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Challenges on Marketing of Information Resources and Services in Federal University Libraries in North-West Zone of Nigeria

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This Paper examines challenges associated with Marketing of Information Resources and Services in Federal University Libraries in North-West zone of Nigeria. The objective is 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 this study were the Heads of Readers services in (5) five Federal University Libraries studied. Interview method was also used as the data collection instrument and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The major challenges associated with marketing of information resources and services by the libraries include low patronage, inadequate funds to provide relevant resources and services as well as to support the marketing activities, inadequate support from the parent institution, inadequate staff to provide the necessary services with professionalism among others. It is concluded that the libraries in federal university in North-West zone of Nigeria are information markets and the library users are consumers of information and it is expected that libraries studied should be committed to effective services delivery as that will increase the visibility of the library, its resources and services. Practical Implication- It is critical for the library and information science department to include marketing of library services in their curriculum. Librarians must become entrepreneurs and take leadership position in this information age. Librarians must have future oriented focus on their clients.

Keywords: marketing, challenges of marketing, federal university libraries in the North-zone of Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

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, and the user community needs to be built into a marketing program.

Today, Librarians must actively reposition themselves and their resources to become their libraries' information infrastructure. However, in the academic library setting, marketing of information resources and services entails understanding the objectives of the library, researching the needs of the target users, packaging the library and its services to meet these needs, then promotion of the

library and its resources and services to attract the target users. Marketing includes selling, advertising, physical distribution, sales, promotion (Kotler, 2010).

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. Marketing has become very essential and important in the provision of library and information services because information resources and services that are not marketed effectively may not be heavily patronized (Gupta and Savard, 2010). There is always the feeling that library related information should be marketed because the library is a social agency established to serve the educational and informational needs of society. But the current push towards developing self-sustaining information dissemination operations is changing this idea. Information resources include everything that is used in providing the required services to the clientele. Information resources are those materials which enable libraries to carry their function out effectively. Information resources can be in both printed and electronic formats including textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers, magazines, reports, CD-ROM databases, internet, email, video tapes/cassettes, diskettes, computers and microforms.

However, information resources and services is the factor that drives need, since it represents the ultimate purpose for which information is needed and sought. Information resources and services play a crucial role in the library. The positive effect of information resources has been summed by Jestin and Parameswari (2002) when they observed that "Library-based resources are recognized as crucial national resource having a key role to play in national scientific and technological development of social problems, and in improving quality of life." Information resources are crucial to library users (Johnson, 2006). Library's information resources as used in this context are therefore collections of all text and bibliographic information sources; it also includes information technology such as those that support browsing, authoring and communication like computer and the Internet. In order for libraries to have a great impact on their users through their services, it is necessary for each library management to aim at managing the library accurately and provide timely information for all library users.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Marketing of services by librarians in academic libraries has become a relevant and strategic issue for libraries in this age of information technology. This is deemed necessary now that the use of internet is the major tool in

marketing library services. Library websites can be created and could help to harness the resources of the library. The use of information communication technology (ICT) in marketing is useful to users by widening their horizon in their choice of available information sources and services.

Some scholars observed Kaur and Rani (2007) in support opined that university libraries invest huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources. These resources according to them often remain unutilized resulting to wastage of money, time, energy and space. Library users sometimes do not know the resources and services available and do not ask for assistance in the use of the library.

There is thus a gap between what is and what should be. Urgent attention is needed or else these resources will not be utilized effectively and users may not come to the libraries. They may abandon the library and as such users could miss out the information that could have made them better scholars. Libraries can solve their problems of underutilization of resources and services by marketing them.

The research, therefore, investigates the challenges encountered and strategies which could be used to improve the services rendered to users.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the challenges that hinder effective marketing of library services?
2. What are the strategies to enhance effective marketing of library services?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of marketing

Marketing performs the total management function by anticipating the demand of the customers, identifying and satisfying their needs Igbokwe, J. C.; Ezeji, E. C & Obidike N. A by the provision of right products or services at the right price and place. They also maintain that marketing in libraries is libraries wide philosophy and that it is consumer-oriented, integrated, goal oriented philosophy (Gupta and Jambhekar 2002).

