Strategies Used by Librarians in Marketing Information Resources and Library Services in Federal University of Technology, Owerri and Imo State University, Owerri

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STRATEGIES USED BY LIBRARIANS IN MARKETING INFORMATION RESOURCES AND LIBRARY SERVICES IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, OWERRI AND IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI.

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on strategies used by librarians in marketing information resources and library services in Federal University of Technology, Owerri and Imo State University, Owerri. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study is 62 librarians from the university libraries studied which was also used as sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection was an online questionnaire rated using the four-point scale. Out of 62 copies of instrument distributed, 51 copies were returned showing 82.3% return rate. Data collected were analyzed using mean (x) scores. The findings of the study revealed among others that; journals, books, newspapers, conference proceedings, e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, electronic databases, CD-ROM databases, e-theses and dissertations and internet resources are the information resources available for marketing in the university libraries studied; reference services, circulation services, abstracting and indexing services, Current Awareness Services, Selective Dissemination of Information, referral services, inter-library cooperation, internet services, document delivery services and consultancy services are the library services available for marketing in the university libraries studied and strategies used for marketing library services and information resources are exhibitions and display of new arrivals, user orientation programmes, flyers and posters, social media, face to face interaction with the user community, institutional websites, library notice board, Current Awareness Services, conferences, seminars and workshops and Selective Dissemination of Information. The researchers recommended among others that for effective marketing of information resources, university library management should ensure that there are relevant, quality and current information resources in the library.

Introduction

University library is a library established and maintained by a university to provide information resources to cater for the information needs of students, lecturers, researchers and the entire university community. Akidi and Umebali (2019) opine that university libraries are noted to be the hub of academic activities of the universities; the nervous system and heart of the institutions and therefore are pivotal to the realization of the tripartite role of the universities. The university library is devoted to academic activities of its parent institution to ensure that the tripartite functions which include teaching/learning, research and community services are achieved. This is to say that the primary objective of the university library is to provide and organize information resources to ensure the actualization of the goals of the parent institution. Thus, students and other members of the university community rely on information resources of the university library in order to meet their information needs.

Information resources are vital tools in teaching and learning process, research and personal development of students and other members of the university community. Barfi, Afful-Authur and Agyapong as cited in Nwosu and Opara (2019) define information resources as the raw materials that provide vital services in the teaching and learning process. The university library, however ensures that the goals of the parent institution are actualized by making sure that information resources are acquired and well utilized by library users. It is imperative to assert that the success of any university library depends on the availability and utilization of its information resources available in print, non-print and electronic formats. Hence, Akinade and Akinola (2022) maintain that libraries in academic institutions are saddled with the responsibility of managing vast amount of information stored in different formats and are needed for a successful academic pursuit. In order to facilitate academic success and provide access to a wide range of information resources, university libraries render library services to the users of the library.

Library services rendered to the users of the library vary from one library to another depending on the type and nature of the library. In university libraries, the provision of library services to library users is considered of utmost importance. University libraries provide library services to support teaching, learning and research needs of members of their parent institutions.

The common services offered to students and other members of the university community include reference services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, user education, referral services, reprographic services, indexing services, abstracting services, technical services, document delivery services, bibliographic services, inter-library loan services, library liaison services, among others. The essence of rendering library services to library users is to create adequate access and increase utilization of information resources available to users of the library and the users' satisfaction is of utmost priority. Thus, providing quality service means adjusting to user expectations consistently (Yuliana & Ifadah, 2022). Therefore, to bring these services and resources to the attention of the users, there is need for university libraries to embark on their marketing.

Marketing has been defined by many authors and scholars from different perspectives. Kotler as cited in Yusuf (2019) defined marketing as the social process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and values with others. In the views of Emezie, Chukwu and Anyanwu (2015) marketing is the full range of activities or processes that are undertaken in order to make certain that customers' needs are met and profit made in return. Going by these definitions, it could be inferred that marketing is concerned with the processes or activities individuals or organizations undertake to promote the exchange of goods and services in such a way that customers will be satisfied and the organization's objectives achieved. Marketing aims at getting customers interested in the organization's products and services.

Marketing as regards to libraries encompasses processes through which the target users get to know about the functions, resources, services and programmes of the library that match their interest. To Osinulu, Adekunmis, Okewale and Oyewusi (2018), marketing in the context of libraries involves provision of library resources and services, using different tools and technologies in order to create awareness, attract and improve library patrons' use of the library resources and services. We live in the era of competition, hence librarians need to devise strategies to market services and resources of the library to the public so as to create awareness and increase their daily activities. Thus, the primary aim of marketing is to make the users aware of information resources and services that the library has to offer so as to ensure heavy patronage. Aderibigbe and Farouk (2017) assert that 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. Hence, for librarians to stay viable, meet organizational goals and objectives as well as satisfy users' needs, it is vital that they adopt marketing strategies.

