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Marketing Library and Information Services in Selected University Libraries in Africa

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Abstract The demands of modern information handling coupled with the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), which brings various competitors in information service delivery, demands an innovative approach from university libraries in reaching out to users, of which marketing is beneficial. This paper examines the strategies used by university libraries in Africa to market their resources and services to users and the problems experienced. The survey research design was adopted for this study. A questionnaire was designed and used for data collection. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select twenty (20) universities in Africa for the study. Findings revealed that university libraries in Africa, like their counterparts in other continents, creatively engage in marketing library and information services through various strategies. It was also found that the most frequently used strategies for marketing library and information services in African libraries are library publications (memos, bulletins, and newsletters), orientation exercises, website and flyers. The study equally revealed low level use of social media such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, e-mail alerts for marketing. Absence of marketing plan, not knowing what to market, lack of facilities and lack of fund were mentioned by the respondents as some of the barriers in marketing library and information services. It was therefore recommended amongst others, that university libraries should design a workable marketing plan with total emphasis on the users; this will help in determining users' needs for effective and efficient library and information services delivery.

Keywords *Marketing; Information Services; Library Services; University Libraries; Librarians; Africa*

1. Introduction

In recent times, marketing of library and information services has become an integral part of the library and information service culture of most universities in developed countries. The challenges of budget cuts, increased user base, information explosion, rising costs, competition from database producers/vendors and complexity in user information requirements, wants and needs are forcing libraries to adopt marketing strategies to improve the management of library and information institutions (Madhusudhan, 2008).

Marketing library and information service is an established sub-set of management practices which identifies customer wants and needs and meets those needs within the resources of the organization (Gupta, Koontz & Massisimo, 2013). Marketing of library and information services has been anchored on relationship marketing (Besant & Sharp, 2000); internal marketing (Dworkin, 2003); image building (Bass-Bridges & Morgan, 2000) and customer loyalty (Gupta, 2003). For many others, marketing is the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably (Spalding & Wang, 2000).

Marketing is therefore all about identifying users' needs and developing strategies and services to reach out to them. It is a long-term innovative process that is entrepreneurially driven. Marketing in libraries was given a major boost with the introduction of the marketing concept in non-profit organization by Philip Kotler in 1970 (Andreasen & Kotler, 2007). Most library services and resources were not initiated and implemented from a marketing perspective. This went on for some time, until the first paper with the title, "Marketing of library and information services: how it all began" was presented at the 63rd IFLA conference by a Swedish author, Greto Renborg (Gupta, Koontz & Massisimo, 2006). Since then, there has been a steady growth in the literature of marketing library and information services; highlighting marketing practices and efforts in libraries from around the globe.

Libraries in developed world are increasingly aware of the need to market their products and services. Library and information products and services are now being presented as commodities that can be accessed, exchanged and even sold. Libraries are now seen as veritable information providers, rendering strategic services. The need for marketing therefore, cannot be over-emphasized. Additionally, marketing of library and information products and services have been given a major boost in ICT, especially with the advent of social networking media and sites. Therefore it is no surprise that more and more university libraries in developed countries are embracing social networking sites as a tool to promote and market library resources and services (Khan & Bhatti, 2012).

Kotler (1999) views marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services and ideas to create exchanges with target groups that satisfy customers' and organizational objectives. This goes to show that marketing is not all about profit making, but about the satisfaction of customers. It involves a whole gamut of processes aimed at meeting customers' diverse needs and expectations as well as organizational goals and objectives. The library as a service providing institution can conveniently adopt these processes in meeting the overall needs of its users and parent body objectives.

Although there are several library and information resources and services in university libraries in developing countries, users are not adequately informed of the existence and benefits of these resources and services, thereby leading to low patronage of the library (Agaba, Kigongo-Bukenya & Nyumba, 2004).

It is against this background that this study attempts to find out if university libraries market their services and some of the strategies used. This study is also an attempt at enriching the literature. It will thus prove useful, helping both working librarians and future librarians to understand vital issues relating to marketing of library and information services at the local, national and international level.

