

*Full Length Research*

# Strategies for Marketing Information Resources and Services in Federal University Libraries in the North-west zone of Nigeria

Oluwagbemiga Abiodun Aderibigbe

Bayero University Kano. E-mail: [abiodun4va@gmail.com](mailto:abiodun4va@gmail.com)

Accepted 28 October 2015

This study examines the Strategies for marketing Information Resources and Services in Federal University Libraries in North-West zone of Nigeria. The objective of the paper is to identify the strategies employed for marketing of information resources and services, and also to identify the major challenges associated with marketing of information resources and services as well as the solutions to overcome the challenges. The qualitative research methodology was employed for the study. The participants chosen for the study were the Heads of Readers services via the use of purposive sampling technique in the (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 finding show the strategies employed for marketing of information resources and services which include Advertisement, displays, exhibitions, alert, use of billboards, orientation programmes, conferences, and library week for delivery of information services. The major challenges in marketing of Information Resources and Services identified include inadequate fund, lack of incentives, lack of technical know-how and lack of marketing skills, lack of feedback from the users in terms of services provided to them, lack of proper training, and lack of constant power supply.

**Key words:** marketing strategies, information resources and services.

**Cite This Article As:** Aderibigbe OA (2015). Strategies for Marketing Information Resources and Services in Federal University Libraries in the North-west zone of Nigeria. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 3(10): 303-309.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, Librarians are compelled to use new skills and strategies in order to change, survive and continue to compete in the world of virtual information. Radical change is necessary to restructure traditional libraries into knowledge centers which will be recognized for supporting competitive advantage and strategic decision-making. Librarians must actively reposition themselves

and their resources to become their organizations information infrastructure. Marketing strategy has become very essential and important in the field of library and information sciences. However, Information Resources and Services that are not marketed effectively may not be heavily patronized (Gupta and Savard, 2010). Librarians must devise marketing strategic plans

which should take into account all the factors influencing their survival. At the center of other strategic plan is the issue of the services offered to the users. This is where the concept of marketing features in the library management strategy (Madhusudhan, 2008). However, if the purpose of the library is defined by the needs of its users, and the success of that service is determined by the perception and preferences of those users, then the user community needs to be built into a marketing strategy program. It is this focus on users that lies behind the marketing strategy approach to services (Kotler, 2010). There are many reasons why marketing strategies should be applied for the smooth running of the library. Libraries and Librarians are compelled to effectively market their information resources and services because of a number of reasons. According to Adeyoyin, (2005), libraries must learn to market their information resources and services because of the following reasons:

- Libraries are no longer the only information service industries. The mega-bookstores, online book dealers, information consultants, the Internet service providers, free web access providers and individual customers will not hesitate to market to potential library customers or users.
- Libraries have to compete with other organizations or department for funds. Marketing library services and resources benefits as libraries are able to get supports from patrons and others. For instance, academic libraries have to compete with faculties and other university units and projects for funds.
- Academic libraries have to market because of the need to maintain relevance and remain connected to the communities they serve and have some bearing on the present day's event and real-world issues.
- Librarians in academic libraries have to market their services and resources in order to improve the image of their libraries and themselves. For instance, libraries have to be unique in the kind of access and services they provide.
- Librarians in academic library also have to change the perception of users and others toward them as being information experts.
- Academic librarians are, and should be regarded as essential and valuable community resources. In essence, there is the need for the librarians to make people to be aware of the services and resources they provide and their comparative value. Librarians should see themselves as resources people go to for information and should be well prepared and equipped themselves as experts in the field.
- Academic libraries depend on the supports of people they serve for their survival. A library should therefore communicate and work with its users and funding authorities to provide information about what the library is doing and to enable the library to learn about the

community its serve.

➤ Librarians are not visible Shamel (2002) believes that people who are in positions to employ librarians are not aware of the values of libraries and librarians. There is thus the need for librarians to be more proactive in marketing their services to potential users and people in positions of power.

➤ Library users expect recognition, attention and appreciation for their individual information needs. As users always have ever-changing needs and wants, there is the need for librarians to market as dynamic as retail markets and thus create an environment in libraries that foster user's consciousness and satisfaction among them.