Marketing strategies are techniques used by libraries to create awareness so as to attract and retain users to make effective use of information resources and services. Edom and Edom (2019) describe marketing strategy as a led down plan or principle that an organization adopts in order to sell its products and maximize profits. Libraries adopt marketing strategies to remain relevant in the competitive information age. Thus, Mutongi and Chiwanza (2016) encourage libraries to use differentiated strategy, a situation whereby libraries distinguish own products or services from all other libraries' products and services while capitalizing on competitive advantage. This is to say that there are various marketing strategies that libraries need to adopt to promote their resources and services and achieve competitive advantage. It is very important for librarians in university libraries to take into cognizance the different marketing strategies, then know which strategy that will suit the promotion of information resources and services at any given point or situation. In the light of the foregoing, this study examines the strategies used by librarians in marketing information resources and library services in Federal University of Technology, Owerri and Imo State University, Owerri.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. ascertain the information resources available for marketing in the university libraries studied;
2. identify the library services available for marketing in the university libraries studied;
3. determine the strategies used by librarians in marketing information resources and library services in the university libraries studied;
4. ascertain the reasons for marketing information resources and library services in the university libraries studied; and
5. identify the constraints to effective marketing of information resources and library services in the university libraries studied.

Literature Review

For a library to achieve its goals and objectives, there is need to provide resources and services to meet the information needs of its users. It is through various library services rendered to users that access and use of information resources to satisfy the varied information needs of users can be achieved. Libraries have different types of information resources which can be marketed to attract target users to make use of the library. Upev, Akpe and Beetseh (2015) in their study revealed that books and e-books, films, journals, magazines, newspapers, statistics, internet sites and special information are information resources marketable in the libraries studied. Joshua and Michael (2020) identified the following as information resources available for marketing: books, journals, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, e-books, e-journals, e-magazines and CD-ROMs. To Vij (2012), the information resources that can be marketed in order to satisfy the needs of the library users range from books, periodicals, reports to electronic documents. It is evident that both print and electronic information resources are marketed in the library. To this end, there is need to fully equip the library with relevant and current information resources to ensure effective marketing geared towards actualization of the library's goals and objectives.

Marketing of library services is very vital because it helps to showcase the library services provided in the library. The various types of services provided by an academic library as identified by Umoh (2017) include: circulation/borrowing services, reference services, bibliographic verification services, Current Awareness Services (CAS), reprographic services, extension/ community services, technical services and inter-library co-operation. Libraries offer a wide variety of services that are marketable. The library's marketable information-based services include reference, referral, circulation, bibliographic loan, Selective Information Dissemination (SDI), bibliographic data, abstract and indexing, tailored research and development, present knowledge, consultative services for readers and information literacy (Eda & Ukubeyinje, 2019). Joshua and Michael (2020) revealed that some of the library services which are highly available for marketing are reference services, indexing and abstracting services, internet access and Current Awareness Services (CAS). All these services are marketed to ensure that the target library users are aware that these services are provided in the library.

Marketing has been an integral part of librarianship. Libraries have traditionally been involved in marketing information resources and services through the display of newly acquired books, exhibitions, newsletters, user orientation programs, library guide manufacturing and

issuance, library week outreach and other advertising programmes (Eda & Ukubeyinje, 2019). There are different strategies librarians can use to market information resources and library services to increase use of library directed towards the achievement of library's goals. Thus, Adegoke (2015) noted that current awareness service, exhibition and display, selective dissemination of information, bulletin boards, complaints/suggestion boxes, users' education courses, electronic bill boards, audio-visual services, online dissemination of information via the internet technology are strategies for marketing information resources and services in the library. Also Edewor, Okite-Amughoro, Osuchukwu and Egreajena's (2016) study found that library publications (memos, bulletins, and newsletter), orientation programmes, websites, flyers and posters are key strategies used in the libraries studied in marketing library services. In order to successfully market electronic resources, Dryden as cited in Joshua and Michael (2020) established that surveys, usage statistics, instructional sessions, posters, tours, websites, emails, word of mouth, press releases, social media tools, and special events can be used. Ukwoma (2014) identified good communication skills, face to face interaction with the user community networking among professional colleagues, using bulletin boards, seminars and workshops, newsletters, publicity through advertisements and announcements, and through website as the major strategies for effective marketing of library and information services. Similarly, Benson, Udo- Anyanwu and Onuoha (2016) revealed that use of library notice board, face-to-face interaction with user community, seminar/workshop, use of institutions websites, networking among professional colleagues are the most dominated form of strategies used in marketing information products and services. Therefore, librarians need to adopt various marketing strategies to remain relevant in this competitive world.