2. Marketing within the Library and Information Environment

The arrival of the information age, where information provision is an increasingly important commercial activity, coupled with new technological developments bringing together hitherto disparate activities in information supply have led to a change in the role of libraries and librarians. More so, the

pressure on libraries from parent bodies to mobilize resources and be self-reliant, have been on the increase. Due to rising expectations, diverse needs and wants from library users, libraries are therefore finding new ways of serving users effectively. To this end, the application of general principles of marketing becomes imperative.

However, there is still considerable misunderstanding within the library and information environment as to what constitutes marketing. To some it is primarily equated with buying and selling. To others, it is viewed as production of brochures, advertising leaflets and low level marketing communication (Gupta, 2003). This misconception perhaps stems from the "free library culture" that libraries are not-for-profit institutions whose reason for existing is service rather than financial gain (Edewor & Omosor, 2012). Consequently, library personnel need not be trained in business models commonly employed in entrepreneurial ventures with the associated elements of financial risk and potential financial gain (Scanlon & Crumpton, 2011).

Traditionally, libraries have been engaged in marketing of library and information resources and services through display of new books, exhibitions, bulletins, user orientation programmes, production and issuance of library guides, library week outreaches and other publicity programmes. These activities are part of the promotional components of marketing. However, the demands of modern information handling, coupled with the advent of ICT, which brings various competitors in information service delivery, demands an innovative approach in reaching out to users, for which the above traditional strategies are no longer adequate. Therefore it is not surprising that more and more university libraries are embracing social media to promote and market library services.

Marketing is a process that involves systematic evaluation of users' needs and designing information products and services to satisfy the needs. This calls for careful planning, analysis and identification of clients and their needs as well as the choices available for meeting these needs. This is done with a view to gaining superiority over competing alternatives. A successful marketing strategy identifies and gives the services required by the clients. As noted by Koontz, Gupta & Webber (2006) marketing is a process that you do over and over again, a tried and true systematic approach for matching services and products to a consumer's wants, needs and desires. In the library and information environment, our patrons, clients and users are the customers. In other words, services and information products based on the needs and demands of users should be provided.

In this vein, Gupta (2003) argued that marketing of library services is the effective execution of all the activities involved in increasing satisfaction of users by providing maximum value to them. He categorized the different views of the concept of marketing of library services into four:

- Marketing a set of practical techniques and proven processes which can be applied to all aspects of the service planning, delivery and evaluation.
- Marketing as a philosophy: this is premised on the user as being the beginning and end of every marketing activity. The satisfaction of the user is the primary concern of marketing and everyone in the library has a role to play in rendering maximum satisfaction to the customer.
- Marketing as an approach: marketing in libraries is everyone's concern. It is a total organizational effort and not a separate creation or the appointment of a marketing officer.
- Customer driven marketing: it is user satisfaction driven. It requires an in-depth understanding, greater intimacy and mutual trust among libraries and its users.

Marketable information-based products and services in the library include reference, referral, circulation, interlibrary loan, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), bibliographic information, abstract and indexing, customized research and development, current awareness, readers' advisory, and information literacy services.

Baro and Ebhomeya (2013) carried out an empirical study of 20 university libraries in Nigeria; the objective was to identify the different strategies used in marketing library resources and services to staff and students. Respondents were asked to indicate the marketing strategies used in their libraries. Eighteen (81.8%) of the 22 respondents indicated that they used library publications, while 14 (63.3%) used campus radio programmes, 11 (50%) used university intranets and 9 (40.9%) e-mail alerts. Respondents also indicated using other marketing strategies such as orientation talks, seminar/workshops, library instruction in general studies, university bulletins, library week, newsletters, staff meetings and library committees. Only 8 libraries (36.4%) indicated using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace to market the library resources and services to users.

Similarly, Dube (2011) revealed that to popularise and market library services in South Africa, libraries have a dedicated division for library marketing and works closely with the relevant university structures to ensure marketing of services to regular and potential clients by using sign posts and exhibitions, brochures, plasma screens, the library and university websites. She however, stated in her finding that only one library in particular uses services such as Ask-a-Librarian. Others conduct regular visits to academic departments while others market their services during training interventions, when they conduct client surveys and programmes scheduled during library week celebrations.

