Challenges and Strategies in Marketing Library Resources and Services: A Study of University Libraries in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the marketing of library materials and services by librarians to improve client utilisation in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria. The research was directed by two enquiries and employed a descriptive survey methodology. The population consisted 308 librarians from federal (111) and state (197) university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria. The complete population was utilised due to its manageability, so no sampling was conducted. Data were gathered with a standardised questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity was assessed by three experts, and Cronbach's Alpha produced an overall reliability coefficient of 0.83. The research topics were addressed using statistical mean and standard deviation. Findings suggest that librarians confront considerable challenges like inadequate money, lack of marketing skills (3.73±0.48), culture and linguistic hurdles (3.57±80), limited funded and resources (3.40±76). The strategies to address these obstacles encompass utilising free marketing tools, cultivating a culture of innovation, enhancing communication channels, involving marketing specialists, prioritising marketing activities, engaging stakeholders, integrating with course management systems, executing awareness campaigns, providing technology training, and developing multilingual resources. It was recommended that library management offer regular training for librarians in marketing strategies, digital tools, and user engagement techniques to address the skill gap and empower staff for effective outreach. Additionally, university administrations should formally incorporate library marketing into institutional development plans, allocate sufficient funding, and acknowledge marketing as a fundamental library function. The findings enhance understanding by identifying obstacles to effective library marketing and suggesting pragmatic strategies for augmenting customer involvement in university branch libraries.

Keywords: Library resources, library services, marketing, challenges and strategies

Introduction

University branch libraries in South-South Nigeria serve a crucial role in supporting academic activities by offering access to information resources and services. However, despite their value, these libraries confront hurdles in properly marketing their offerings to promote client usage. A study by Salami (2014) noted that limited financing, lack of equipment, and librarians' reluctance to engage in marketing efforts impede the promotion of library services in university libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. Similarly, Farouk (2017) cited low patronage, insufficient money, and inadequate institutional support as important issues hampering the marketing of information resources and services at federal university libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria. These problems underline the necessity for a comprehensive examination into the barriers experienced by librarians in marketing library materials and services in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Effective marketing tactics are vital for boosting awareness and utilization of library resources and services. Adeleke (2020) stressed the importance of online marketing methods in promoting library resources and services in Nigeria, saying that librarians must acquire the essential skills to effectively promote library resources online. Additionally, Otuu and Unegbu (2022) discovered that marketing techniques significantly influenced the utilisation of library information services in university libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria. Their analysis found that the 'Seven Ps' marketing tactics were crucial in improving the utilisation of library information services. These findings illustrate the potential impact of well-implemented marketing tactics on client utilisation and the overall effectiveness of library services.

The divergence between service supply and user involvement has made it important to explore not just the problems librarians encounter in marketing but also the potential solutions that can be adapted to this distinct educational and socio-cultural setting. Against this backdrop, this study analyses the specific difficulties encountered by librarians in efficiently marketing library resources and services at university branch libraries across South-South Nigeria. It also aims to suggest actionable techniques that can be taken to address these difficulties and boost user engagement. Understanding these limitations is especially crucial in locations where libraries often operate under tough conditions—ranging from budget shortages to infrastructure decay—yet are expected to achieve the same academic requirements as their better-equipped counterparts

in urban centers. Moreover, as user expectations shift and digital information becomes increasingly prominent, the need for libraries to rebrand and reposition themselves has never been more critical. Therefore, this study is both contemporary and important, intending to give practical insights into how marketing strategies in university branch libraries may be improved to raise client usage, enhance the library's exposure, and reaffirm its role as an indispensable academic partner.

Problem Statement

In recent years, university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria have suffered with poor patronage and underutilization of their resources and services, despite major investments in information materials and digital infrastructure. This underutilization is partly attributable to inefficient marketing methods, which result in a lack of awareness among students, teachers, and other potential users about the full range of resources and services available. Many customers either do not know what the library offers or do not see its relevance to their academic and research needs. As libraries confront increased competition from online information sources, it has become vital for them to actively market their value and services to stay integral to the academic environment. However, librarians often lack the requisite skills, resources, or institutional backing to carry out efficient marketing initiatives, leading to a growing mismatch between library services and user involvement.

This predicament is further aggravated by systemic obstacles such as inadequate budget, poor technical infrastructure, cultural and communication impediments, and reluctance to change within library management systems. These constraints limit the ability of librarians to adopt novel ways to marketing and user outreach. As a result, the potential of university branch libraries to support teaching, learning, and research is not completely realized. Given this background, there is a pressing need to investigate the specific obstacles faced by librarians in marketing library resources and services, as well as to propose practical solutions that might be taken to overcome these hurdles. This study, therefore, intends to analyze these difficulties in detail and provide actionable insights to boost client usage and assure the continued relevance of academic libraries in the region.

Objectives

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. find out the challenges encountered by librarians in marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria

2. find out the strategies for overcoming the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions are raised to guide the study.

1. What are the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively promoting library resources and services for enhanced client usage in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria?