Marketing is designed to make potential customers aware of the existing products and services that are in stock for them. Garoufallou, Siatri, Zafeiriou and Balampanidou (2013) maintained that marketing is essential because it uses a range of tools and resources which aims to promote and make potential and current customers aware of the brand, services, and products of an organization. Through marketing of information resources and library services, potential library users get to know about the value of the information products and services and additional information that might be helpful to them. Studies have revealed that effective marketing improves users' awareness of library products and services, promote use of library and achievement of library's goals and objectives. For instance, Joshua and Michael (2020) revealed that the major

reason for marketing library services is to achieve the objectives of the library and identify the information needs of users. Similarly, Kutu and Olajide (2018) postulated that effective marketing provides the means by which users are aware of the services of the library and their values. Also, as a result of information explosion caused by electronic revolution, libraries are now faced with competitors who try to provide some of the services that libraries have been providing. Consequently, Ubogu (2021) posited that to contend with all competitors, libraries have to instigate different inventive products and services and employ different marketing tools to reach their patrons globally. Hence, marketing of information resources and library services is crucial to make the library users aware of the products and services of a library in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the library.

There are factors that affect effective marketing of information resources and library services in libraries. The findings of recent studies are in conformity with this submission. Osinulu, Adekunmisi, Okewale and Oyewusi (2018) citing Das and Karn submitted that most librarians do not promote library resources, services and products effectively due to lack of training and poor knowledge of marketing tools and techniques as well as fear of commercial publicity. The study by Benson, Udo-Anyanwu and Onuoha (2016) discovered that inadequate funding, low level of awareness on the use of ICT in marketing, irregular power supply, high cost of ICT tools, inadequate computer trained and certified librarians among others as the factors affecting marketing of library services. The findings of Aderibigbe (2015) revealed that 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 are major challenges associated with marketing of library and information services in the libraries studied. Ukwoma (2014) revealed that inadequate funding, lack of training and education of librarians on marketing, lack of ICT infrastructure and lack of internet facilities to reach out to the global world are the challenges hindering effective marketing of library services. There is no way librarians will effectively market information resources and library services with these observed challenges. Thus, these constraints if not well tackled or mitigated could affect the essence of marketing information resources and library services.

Research Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study is sixty two (62) librarians from the university libraries studied which also served as sample for the study.

The instrument for data collection was an online questionnaire rated using the four-point scale. Out of the 62 copies of instrument sent, 51 copies were returned and found adequate for the study giving a response rate of 82.3%. Data was analyzed using mean (x) scores. Items with mean scores of 2.5 and above were positively interpreted while those with mean scores below 2.5 were negatively interpreted. The benchmark for rating is Strongly Agree (SA) = 3.50 – 4.0, Agree (A) = 2.50 – 3.49, Disagree (D) = 1.5 – 2.49, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 0 – 1.49.

Data Analyses, Presentation and Discussion

Table 1: Information Resources Available for Marketing

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Journals	27	24	-	-	3.53	SA
2.	Books	33	18	-	-	3.65	SA
3.	Newspapers	29	21	1	-	3.55	SA
4.	Conference proceedings	23	28	-	-	3.45	A
5.	E-books	31	20	-	-	3.61	SA
6.	E-journals	32	19	-	-	3.63	SA
7.	E-newspapers	25	26	-	-	3.51	SA
8.	Electronic databases	28	23	-	-	3.49	A
9.	CD-ROM databases	24	27	-	-	3.47	A
10.	E-theses and dissertations	35	13	3	-	3.63	SA
11.	Internet resources	39	12	-	-	3.84	SA
	Grand Mean					**3.58**	**SA**

The result of the analysis in Table 1 shows that the respondents strongly agree that the information resources available for marketing are journals, books, newspapers, e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-theses and dissertations and internet resources with mean scores of 3.53, 3.65, 3.55, 3.61, 3.63, 3.51, 3.63 and 3.84 respectively. The respondents agree that other information resources available for marketing are conference proceedings, electronic databases and CD-ROM databases with mean scores of 3.45, 3.49 and 3.47 respectively. Generally, the respondents strongly agree that information resources are available for marketing in the university libraries studied as shown in the grand mean which is 3.58. Corroborating this finding, Upev, Akpe and Beetseh (2015) in their study revealed that books and e-books, films, journals, magazines,

newspapers, statistics, internet sites and special information are information resources marketable in the libraries studied. Joshua and Michael's (2020) result identified the information resources available for marketing as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, e-books, e-journals, e-magazines and CD-ROMs. Also, Vij (2012) revealed that the information resources that can be marketed in order to satisfy the needs of the library users range from books, periodicals, reports to electronic documents.