Commenting on the benefits of marketing library services, Spalding and Wang (2006) observed that by using marketing principles and techniques, librarians are discovering that they can understand better their users' needs, justify funding, communicate more effectively with a variety of external audience and achieve greater efficiency and optimal results in delivering products and services that meet the identified needs of their clients. Madhusudhan (2008) listed the benefits of marketing information by university libraries to include:

- Promotion of the use of information resources.
- Create perception of need and thereby create demand.
- Ensure the optimum use of information.
- Improve the image and status of the libraries and library profession.
- Tackle the problems of rising costs of reading materials, journals and databases.
- Cope with the information explosion.
- Introduce cutting edge information technology systems in library services.
- Balance shrinking funds.
- Save libraries from devaluation.
- Save libraries from declining reader support.
- Uphold the dictum that information is power.

Gupta, Koontz and Massisimo (2013) outlined several factors militating against the effective marketing of library and information resources and services, such as poor marketing strategy, absence of marketing policies, lack of skilled manpower and infrastructural constraints. Other militating factors include lack of funds to engage in marketing activities as well as lack of exposure to adequate marketing training in library schools (Baro and Ebhomeya, 2013). There is no gainsaying the fact that librarians should be exposed to adequate marketing training in order to drive the marketing process in university libraries.

University libraries need to identify target users, what services are required by these users and in what format as well as identify competitors in the information service business. User studies help university librarians to understand the needs of users to be able to design appropriate services for them.

3. Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine the strategies used in marketing library and information services in university libraries in Africa. University libraries in Africa were chosen in order to draw an overall picture of the strategies used in marketing library and information services across countries in Africa and also to provide these libraries with helpful information to better understand how their colleagues elsewhere are utilizing these strategies in rendering library services. Specific questions addressed are:

- To what extent are librarians in university libraries in Africa aware that they can market library and information services through various strategies?
- To what extent do librarians in university libraries in Africa use available strategies in marketing library and information services?
- What are the challenges faced by the librarians in marketing library and information services in university libraries in Africa?

4. Methodology

The descriptive survey research method was employed for this study. A questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. Items in the questionnaire cover areas such as extent to which librarians in university libraries in Africa are aware of marketing strategies, existence of marketing policies in university libraries in Africa, the extent to which librarians in university libraries in Africa use marketing strategies and the challenges the librarians face in marketing library and information services. The questionnaire was sent to libraries in university libraries in Africa via e-mail. Their e-mail addresses were collected from the institutions' websites. Librarians from twenty (20) leading universities in Africa participated in the survey. The universities were selected from the 2013 World University Web Ranking of top 100 universities and colleges in Africa (www.4icu.org/topAfrica). The questionnaire was forwarded to 333 librarians in the 20 university libraries in August 2014. Reminders were sent after one month, in order to whip up response. Data collection was completed in February 2015. A total of 140 respondents representing a response rate of 45% responded. The completed and returned questionnaires were downloaded, printed and used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data and the results presented in tables.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Responding Universities in Africa

S/N	Name of University	Country	No. of Questionnaires Sent	No. of Respondents
1	Ahmedu Bello University	Nigeria	12	5
2	University of Cape Coast	Ghana	16	6
3	University of Khartoum	Sudan	14	8
4	University of Botswana	Botswana	14	7
5	University of Zambia	Zambia	11	4
6	Strathmore University	Kenya	14	6
7	Kenyatta University	Kenya	24	8
8	University of Kwazulu Natal	S/Africa	19	5
9	University of Cape Town	S/Africa	9	3
10	University of Dar es Salaam	Tanzania	21	8
11	University of Benin	Nigeria	12	6
12	University of Ibadan	Nigeria	27	5
13	University of Lagos	Nigeria	12	4
14	University of Limpopo	S/Africa	21	11
15	University of Ilorin	Nigeria	19	6

16	Cairo University	Egypt	22	11
17	Makerere University	Uganda	25	11
18	Addis Ababa University	Ethiopia	15	12
19	University of Malawi	Malawi	13	10
20	Rhodes University	S/Africa	13	4
		TOTAL	333	140

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Demography	No.	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	66	47.1
Female	74	52.9
Total	140	100
Qualifications		
Bachelors degree	74	52.9
Masters degree	56	40
Ph.D	10	7.1
Total	140	100
Job Title		
Head of library	8	5.7
Asst/Deputy head of library	5	3.6
Senior librarian	17	12.1
Systems librarian	22	15.7
Librarian 11	56	40
Librarian 1	5	3.6
Assistant librarian	27	19.3
Total	140	100

Out of the 140 respondents, 74 (52.9%) were females while 66 (47.1%) are males. Seventy four (52.9%) indicated that they were bachelor degree holders, 56 (40%) Masters degree holders and 10 (7.1%) are Ph.D holders in library and information science. Twenty seven (19.3%) of the respondents indicated their job title as assistant librarians, 56(40%) were librarian 11; 22 (15.7%) systems librarian and 17 (12.1%) senior librarians. Others are 8(5.6%) head of library and five (3.6%) assistant/deputy head of library and librarian 1 respectively.

