers services to people through its various policies. Librarianship has developed in Nigeria due to its necessity to human activities. Effective marketing of library services is very essential to ensure improvement in its acceptance and usage. Effective marketing of library services brings about holistic development to the library profession, library patrons and the nation at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore, made by the author:

- Library and information marketers should undergo some training that teach how to convince people especially the illiterate.
- The strategies of marketing the library services and products should be expanded and developed to meet the changing needs of prospective clients.
- There should be a regular organization of seminars, workshop that will describe the importance of library services and products to everybody.
- Government of the state, the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Federal Government should make some definite policy statements and ensure its implementation.
- Librarians and information managers should take their destiny in their hands by leaving their comfort zones and embrace change. They should be more enthusiastic about going out to engage in effective marketing of library services, just like what their counterparts in the banking and insurance industry do.
- Librarians should strive to provide inclusive services to all users including people with disabilities. To achieve this, universal access requires the formulating of policy regarding providing of library services to people with disability, providing adequate budgets and staff training in addition to practical measures such as constructing library buildings with ramps and maintaining working lifts, acquiring Braille and large print information resources, as well as providing assistive equipment. It is left for the library professionals to make the profession attractive by creating innovative ways that will draw attention to the library sector thereby promoting the services

rendered by library and information experts as a panacea for sustainable Nigerian libraries.

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