2. What are the strategies for overcoming the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively promoting library resources and services for enhanced client usage in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Literature Review

Marketing in academic libraries entails promoting library materials and services to enhance awareness and utilisation among the target audience. According to Salami (2014), exhibitions, displays of new items, and staff friendliness are common marketing strategies implemented in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. However, the survey also recognised obstacles such as inadequate money, lack of facilities, and librarians' reluctance to engage in marketing activities as impediments to effective marketing. Similarly, Farouk (2017) claimed that federal university libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria experience issues in marketing information resources and services due to low patronage, insufficient budgets, and poor institutional support. These studies underline the necessity for tackling the constraints impeding effective marketing in university libraries.

The implementation of internet marketing tactics has been suggested as a potential approach to boost the promotion of library resources and services. Adeleke (2020) stressed the importance of online marketing methods in promoting library resources and services in Nigeria, saying that librarians must acquire the essential skills to effectively promote library resources online. Otuu and Unegbu (2022) discovered that marketing techniques significantly influenced the utilisation of library information services in university libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria. Their analysis found that the 'Seven Ps' marketing tactics were crucial in improving the utilisation of library information services. These findings imply that the inclusion of internet marketing methods can improve the visibility and consumption of library resources and services.

In addition to online marketing efforts, traditional marketing techniques continue to play a role in promoting library resources and services. Salami (2014) found that exhibitions, displays of new materials, and staff friendliness are regularly employed marketing methods in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. However, the survey also recognised obstacles such as inadequate money, lack of facilities, and librarians' reluctance to engage in marketing activities as impediments to effective marketing. Farouk (2017) has noted comparable difficulties in federal university libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria, including poor patronage, limited budget, and inadequate institutional support. These studies underline the necessity for addressing both traditional and online marketing tactics to promote the promotion of library resources and services.

The integration of marketing tactics into the library's goal and objectives is vital for their efficacy. Adeleke (2020) underlined the necessity of integrating marketing efforts with the library's goal and objectives to ensure that marketing strategies are focused, consistent, and connected with the overall mission. Salami (2014) also underlined the necessity for libraries to build complete marketing plans that include an analysis of the target audience, explicit goals and objectives, specific marketing tactics, and mechanisms for measuring success. By taking a strategic strategy, libraries can ensure that their marketing initiatives are effective in promoting awareness and utilization of library resources and services.

Furthermore, the involvement of librarians in implementing marketing strategies is important for their success. Farouk (2017) emphasised that librarians must be proactive in promoting library materials and services to boost awareness and utilisation among the target population. Salami

(2014) also stressed the need of librarians' involvement in marketing operations, arguing that their engagement is vital for the success of marketing endeavours. By equipping librarians with the required skills and information, libraries may boost the effectiveness of their marketing initiatives and improve client utilisation.

Nowrin, Mostofa and Akter (2020) investigated potential and problems of marketing in private university libraries in Bangladesh and offered a model plan. Data were acquired utilising surveys and interviews with heads of 15 university libraries. Key obstacles highlighted included weak infrastructure, unqualified people, and financial issues. Benson, Udo-Anyanwu and studied marketing techniques for library services at tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria, utilising surveys from 100 library professionals. Findings found common techniques include notice boards, workshops, and websites, with difficulties including insufficient funding and ICT awareness. Edewor et al. (2016) analysed how selected African university libraries sell their services and the issues associated. Using a survey and purposive sample of 20 universities, it highlighted lack of marketing plans, inadequate facilities, and money as important difficulties. It advised user-focused marketing methods. Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) explored issues librarians in South-South Nigeria encounter when using social media to promote library services. With 304 librarians questioned, main issues mentioned were privacy concerns, low network connectivity, and insufficient financing.

The literature reveals that academic libraries in Nigeria confront obstacles in efficiently marketing their resources and services due to reasons such as low financing, lack of facilities, and librarians' reluctance to engage in marketing initiatives. However, the use of online marketing tactics, integration of marketing efforts with the library's goal and objectives, and active involvement of librarians in marketing operations can boost the promotion of library resources and services. Addressing these variables is vital for raising awareness and consumption of library resources and services, hence improving client usage and the overall efficacy of academic libraries

Theoretical Framework: Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, developed by Everett M. Rogers in 1962, is one of the most suited theoretical frameworks for this investigation. The theory explains how new ideas, technology, or behaviours spread within a social system throughout time. It specifies five kinds of adopters' innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards and outlines important criteria driving adoption, including relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The theory highlights the role of communication channels and social systems in influencing how quickly and successfully innovations are accepted. In organizational environments, the decision-making process, cultural dynamics, and willingness for change all play crucial roles in determining the effectiveness of innovation diffusion.

In the context of this study, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory is particularly significant as it helps explain the obstacles experienced by librarians in adopting and executing effective marketing tactics in university branch libraries. Many of the difficulties identified such as unwillingness to change, lack of marketing skills, limited technology capabilities, and insufficient institutional support reflect the characteristics of late adopters or laggards within the diffusion model. Furthermore, the theory underlines the importance of training, communication, and leadership in fostering innovation, which coincides with the study's findings that recommend tactics including staff training, stakeholder involvement, and integration of marketing into institutional frameworks. By applying this theory, the study underlines the necessity for a thoughtful and supportive strategy to adopting and sustaining marketing innovations in university libraries, ultimately leading to better client usage and service visibility.