It is against this background that this study was designed in order to examine the marketing strategies employed by the Federal University libraries in North-West zone of Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Marketing in libraries has received considerable attention from many writers and scholars. Jestin and Parameswari, (2002) opined that marketing involves activities such as identifying the needs, designing suitable services or resources and the use of effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and serve the users. In the words of Singh (2009), marketing in the Library places the users at the Centre of the activities. However, Stanton (2006) stated that "marketing is a total system of activities which involves the librarians to plan, promote their resources and services, and present to potential users." Adeyoyin (2005) affirms that marketing concept rotates on three pillars namely; user-centered, profit-centered and anticipating of changes through time. On the other hand, Madhusudhan (2008) submits that the underlying aim of marketing is to identify the client base, determine and fill its needs, wants and demands by designing and delivering appropriate resources and services. Dragon (2008) defined the concept of marketing stating that "Marketing is a systematic approach to planning and achieving desired exchange relations with other groups. Marketing is concerned with developing, maintaining, and/or regulating exchange relations involving resources, services, organizations, persons, places or causes.

Similarly, Dragon (2009) defined the concept of marketing, stating that marketing is a systematic approach to planning and achieving desired exchange relations with other groups. Marketing is concerned with developing, maintaining, and/or regulating exchange relations involving products, services, organizations, persons, places or causes. Nevertheless, Zachert and Williams (2004), considered that marketing is a plan that focuses on products, place or mode of delivery,

adjustment of cost/price to the market, and promotion to specifically targeted segments of the academic librarian's market. Marketing is the process of determining consumer demand for a product or service, motivating its sale and distributing it into ultimate consumption at a profit (Budd, 2008). Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals (American Marketing Association, 2004). Olson, (2007) posit that marketing includes determining market niches, defining products and services, setting prices, promoting services, and building good public relations.

From all the above assertions, it can be deduced that in the academic library setting, marketing library and information services entails understanding the objectives of the library, researching the needs of the target market, packaging the library and its services to meet these needs, then promotion of the library and its services to attract the users. It is suffice to say that marketing in the academic library setting, is more than presenting books in a nice arrangement, printing flyers, hosting an event but it is rather satisfying the ever changing users' needs.

It is important to note that librarians have different understandings of marketing which is obviously responsible for the variation in approach or strategy adopted by libraries for information services. According to Kotler (2010), Marketing is the business function that identifies current unfilled needs and wants, defines and measures their magnitude, determines which target markets the organization can best serve, and decides on appropriate products, services, and programs to serve these markets. In a more recent literature, Singh (2008) defines marketing in relation to library and information services as the process of planning, pricing, promoting, and distributing goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy the library and the customer. Baker (2005), asserted that Marketing has been one of the world's oldest professions and the enigma of marketing is one of man's oldest activities and yet it is regarded as the most recent of the business discipline. Going with the above assertion, it can be deduced that marketing of information resource and services covers all those activities involved in satisfying the quest of the users by proving them with satisfactory services and making a profit for the library that makes use of available resources to the maximum.

Madhusudhan (2008), believes that Marketing aims to identify the client base, to determine and fill its needs, wants, and demands by designing and delivering appropriate products and services. Shontz, (2004) defines marketing as the process of planning, performance, pricing, promotion and publishing ideas, resources and services for user satisfaction and achieving the objectives of the organizations. Berry (2005) believes that marketing in the library sector involves the performance of planning, organizing,

dissemination and controlling information services on a proactive and user-oriented way that ensures user satisfaction while achieving the objectives of the parent organization.

On the other hand, a number of scholars have identified different strategies for the marketing of information resources and services. Davidson (2001) stressed the importance of marketing library and information services through displays and exhibitions. This he said can boost current awareness in the library because it allows library customers to know the existence of materials in the library. Samuel (2004) agree with Davidson (2005) when he argued that libraries as matter of responsibility should publish newsletters and bulletins which will draw the attention of library customers to the benefits of library displays and exhibitions. Macdonald (2007) submitted that current awareness services if fully integrated with library, displays and exhibitions will draw library customers to patronage library services. Peterson (2004) disagrees with Brown (2002) who submitted that there is no justification to suggest that the public confidence is won as a result of displays and exhibitions. He suggested that librarians need to work on the area of current awareness services so that good patronage of library services would justify their efforts in displays and exhibitions of library resources. Singh (2009) submitted that library displays and exhibitions cannot be said to have taken place without involving the press who are to give first-hand information about the advantages of marketing library services. Mark (2007), disagrees with the opinions and express that librarians should be careful and not politicize the displays and exhibitions, the objective of satisfying the library customers on their wants and needs should be of topmost priority. Daniels (2007), agrees with the fact that, library customers are not only aware of authors and writer's contribution to knowledge but be sure their needs has been met. Adams (2008) suggests that in this direction current library resources must be displayed and exhibited whenever the opportunity opens. Amos (2000), is of the view that some libraries conduct displays and exhibitions annually, he did not buy the idea, but suggested that displays and exhibitions should be on a continuous base as long as library user needs are satisfied. Adams (2008) disagreed with Amos (2002), when he said that libraries should maintain the idea of annual displays. A continuous displays and exhibitions would become monotonous and library customers would not take it seriously.