Table 2: Library Services Available for Marketing

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Reference services	32	19	-	-	3.63	SA
2.	Circulation services	29	21	1	-	3.55	SA
3.	Abstracting and Indexing services	17	32	2	-	3.29	A
4.	Current Awareness Services (CAS)	27	24	-	-	3.53	SA
5.	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)	24	25	2	-	3.43	A
6.	Referral services	24	23	4	-	3.39	A
7.	Inter-library cooperation	21	25	5	-	3.31	A
8.	Internet services	29	19	3	-	3.51	SA
9.	Document delivery services	16	33	2	-	3.27	A
10.	Consultancy services	22	29	-	-	3.43	A
	Grand Mean					**3.43**	**A**

Presented in Table 2 are the item-by-item mean scores on library services available for marketing in the university libraries studied. From the Table, the result shows that items 1, 2, 4, 8 have mean scores of 3.63, 3.55, 3.53 and 3.51 respectively indicating strongly agree while items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 have mean scores of 3.29, 3.43, 3.39, 3.31, 3.27 and 3.43 respectively indicating agree. The grand mean of 3.43 indicates that the librarians agree that library services are available for marketing in the university libraries studied. This finding is in agreement with Umoh's (2017) findings which established that circulation/borrowing services, reference services, bibliographic verification services, Current Awareness Services (CAS), reprographic services, extension/ community services, technical services and inter-library co-operation are the various types of services provided by an academic library. Also, Eda and Ukubeyinje's (2019) findings revealed

that the library's marketable information-based services include reference, referral, circulation, bibliographic loan, Selective Information Dissemination (SDI), bibliographic data, abstract and indexing, tailored research and development, present knowledge, consultative services for readers and information literacy. Similarly, Joshua and Michael's (2020) result revealed that some of the library services which are highly available for marketing are reference services, indexing and abstracting services, internet access and Current Awareness Services (CAS).

Table 3: Strategies used for Marketing Information Resources and Library Services

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Exhibition and display of new arrivals	32	19	-	-	3.63	SA
2.	User orientation programmes	29	21	1	-	3.55	SA
3.	Flyers and posters	17	32	2	-	3.29	A
4.	Social media	27	24	-	-	3.53	SA
5.	Face to face interaction with the user community	24	25	2	-	3.43	A
6.	Institutional websites	24	23	4	-	3.39	A
7.	Library notice board	21	25	5	-	3.31	A
8.	Current Awareness Services	29	19	3	-	3.51	SA
9.	Conferences, seminars and workshops Selective Dissemination of Information	16	33	2	-	3.27	A
10.		22	29	-	-	3.43	A
	Grand Mean					**3.43**	**A**

Data analyzed in Table 3 revealed that the respondents strongly agree that strategies used for marketing information resources and library services are exhibition and display of new arrivals (3.63), user orientation programmes (3.55), social media (3.53) and Current Awareness Services (3.51). They also agree that flyers and posters (3.29), face to face interaction with the user community (3.43), institutional websites (3.39), conferences, seminars and workshops (3.27) and Selective Dissemination of Information (3.43) are strategies used for marketing information resources and library services in the university libraries studied. The grand mean of 3.43 shows that the respondents agree that these strategies are used for marketing information resources and

library services in the university libraries studied. The finding is in consonance with Adegoke (2015) who noted that current awareness service, exhibition and display, selective dissemination of information, bulletin boards, complaints/suggestion boxes, users' education courses, electronic bill boards, audio-visual services, online dissemination of information via the internet technology are strategies for marketing information resources and services in the library. Also Edewor, Okite-Amughoro, Osuchukwu and Egreajena's (2016) study revealed that library publications (memos, bulletins, and newsletter), orientation programs, websites, flyers and posters are key strategies used in the libraries studied in marketing library services. Similarly, Benson, Udo- Anyanwu and Onuoha (2016)'s study revealed that use of library notice board, face-to-face interaction with user community, seminar/workshop, use of institutions websites, networking among professional colleagues are the most dominated form of strategies used in marketing information products and services.