Table 3: Awareness of Strategies for Marketing Library and Information Services

Strategies	I know	%	I don't know	%	I only heard	%
Facebook	81	57.9	41	29.3	18	12.9
Orientation exercise	125	89.3	7	5	8	5.7
Library publications	108	77.1	21	15	11	7.9
Flyers	105	73	23	16.4	12	8.9
Posters	104	74.3	25	17.9	11	7.9
Twitter	75	53.6	43	30.7	22	15.7
Website	93	66.4	25	17.9	22	15.7

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they know, don't know or only heard that the above mentioned strategies can be used to market library and information services. Orientation exercise was the most popular with 125 (89.3%) while 7(5%) admitted they don't know and 8 (5.7%) had only heard. One hundred and eight (77.1%) of the respondents indicated that they know that library publications can be used for marketing, while 21 (15%) admitted that they don't know and 11 (7.9%) had only heard. One hundred and five (73%) indicated they know about flyers been used for marketing, while 23 (16.4%) indicated they don't know and 12 (8.9%) had only heard about flyers. One hundred and four (74.3%) indicated that they know that posters can be used for marketing library

services, while 25 (17.9%) indicated they don't know and 11 (7.9%) indicated they had only heard about the possibility of using posters to market library services. Facebook, Twitter and website were the least known strategies with 81 (57.9%), 75 (53.6%) and 93 (66.4%), respectively.

Consistent with prior research (Gupta, 2003; Koontz, Gupta and Webber, 2006; Baro and Ebhomeya, 2013), this study affirms the position that university libraries in Africa, like their counterparts in other countries, creatively engage in marketing library services through various means such as library publications, flyers, orientation exercises, library web pages, posters, e-mail alerts, Facebook, blogs and twitter. However awareness needs to be created for the librarians to know that several more strategies can be deployed in marketing library services. This can be done through training workshops organized for librarians. This will in no doubt raise the level of awareness and usage among librarians in Africa.

Table 4: *Use of Strategies for Marketing*

Strategies	1= no use	2= rarely use	3= occasionally	4= frequently	5= very frequently
Facebook	45.7	17.9	16.4	7.9	12.1
Library publications	20.7	12.1	14.3	7.9	45
Website	30.7	15.7	17.1	16.4	20
Orientation	33.6	18.6	11.4	13.6	22.9
Blogs	50	13.6	14.3	15	6.4
Twitter	55.7	21.4	13.6	7.3	5
e-mail alerts	39.3	18.6	17.9	10.7	13.6
Flyers	39.3	19.3	9.3	14.3	17.9
Posters	39.3	12.1	12.9	18.6	17.1
Radio	65,7	17.1	10	5.7	1.4

Table 4 shows frequency of utilization of strategies by respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of utilization of strategies in marketing library and information services based on a scale where (1) = no use, (2) = rarely use, (3) = occasionally, (4) = frequently and (5) = very frequently. The results show that the most frequently used strategy for marketing library and information service is library publications (45%), followed by orientation with 22.9%, website with 20%, flyers with 17.9% and posters with 17.1%. Other strategies mentioned were e-mail alerts with 13.6%, Facebook with 12.1%, blogs with 6.4% and Twitter with 5%. These strategies were indicated to be the least used by librarians.

The study revealed that the most frequently used strategies by librarians in university libraries in Africa are library publications (memos, bulletins and newsletter), orientation exercise, website, flyers and posters. This finding is in agreement with earlier studies (Baro and Ebhomeya, 2013) that the most frequently used strategy by librarians in marketing library and information services in Nigeria is library publications. This is also true in Zambia, South Africa and Kenya where publications, website and orientation exercise respectively, is predominantly used to promote library services (Benda, 2011; Bosch, 2009; Chisenga, 2012).