However, Amechi (2001) discusses the role of advertisement in Nigeria economic growth. He defined advertisement as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor. Purpose of advertising in the library context is to develop the awareness of users, increase the use of services, and intensify the image of the library. Another way of advertising library and

information services is by placing a billboard in strategic places within the library where the information resources and services are located. This will attract the passerby and those who are interested in its services. Kumar (2006) observed that patronage is a function of good advertisement. He opined that libraries have been able to employ the weapon of advertisement to attract patronage such as indexing, abstracting services and research advisory services. Fisher (2005) observed that before advertisement of the marketing library services are considered it must be investigated whether advertisement is relevant to the needs and wants of users whose taste of the library customers cannot underestimate.

Publicity has also been identified as important strategy for marketing of information resources and services. Nwokoye (2001) has defined publicity as any information about individual, product, service or an organization that is distributed to the public through the media. It is neither paid for nor controlled by sponsor. Publicity is often used to launch new product, brand or service and also to rekindle interest in matured product or services. Basically publicity consist of communicating the library services features in terms of benefits and advantages to readers and persuading potential readers to right kind of resources. Alder (2000) opined that one other method of outreach employed by some is to start friends of the library movements.

## METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative methodology, the researcher interviewed (5) Head of Reader Services of Federal University libraries in North-west zone of Nigeria. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. The structured interview was used to collect the data and a purposive sampling technique was also employed with the use of Narrative research design. The aim of the study was to examine marketing strategies of Information Resources and Services of Federal University libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the strategies employed by the libraries understudy in marketing their information resources and service
2. To find out the challenges in marketing of library and information services in the libraries under study.

The study is guided in answering the following questions:

1. What are the strategies employed by the libraries in marketing their information resources and services?
2. What are the challenges associated with

marketing of library and information services in the libraries under study?

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The findings of the study also unveiled a number of strategies employed by the five (5) respondents which were used to market the library resources and services. The marketing strategies include flyers, advertisement, handbills, display and exhibitions, pricing, studentsguides,libraryweek,seminars,workshops,newspa per,magazines, Alerts, SMS, orientation programme etc. The findings also discovered that the libraries are informed by the quality of the services and resources through these strategies. The findings also shows that flyers, handbills, and seminars are the most frequently used strategies by respondents This is similar to Obi (2006) when he asserted that library displays and exhibitions are the greatest strategies libraries could adopt to enhance marketing of resources and information services. She noted if displays and exhibitions are properly planned and carefully organized, it would definitely boost library patronage. She suggested that large portrait and photograph of good work be displayed side by side with books so as to capture attention. This is supported by Carrington (2005) who recommended advertisement of library services through news, bulletin, notice board and newspapers. This is in line with Davidson (2001) who stressed the importance of marketing library and information services through displays and exhibitions. This he said can boost current awareness in the library because it allows library users to know the existence of materials in the library. Samuel (2004) agrees with Davidson (2005) when he argued that libraries as a matter of responsibility should publish newsletters and bulletins which will draw the attention of library customers to the benefits of library displays and exhibitions.

The researcher is of the opinion that for the users' confidence to be fully won, librarians should be able to carry along the users by organizing library orientation, talks and seminar on the importance of displays and exhibitions, the academic libraries studied must find a way to cultivate better relationship with the entire users on marketing library services through displays, exhibitions etc.

2. The major challenges identified from the findings of the study, as indicated by the five (5) Participants include inadequate funding from the parent institution to provide quality resources and services, inadequate resources, lack of facilities, poor patronage by the users and poor power supply.

3. The findings of the study also indicated the solutions proffered by the five(5) respondents which include proper support from the parent institutions in

terms of providing enough fund that will enable the library function effectively as well as to acquire resources and services that are relevant. Adequate fund to organize more seminars, conferences, talk shows, orientation programmes, provide adequate services that will draw the maximum attentions of the users and also serve as a persuasive measure to capture the attention of the users at large, provide ICT facilities, organize training of staff on how to be proactive in providing effective and efficient services to these users through marketing, provision of electricity twenty-four hours(24/7) should be mounted. Marketing is a comprehensive term that describes all the processes and interactions that result in satisfaction for users and revenue for the information Centre or library. By implication, the librarians should put these measures in practice as to solve the identified challenges.