Weingand (2002) is of the opinion that due to challenges and issues confronting libraries nowadays, libraries need to embrace change and also demonstrate leadership to the community through the use of marketing strategies and future oriented proactive focus on the customer. Also Zauha, Samson and Christin (2001) noted that libraries need to market themselves to remain

connected with their communities and have some bearing on real world issues and present day event. Leisner (1995) opines that contemporary management practice suggests very strongly that marketing is an essential component of an organizational business plan. Furthermore, for libraries to attain good height and achieve their goals; they must have qualitative marketing approach and set objective such as to achieve high level of customer satisfaction, and insure the survival of their institutions.

Obi (2002) observes that marketing of library services would help to educate some library users who do not know the work of librarians and expose them to the services of the library orientation, user education, reference/ reader services, bindery and reprographic services. She rightly observes that there is this tendency for users to shy away from asking for assistance from library staff, even when it is obvious that the service they need is available and the staff that can help is willing. She also observed that a user may spend long hours looking through book-shelves, before summoning courage to ask for assistance on how to locate a book.

Boakye (1999) observed that lack of marketing strategies affects library user skills and utilization of services. Kaur and Rani (2007) in support opined that university libraries invest huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources. These resources according to them often remain unutilized resulting to wastage of money, time, energy and space. Also Ochogwu (2007) opined that availability of information does not necessarily mean its accessibility not to speak of use. Therefore, library orientation is important for new students. Cuiying (2007) noted that a coordinated program of orientation to the library, teaching research skills and instruction in critical thinking can assist users to reduce academic stress and increase the likelihood of success. Edoka (2000) however, states that the library has the responsibility of ensuring that its resources and services are used. The library can effectively do these by involving actively in the marketing of its services like other organizations. The marketing programme will enable the library to reach more potential users, encourage and promote the use of library resources and work towards becoming the indispensable information centre where modern information disseminating equipment are functional.

Challenges that hinder effective marketing of library services

Some of the problems that hinder effective marketing of library services include lack of funds. Adebayo (2004) reported that the issue of funding is the worst problem facing libraries in Nigeria. The problem of funding in libraries constitutes set back and highest sabotage to the

ability of libraries in Nigeria to design and deliver high profit services. Edoka (1991) revealed that budgetary allocations for running the libraries are grossly inadequate and government subventions have witnessed serious cuts coupled with the down-town in the economic fortunes of Nigeria. Uzoigwe (2004) rightly revealed that the failure of policy makers and fiscal managers to make adequate budgetary allocations for library services compounds the funding problems of Nigerian libraries. She adds that the perception of the library as a social and non-profit service provider has greatly undermined the ability of library administrators to identify, develop and exploit alternative sources of revenue.

An additional problem is the issue of non-computerization and non-automation of library operations and services. Asemoah- Hassan (2002) reported that very few Nigerian . Libraries are fully computerized and automated. As a result of inadequate telecommunication facilities, low level of computer literacy among library staff, dearth of computer gadgets and poor level of internet capabilities, clumsy and error-prone manual procedures are seen as threats in marketing services in Nigerian libraries.

METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative methodology, the researcher interviewed (5) Head of Reader Services from (5) academic libraries in North-west zone of Nigeria. The interviews were recorded. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher recorded information about the type of information resources and services in the university libraries. The structured interview was used to collect the data.

The aim of the study is to identify the challenges associated with Marketing of Information Resources and Services in Federal University libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria. The specific objective of the study is:

• To find out the challenges in marketing of library and information services in the libraries understudy

Findings from the Paper

The researcher asked the Participants about the challenges they encountered in the course of marketing their resources and services. (see Figure 1)

