



## Marketing of Library and Information Services in Nigerian University Libraries: An Entrepreneurial Perspective

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### Abstract

This paper discussed the marketing of library and information services vis-à-vis entrepreneurial activities in the library with particular reference to the academic libraries. The information age, which revolutionized all human activities including the library and information services and also the ICT incursion made marketing of library and information services and the inclusion of entrepreneurial activities necessary if librarianship must thrive among its competitors in the business of human management and provision. Marketing concepts, with particular reference to the 7Ps in “marketing mix” are highlighted. The paper worked on secondary data using the Narrative Textual Case Study (NTCS) and some discussions with professional colleagues in the field of librarianship to draw some valid conclusions.

## Introduction

The university libraries in their position in the scheme of the activities and programmes of the universities were hitherto regarded as the pivot or midwife of all intellectual or academic activities. The libraries were entrusted with information sourcing, organization, conservation and dissemination to the entire user community. Since the dawn of the information age (variously referred to as the ‘knowledge age’, the ‘digital age’, the ‘computer/ICT age’ and the like), the role of information management which used to be the exclusive reserve of the libraries and librarians became embattled with other professionals who also found themselves in the business of information sourcing and provision (Nwakwuo, 2006). The 20th century ICT incursion made the situation more bizarre for the libraries and the librarians who now face the challenge of image retention and visibility. To this writer, perhaps of all innovations since the world began, the advent of the ICT era is the greatest of them all.

The ICT arrival made information provision some increasingly important commercial activities with new technologies and developments, thereby bringing together hitherto disparate activities in information supply, and this has led to a change in the roles of libraries and librarians (Edewor and Omosor, 2012). ICT introduced new innovations and new ideas in information sourcing, processing and dissemination: The innovation are changing dramatically, moves faster, relies on technologies and results in more intense competition. There is now an expanding tradeable information sector encompassing the supply of business and financial information, printing and publishing technical information, political information etc., notwithstanding the fact that these are not recognized in information statistics (Imarisha, 2022). There is an increase demand for more and better services without a corresponding increase in funding in all the various types of libraries. Some funding bodies of these libraries

surprisingly now want their libraries to generate revenue to ‘offset a proportion of their cost’ (Aina, Etim and Opara, 2016).

What about the competition posed by Google, Amazon, Wikipedia, Myspace, the Social media and in fact the entire internet, which are veritable sources of information (Noris, 2007, Ochogwu, 2007, Gupta and Savard (ND)). In a bid to create new ventures, confront challenges associated with the innovations and competitions in information provision and most especially in order to ensure the survival of libraries and librarians the need for information marketing and entrepreneurial activities emerged to help the library and information service professionals “manage better” (Dars and Karn, 2008).

Some areas of information marketing and entrepreneurial activities in library and information services that will be discussed in this work includes information brokerage services, database production and distribution, printing and publishing services, Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) Services, reprography and bindery services etc.

This study relied entirely on secondary sources of information. The research was carried out using a technique known as the narrative textual case study (NTCS). Data was gathered from a wide variety of sources including journals, research papers, and online sites. Additionally, a number of discussions with professionals working in the fields of librarianship and information and communications technology were also conducted.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is no longer news that libraries all over the world including academic libraries are witnessing low patronage and underutilization of information resources and services. This has been traced by many researchers to lack of or low marketing of their products and services. This is the position of Kaur & Rani (2007) and Carrington (2005), who lamented the huge cost of library resources with little utilization resulting in wastage of money, time, energy and space. Adegoke (2015) citing Carrington (2005) noted that “one of the problems or deficiencies faced by libraries is that of improper dissemination of library services to the target audience and that is one of the reasons for the low usage of library materials and facilities.

This study will finally attempt to analyse the existing situations in the academic libraries with a view to determine the reason for the near compulsory inclusion of marketing and entrepreneurial activities/services in the libraries. The challenges and the prospects of marketing of library and information services in the academic libraries will also be discussed.

The research will be used to catalog university libraries and locate services that may be offered for profit. The goal of this research is to better promote academic libraries' library and information resources by determining the best methods currently available. The goal of this study is to investigate the difficulties and potential solutions associated with promoting library and information services in university libraries.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***The Concept of Marketing***

There have been many different definitions of the concept of marketing by different contributors and authors. According to Kotler (1985) in Patil and Pradhan (2004), marketing is defined as “a social and managerial process by which individuals and group obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products of value and others”. The National Association of Marketing Teachers adopted what seems to be the first official definition of marketing in 1935 thus “marketing is the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer” (Gupta Savard, 2010). The American

Marketing Association (AMA) adopted the above definition for 50 years but revised in 1985 as “marketing consists of individuals and organizational activities that facilitate and expedite exchange relationships in a dynamic environment through the creation, servicing, distribution, promotion and pricing of goods, services and ideas”. According to same authors, this definition was again revised in 2004 as “marketing is an organizational function and a set of process for creating, communicating and delivering values to customers and for managing customers’ relationship in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders”.