The study also revealed low level usage of social media in marketing library services across Africa. This is in agreement with Lwoga (2011). He specifically focused on the potential of social media in marketing library services. Libraries in developing countries can use social media as a better marketing tool. It is instructive to note that social networking media and sites have attracted the attention of university libraries around the world for promoting and extending their resources and services. The study reveals the low level usage of social networking media such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter and e-mail alerts for the purpose of marketing library and information services in Africa. The reason for this may be connected to the unwarranted fear of adjusting to the paradigm shift in marketing library services to users because of traditionalist values as well as unsubstantiated fear of

possible security breaches to libraries online and integrated systems (Rogers, 2009). The use of social networking media is still in its embryonic stage in Africa. According to Dickson and Holley (2010:469) social networking by university libraries has the potential to reap great results. Gupta (2003:100) specifically mentioned that Twitter can be used by libraries to inform the library users about major events, activities and recent acquisitions through posting photo and links to resources about the library. It is sad to note that many university libraries in Africa still prefer the traditional environment to extend library and information services. University libraries in Africa need to change and adapt to the requirements and wants of ''customers''.

In order to know the hindrances encountered in marketing library services in university libraries in Africa, respondents were asked to indicate the challenges faced, 82.1% indicated absence of marketing plan, while 80% indicated not knowing what to market, followed by 75.7% indicating lack of facilities and 70% indicating lack of fund.

For university libraries to effectively market their services in order to attract more users, in this digital era, the need for a robust marketing plan cannot be over emphasised. University libraries have a responsibility to design and implement a robust marketing plan that will guide the entire marketing process. This can be done in conjunction with various stakeholders – users, administrators, relevant government agencies etc. Seminars, workshops and symposium can be organized in relation to this to equip librarians with relevant set of skills for the effective design and implementation of a workable marketing plan aimed at delivering appropriate information products and services in university libraries in Africa.

Not knowing what to market is rooted in the absence of a well formulated marketing plan. As noted by Kumbar (2004), there is lack of familiarity with marketing concepts among librarians. This perhaps is as a result of the misunderstanding among librarians as to what constitutes marketing. Most librarians view marketing from buying and selling perspective, hence they don't know what to market. There is therefore the need to re-orient librarians as to what really is marketing in library and information science and its associated benefits.

Lack of facilities such as computers, printers, scanners is another major barrier. This finding agrees with Rehman and Shafique (2011) that lack of ICT facilities were the main hindrances towards effective marketing in libraries in Pakistan. Internet connectivity with adequate bandwidth in university libraries in Africa is a pre-requisite for effective marketing. In Nigeria for instance, only a few university libraries have stable and reliable Internet connectivity, despite directives from the Nation's Universities regulatory agency – National Universities Commission (Baro & Asaba, 2010). Also, lack of fund is another challenge identified. From the design to implementation requires adequate funding to succeed. A huge financial resource is required to design, implement and sustain the entire marketing process.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research is to examine the strategies used in marketing library and information services in university libraries in Africa. It is aimed at investigating whether librarians market their services and what are the strategies used as well as barriers encountered in an attempt to market library services. The results of the study show that university libraries market library and information resources and services using various strategies such as flyers, library publications (memos, bulletins, newsletters), orientation, posters, websites, radio, twitter, e-mail alerts, Facebook, and blogs. The results equally show that the most frequently used strategies for marketing library services is library publications, orientation exercises, and website. It also emerged that the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs were at minimal level. Also the study revealed absence of marketing plan, not knowing what to market, lack of facilities and lack of fund as some of the barriers that hinder

university libraries in Africa from effective marketing of library and information services. There is therefore the need for university libraries to adapt more systematic and innovative approaches in determining user's needs in order to design appropriate strategies and services to meet their wants and needs. To this end university libraries should design a workable marketing plan with total emphasis on the users. This will help in determining users' needs for effective and efficient information service delivery. Information and communication technologies with stable Internet connectivity should be put in place by university libraries to be able to reach a wide audience of users. Also Social networking media should be embraced and vigorously used in marketing library products and services by university libraries because the benefits quite outweigh the cost. Library schools should update the curriculum to incorporate entrepreneurship and business models involving marketing.

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