The data presented in figure above revealed the various challenges associated with marketing of information resources and services by the Participants interviewed. The responses indicated that the major challenges being faced are inadequate fund, poor electricity, lack of incentives, lack of technical know-how and lack of marketing skills. From the analysis, it was
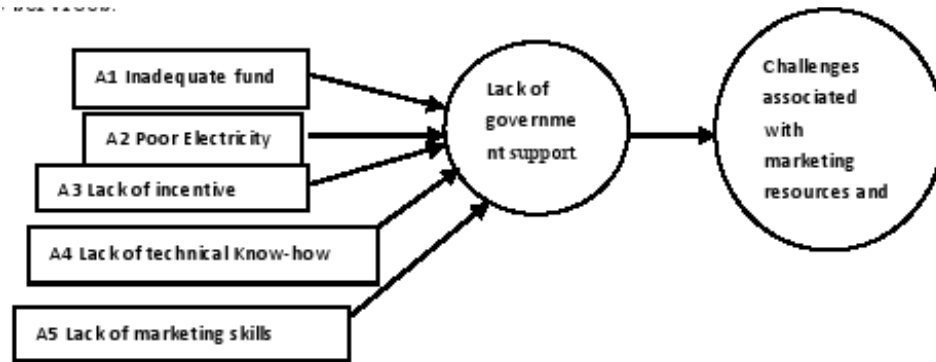
Figure 1

observed by the researcher that the Federal University libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria have encountered series of challenges in terms of marketing of information resources and services.

Participant A1 reported that the major problem is that of inadequate funds, inadequate training facilities, and lack of marketing skills, poor workshop and seminar experiences. He stressed that some of the resources they have are outdated and that there are no enough books to cater for all the needs of the users.

Participant A2 revealed that there is inadequate fund to acquire more current resources books, absence of more adequate training facilities and more qualified personnel. There is also the problem of retraining and training of member of library staff for effective service delivery, poor electricity, low patronage of users due inadequate and relevant resources and services.

Participant A3 stated that there is insufficient of funds to maximally market the resources and services, outdated materials, lack of incentive on the staff, lack of feedback from the users in terms of services provided to them, which leads to low of patronage.

Participant A4 indicated that there is lack of technical know-how to market the library resources and services, lack of motivation on the side of the users, fund constraints, lack of proper training, and lack of constant power supply.

Participant A5 confirmed that inadequate fund, lack of marketing skills, poor patronage due to inadequate resources and services. The responses indicated that the major challenges being encountered in marketing of information resources and services include: inadequate funds, inadequate resources, lack of training of staff, lack of facilities, poor patronage by the users and poor power supply.

From the finding, it can be inferred that inadequate funding, problem of staff training and retraining, inadequate resources, lack of facilities, poor patronage, poor power supply and lack of marketing skills amongst others are the major challenges encountered by the libraries in North-west zone of Nigeria in marketing of information resources and services.

CONCLUSION

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. The major problem hindering effective marketing of library services were inadequate fund, irregular power supply, inadequate infrastructure like photocopier, computers, air conditioner for the marketing of library services, unavailability of staff, low computer literacy among staff, lack of professional training in marketing, under staffing, limited media access, death of library materials to market, and also library management do not have marketing policy.
2. Strategies to enhance effective marketing of library services in academic libraries include; publicity and public relation strategy, pasting of new information on the notice board, enhancing the image of libraries, using user's orientation as a strategy, devising training programme, advertising in print media or directories, sending out newsletters, brochures and flyers, word of- mouth endorsement and also personal sales by the librarians.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings the researchers recommend that:

(i) Academic libraries should develop marketing plans that will help to ensure that the strategies are put in place and managed for the benefit of the libraries.
(ii) Library management should be provided with enough funds to procure current global information networks like the Internet.
(iii) Library staff should be given computer literacy training so as to be efficient in their place of work.

(iv) There is urgent need to increase fee based services in order to generate funds. It is not sufficient to install equipment or services. It is vital to market the services in the same way a private firm markets its products in order to make users aware. This becomes more urgent with several business centres/cybercafés operating on most university campuses.

(v) Efforts should be made to improve the quality of services rendered to users by employing more staff and establishing a cordial relationship between the staff and students.

(vi) The library should try to market itself by making use of other media like radio and television to bring to the notice of the general public the benefits that they derive from library services.

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