Significant changes of focus can be noticed in the analysis of the three definitions above. The 2004 definition while still emphasizing on process, which is fundamental to marketing, shifted its focus on ‘value’ ‘managing customer relationship’ and ‘stakeholders’.

#### Application of Marketing Concepts in Library and Information Services (LIS)

According to Ihejirika and Ezeani (2016), “Marketin mix” is applied in marketing library and information services. Marketing mix here refers to the 4Ps – Product, Price, Place and Promotion, although Ihejirika and Ezeani extended theirs to 7Ps – Products/Services, Price, Place, Promotion, Participants, Physical evidence and Process.

The authors however agree that “Product” in Library and Information Services refers to services or general reference and information services offered by the libraries. Here the products/ services can be expanded to cover the creation, development and management of product and services. Supplementary services that add value to library and information services such as personal assistance, referral services, online database searches, document delivery and inter-library loan, housebound reader services and so on are all part of the product/services in the marketing mix. The libraries are expected to satisfy the information as well as social needs of their users by providing satisfactory level of products, which involves introducing new products, modifying existing products and eliminating products that no more add a significant value to the users.

Libraries can engage in the provision of bibliographic information, abstract and summaries of information, books, databases, journals, bulletins; these are tangible information while the product line includes the quality, reliable, speedy, and timely professional services. Pricing in library and information services is normally that of “time and effort the user spends in travelling to the library as well as the time and effort spent in searching for and examining library resources and cost of a forgone alternative the product offers” (Adegoke, 2015).

In library and information services, price is not only concern at the point of use, but need to be considered throughout the information industry value chain. Ihejirika and Ezeani (2016) posit that the concept of price constitutes two different types of value; the monetary price and the social price. According to the authors, “monetary price implies the payment of certain sum (by the users) and the social price refer to the additional efforts that the user must make in order to obtain access to a product”. This is an indication that price is a vital market mix in library and information services, which can be expressed in term of fees charged for certain services e.g. fines or membership fees, photocopying services, printing costs, scanning etc.

Place here refer to a location of information and that of the user. There is need for a distribution channel, inventory, transportation etc. to make the information available from its location at the point of creation to its use by the user. Ihejirika and Ezeani (2016) opined, the distribution of library product or services refer to ‘when’, ‘where’, and ‘how’. When refers to the time period in which information is provided to the right user. Where indicate location of the services and how refers to the type/channel of the distribution.

Promotion on its own involves the advertisement, personnel selling and public relation that the library and information service professional engaged in with the users in order to acknowledge the products. All efforts here are to encourage the user 'to respond either by buying or requesting further information or by filing the promotional material away for use the future' (Dhiman & Sharma, 2009). Other examples of promotion in the library include publicity, library orientation, user education etc. Participants refers to the library and information service professionals and paraprofessionals assistants or support staff, who play a part in library and information service delivery. All the human factors play a key role in the marketing of library products and services. The 'physical evidence' or 'environment refer to the environment (including the library building itself) where the library and information products/services are delivered that facilitate the performance and communication of the service.

Process is the procedure, mechanism and flow of activities by which the library and information products are acquired. In conclusion therefore, marketing approaches have become effective tool in the hands of today's library and information service worker to ensure effective and efficient information services provision.

### **Marketing in Library and Information Service and Entrepreneurship: the mix**

Marketing and entrepreneurship are two innovations in library and information services aimed at ensuring the survival and sustainability or effectiveness of modern libraries. Marketing is very essential in the libraries as it benefits both the users and the service providers, this time the librarians. Marketing elicits user's needs, reduces barriers to use and access, persuade and inform the users and carefully plan to satisfy the users". Marketing fundamental that it cannot be looked as a separate function in the library and information centres.

The entrepreneurial librarianship on the other hand refers to the idea of providing library and information services and products to meet users' needs in new and creative ways. Entrepreneurial librarianship provides a means to not only integrate business skills and activities particularly financial marketing and fund raising, but also to apply them towards a variety of goals from commercial enterprise to social or non-profit initiative (Edewor and Omosor, 2012).

### **Need for Marketing and Entrepreneurship in Library and Information Services in the Academic Libraries**

As have been discussed in the introductory part of this study, the need for marketing and entrepreneurial activities in the academic libraries cannot be over-emphasized. A lot of challenges have forced all libraries including academic and research libraries to embrace effective marketing and incorporate entrepreneurial activities in their services to ensure survival and sustainability of the libraries. Jestin & Parameswari (2002) listed the following reasons; (1) Libraries are no longer the only information service industries; (2) Libraries of all types have to compete with other organizations or departments for funds; (3) 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 events and real world issue; (4) Libraries have to market their products and services in order to improve the image of their libraries themselves; (5) Librarians have to change the perception of users and others towards them as being informed experts; (6) Librarians should be regarded as essential and valuable community resources; (7) Libraries depend on the support of people they serve for their survival; (8) Libraries are not visible; (9) Library users expect recognition, attention and appreciation for their individual information needs; (10) Effective marketing has been found to increase library

funds, increase usage of services, educate customers and non-customers, change perceptions and enhance the clout and reputation of the library and its staff.