## CONCLUSION

The study on marketing of information resources and services in federal university libraries in North-west zone of Nigeria resulted in the following conclusions:

Going with the result of the findings from the participants interviewed for the study, it was found that the information resources and services provided by the federal university libraries in North-west zone of Nigeria were not effectively and efficiently patronized. This may be as a result of ineffective marketing activities within the libraries in North-west zone of Nigeria to enlighten and sensitize the library users through a balanced resources and services, this can only be done by creating awareness and organizing seminars that will boost the image of the libraries as well as improve the services. Therefore, based on the findings, it can be concluded that library has the mandate to create awareness and improve the quality of the services and this can be activated by marketing. Therefore the library has to do all things possible to ensure adequate service delivery with well-balanced resources and services. The role of marketing of information resources and services influences the library services through adequate provision of information resources and services. However, with this development, it can be inferred that effective marketing activities within the library setting will encourage effective library service delivery by a well-balanced resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The libraries in the North-west zone of Nigeria should endeavor to provide current resources and services that would satisfy the information quest of the library and that will encourage patronage. The library being a store house of knowledge needs not only books

as it resources, but should also provide current resources and services like the modern ICT facilities, for example computers should be made available with 24/7 internet connectivity as well as more services such as interlibrary loans, audio-visual materials, this will bring about sharing of resources and services among these libraries under study, so as to solve the problem of acquisition, as this would equally foster cooperation and unity among them and also the need to provide a standard criterion that will aid in the selection of appropriate, up-to-date resources.

2. There is also a need for the libraries in the North-west zone to develop more strategies like internet marketing through the use of web 2.0 for marketing the resources and services.

3. There is also a need for the libraries in the North-west zone of Nigeria to create mandatory seminar for the librarians to be conversant with the marketing activities. This will increase their perceptions positively. The training and retraining of the staffs in terms of marketing of library resources and services, maximum support by the management in marketing of these resources and services, standard policy in marketing of these resources and services should be introduced, comparative analysis on the provision of resources and services for the users in Nigeria.

4. The libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria should strive to ensure that a qualified, competent, committed, determined and proactive staffs are trained and serve as the librarians who can render effective and quality service to the library. This will in the long run encourage high patronage of the library. There is also a need for the libraries in North-west zone to develop a standard policy statement on marketing strategies so that it will serve as a guide.

5. The libraries in the North-west zone of Nigeria should encourage patronage by organizing educative and informative programmes which will make the library users more aware of the various and newly resources and services provided by the libraries and these programmes should include library week, student orientation, conferences, display and exhibition, seminars, workshops, quiz competition amongst the library users etc.

There is also a need to send out some staffs for training and retraining on how to market the resources and services, this should be on a continuous basis for the staff to be able to provide and satisfy the users with effective and quality services. Importantly, user education programmes should be introduced where librarians can teach the users on how to make a good use of the library, its resources and services and also the need for the provision of inter-library loan services as well as audio – visual services should be made available. Also, the provision of marketing strategies in library should be incorporated in the curriculum this will make the librarians to be well schooled in marketing.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY

Information resources and services are the bedrock of the library, and librarians are seriously applying new skills and strategies to improve their information resources and services in their libraries and also to increase the quality of their services. Therefore, the libraries involved are encouraged to adopt marketing strategies in order to improve the services of the library.

Furthermore, with these marketing strategies, it is imperative to note that information resources and services that are properly marketed will enhance the quality of the services and also improve the library image. This study will be significant to librarians, users, library managers and researchers. Practically the result of this study would encourage and help the library management to improve and understand the impact of marketing of information resource and services towards the provision of effective services to the library users in order to meet their information, education and research needs. It would also add to the body of knowledge on marketing in libraries in general and north western in particular. It is hoped that this study will help librarians in the planning of effective marketing of their information resources and services, and also understand the problem associated in marketing of information resources and services. The study will equip the librarians with skills in carrying out effective and efficient marketing activities with relevant resources thereby promoting the image of the library. The study will also be significant to the users of the library because through proper marketing, many users will become more aware of the types of services and resources the library has in stock thereby attracting more patronage. Also, it will be significant to library managers because marketing is a managerial activity which will enable the library managers to manage and market the resources effectively and also promote their services. It will also assist and serve as a guide to other researchers who may be interested in conducting research on marketing of information resources and services in other federal university libraries in other geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The study will be a great contribution to the libraries in the Federal University in the North-West, as it will stimulate the provision of effective and adequate library services through its recommendations which will in the long run play a major role in the education and information as well as research development of the librarians in North-west zone.

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