Table 4: Reasons for Marketing Information Resources and Library Services

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	To make potential and current customers aware of the services and products of the library	40	11	-	-	3.78	SA
2.	To identify the information needs of users	31	20	-	-	3.61	SA
3.	To achieve the objectives of the library	36	13	2	-	3.67	SA
4.	To promote use of the library	41	10	-	-	3.80	SA
5.	For libraries to remain connected with their customers	32	19	-	-	3.63	SA
6.	For libraries to survive in an increasingly competitive environment	30	21	-	-	3.59	SA
7.	To improve the image of the library	35	16	-	-	3.69	SA
	Grand Mean					**3.68**	SA

Presented in Table 4 are the item- by- item mean scores on the reasons for marketing information resources and library services in the university libraries studied. The result of the analysis in the Table shows that the respondents strongly agree that to make potential and current customers aware of the services and products of the library (3.78), to identify the information needs

of users (3.61), to achieve the objectives of the library (3.67), to promote use of the library (3.80), for libraries to remain connected with their customers (3.63), for libraries to survive in an increasingly competitive environment (3.59) and to improve the image of the library (3.69) are the reasons for marketing information resources and library services in the university libraries studied with a grand mean of 3.68. The finding confirms with the assertions of Garoufallou, Siatri, Zafeiriou and Balampanidou (2013), Kutu and Olajide (2018) and Ubogu (2021) as well as the findings of Joshua and Michael (2020).

Table 5: Constraints to Effective Marketing of Information Resources and Library Services

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	Inadequate funding	40	11	-	-	3.78	SA
2.	Inadequate ICT facilities	31	20	-	-	3.61	SA
3.	Inadequate information resources	36	13	2	-	3.67	SA
4.	Lack of training and poor knowledge of marketing tools	41	10	-	-	3.80	SA
5.	Irregular power supply	32	19	-	-	3.63	SA
6.	Inadequate knowledge of users' needs	30	21	-	-	3.59	SA
7.	Unstable Internet connectivity	35	16	-	-	3.69	SA
8.	Uncooperative staff attitude	19	26	6	-	3.25	A
9.	Increasing users' expectations	22	29	-	-	3.43	A
	Grand Mean					**3.50**	SA

Table 5 shows the item-by-item mean scores on the constraints to effective marketing of information resources and library services in the university libraries studied. The result of the analysis in the Table shows that the respondents strongly agree that inadequate funding (3.78), inadequate ICT facilities (3.61), inadequate information resources (3.67), lack of training and poor knowledge of marketing tools (3.80), irregular power supply (3.63) inadequate knowledge of users' needs (3.59) and unstable Internet connectivity (3.69) are constraints to effective marketing of information resources and library services in the university libraries studied. They also agree that uncooperative staff attitude (3.25) and increasing user expectations (3.43) are constraints to effective marketing of information resources and library services in the university libraries studied. The grand mean of 3.50 indicates that there are constraints to effective marketing of information

resources and library services in the university libraries studied. The finding is in tandem with the findings of Benson, Udo-Anyanwu and Onuoha (2016), Aderibigbe (2015) and Ukwoma (2014).

Conclusion

Marketing is very vital for libraries to make potential and current users aware of the resources and services of the library so as to increase use of the library as well as promote the image of the library. It was discovered that strategies employed by librarians in marketing information resources and library services include exhibition and display of new arrivals, user orientation programmes, flyers and posters, social media, face to face interaction with the user community, institutional websites and Current Awareness Services, conferences, seminars and workshops and Selective Dissemination of Information. This implies that for a university library to effectively market its resources and services, there is need to adopt several marketing strategies. It was also discovered that inadequate funding, inadequate ICT facilities, inadequate information resources, lack of training and poor knowledge of marketing tools, irregular power supply, inadequate knowledge of users' needs, unstable Internet connectivity, uncooperative staff attitude and increasing user expectations are constraints to effective marketing of information resources and library services. With these observed constraints, there is no way a university library will effectively market its resources and services if those constraints are not properly addressed by appropriate authorities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. For effective marketing of information resources, university library management should ensure that there are relevant, quality and current information resources in the library. This will go a long way in promoting the image of the library and increase patronage.

2. Government and the university management should adequately fund the university libraries to enable training of librarians on current trends in librarianship so as to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively market the services of the library.

3. University library management and the librarians should include user survey and outreach programmmes among strategies employed in marketing information resources and library services to enable them understand and identify the information needs of the users in order to satisfy the changing and varying information needs of the users.

4. University libraries and librarians should continue to market their information resources and library services to make the library users aware of the products and services of the library in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the library.

5. Government should assist university libraries through funding so that they can acquire relevant and current information resources and ICT facilities capable of enhancing marketing of information resources and library services. University library management should organize seminars and workshops for librarians on issues bordering on knowledge of marketing tools and strategies capable of equipping librarians with knowledge required for effective marketing of information resources and library services.

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