With the above scenario, presented libraries and librarians therefore has no option than to embrace marketing and entrepreneurial activities in their services.

### **A Synopsis of the Entrepreneurial Activities/ Services in the Academic Libraries**

Ordinarily, entrepreneurship is the act of creating a business or businesses while building and scaling it to generate profit. Entrepreneurship also entails transferring and existing system into a profit making venture, like initiating social changes, creating an innovative product or presenting a new life-changing solution. An entrepreneur takes his/her career or dreams into his/her hands and leads it.

Udoh and Umoren (2016) describe entrepreneurship as “the willingness and recognition of the need to improve upon existing situation or condition by creatively using available resources and opportunities for self-development, economic, social and personal satisfaction and attainment of identified human and societal needs.

Drawing from above definition and the scenario that necessitated marketing in library and information services it is the opinion of this writer that entrepreneurial activities cannot be left out in the business of library and information services provision in this modern information age. Entrepreneurial librarianship is concerned with evolving initiatives or providing information services and products to meet user’ needs in new and creative ways. Entrepreneurship in library and information services not only integrates business skills particularly financial marketing and fund raising, but also to apply them towards a variety of goals from commercial enterprise to social or non-profit initiative (Edewor and Omosor, 2012).

The goal of every organization remains the actualization of the organizational goal/objectives and that of the individuals therein. The application of marketing concepts and entrepreneurial activities therefore are inseparable and valuable tools if the goals of efficient and effective information service delivery, which is the hallmark of the libraries (academic libraries in particular) as well as the individual goals of the library and information service professionals, which include that of self-actualization esteem and so on can be met.

Both in marketing of library and information science and application of entrepreneurial activities, the professional is expected to have the following skills; (1) Have the expert knowledge of the content of information resources, including the ability to critically evaluate and filter them; (2) Have specialized subject knowledge appropriate to the business of the organization; (3) Develop and manage convenient, accessible and cost effective information services that aligned with the strategic direction of the organization; (4) Provide excellent instruction and support for library and information service users; (5) Access information needs and designs and markets value-added information services and products to meet identified needs; (6) Use appropriate technology to acquire, organize and disseminate information; (7) Use appropriate business and management approaches to communicate the importance of information services to senior management; (8) Develop specialized information products for use inside or outside the organization by individual clients; (9) Evaluate the outcome of information and conducts research related to solution of information management problems; (10) Continually improve information services in response to changing needs (Etim, 2016).

These skills will in turn equip the librarian for effective involvement in any of the identified areas of entrepreneurial opportunities in library and information services, which includes but not limited to; (1) Book production, printing and publishing; (2) Bindery services; (3) Reprography services; (4) Bookshop; (5) Lamination of documents; (6) Virtual library

services; (7) Visual impaired services; (8) Book vendor; (9) Newspapers vendor; (10) Consultancy services; (11) Indexing and abstracting; (12) Organizing seminars, conferences and workshops

### **Challenges and Undertaking Entrepreneurial Opportunities by Library and Information Services Professionals**

For space constraints mere mention of some of the challenges militating against the effective implementation of entrepreneurial activities as enumerated by Eleonye & Uzuegbu (2013) will suffice; (1) Lack of adequate capital; (2) Lack of adequate socio-amenities; (3) Lack of entrepreneurial spirit; (4) Fear of competition and failure; (5) Lack of knowledge on how to interact with entities that make business succeed; (6) Lack of specific skills ; (7) Problem of generating compelling business ideas.

### **Conclusion**

There is no gainsaying at this point that the need for effective marketing and inclusion of entrepreneurial activities is essential for the growth and development of libraries and information centres and the practitioners alike. The level of marketing library and information services in any given library determine various other issues including: the patronage of users; sponsorship by the body or management; the visibility and the satisfaction of both the users and the practitioners.

Librarians and information scientist should be innovative, exploring new technologies and noble ideas in the relentless pursuit of excellence. They should embrace the entrepreneurial spirit. Nwokocha and Chima (2016) noted the librarians and entrepreneurs share certain characteristics including creativity, persistence and passion.... Several skills that librarianship can be put through entrepreneurship are numerous and should be explored by the librarians and information scientists in order to become self-sustaining and society impacting in the knowledge economy.

### **Recommendations**

Library and information service providers especially in the academic libraries should compulsorily acquire Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills in order to excel in the profession. They should also develop entrepreneurial culture and mind-set. Attendance to workshops, conferences and seminars are essential for the professional growth of serving professionals. Finally, and on a compulsory note, marketing skills, entrepreneurial skills.

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