Methodology

The study utilised a descriptive research design and was carried out in South-South Nigeria. The population of the study was 308 librarians in federal (111) and state (197) university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria. Given the relatively modest size of the librarian's population containing a total of 308 across the twenty-three universities (federal 111 and state 197), the researcher judged it necessary to use all of them. The instruments for data collection were two observational checklist, one questionnaire and one interview. A questionnaire tailored with the aims of the study was validated by three specialists. To establish internal consistency of the

questionnaire, the questionnaire was trial tested on 30 librarians from South-East Nigeria who did not compose the study sample but believed to have similar characteristics to the participants under study. The reliability index of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach Alpha technique and coefficient 0.82 was found suggesting that the instrument was dependable 0.83. Data was collected by the researcher with the help of research assistants. Three hundred and eight (308) questionnaires were disseminated to the respondents, and the research team promptly retrieved the completed copies, out of the three hundred and eight (308) questionnaires distributed, two hundred and seventy-eight (278) were returned and completely filled, making 90% of the total questionnaire (returned rate). The researcher performed the interview with the university librarians of all the universities utilising the interview schedule. Data collected was examined using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation to address the study questions.

Research Question 1: What are the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively promoting library resources and services for enhanced client usage in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Responses of Respondent on Barriers Encountered by Librarians in Effectively Marketing Library Resources and Services for Enhanced Client Usage

S/N	Item Statement	school Ownership				Overall		R	D
		Federal		Federal					
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Limited budget and resources	3.52	.73	3.34	.77	3.40	.76	3rd	A
2	Lack of marketing skills	3.69	.47	3.76	.48	3.73	.48	1st	A
3	Low awareness among users	3.17	.97	3.23	.91	3.21	.93	6th	A
4	Competition with digital resources	3.26	.93	3.10	.98	3.16	.97	7th	A
5	Resistance to change	3.15	.97	3.01	1.00	3.06	.99	8th	A
6	Time constraints	3.31	.82	3.31	.71	3.31	.75	4th	A
7	Lack of institutional support	2.78	1.08	2.96	.93	2.90	.99	10th	A
8	Technological barriers	2.88	1.07	2.96	1.10	2.93	1.09	9th	A
9	Communication gaps	3.35	.91	3.29	.92	3.31	.91	4th	A
10	Cultural and language barriers	3.68	.71	3.51	.85	3.57	.80	2nd	A
	Cluster mean	3.28	.79	3.24	.70	3.26	.51		A

Key: SA = Strongly Agree,   A = Agree, D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

Results presented in Table 1 show the mean and standard deviations of barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage using the criterion mean of 2.50 for level of acceptance. The analysis identified that all the items were accepted as the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage. More so, the cluster mean of 3.24 indicated that in aggregate the respondents are in affirmation that these items are the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage. The standard deviations of the 10 items ranged from .48-1.09 indicating that the respondents were homogeneous in their response.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies for overcoming the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively promoting library resources and services for enhanced client usage in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Responses of Respondent on Strategies of Overcoming the Barriers Encountered by Librarians in Effectively Marketing Library Resources and Services for Enhanced Client Usage

S/N	Item Statement	School Ownership				Overall		R	D
		Federal		**Federal**					
		Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**		
1	Leveraging free and low-cost marketing tools	3.66	.65	3.53	.76	3.58	.72	1st	A
2	Hiring marketing experts	3.47	.84	3.40	.82	3.42	.83	4th	A
3	Conducting awareness campaigns	3.34	.83	3.28	.94	3.31	.90	8th	A
4	Integrating with course management systems	3.43	.79	3.26	.96	3.32	.90	7th	A
5	Fostering a culture of innovation	3.57	.65	3.56	.63	3.56	.64	2nd	A
6	Prioritizing marketing tasks	3.30	.77	3.40	.71	3.36	.73	5th	A
7	Engaging stakeholders	3.42	.74	3.31	.76	3.35	.75	6th	A
8	Investing in technology training	3.28	.83	3.15	.94	3.20	.90	9th	A
9	Improve communication channels	3.52	.66	3.56	.67	3.54	.66	3rd	A
10	Creating multilingual resources	3.10	1.00	3.06	1.07	3.08	1.04	10th	A
	Cluster mean	3.41	.61	3.35	.73	3.37	.56		A

Results presented in Table 13 show the mean and standard deviations of strategies of overcoming the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage. Using the criterion mean of 2.50 for level of acceptance. The analysis identified that all the items were accepted as the strategies of overcoming the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage. More so, the cluster mean of 3.37 indicated that in aggregate the respondents are in affirmation that these items are the strategies of overcoming the barriers encountered by librarians in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage. The standard deviations of the 10 items ranged from .57-1.16 indicating that the respondents were homogeneous in their response.

Discussion

Barriers Encountered by Librarians in Effectively Marketing Library Resources and Services for Enhanced Client Usage

Librarians in university branch libraries across South-South Nigeria encounter a broad range of barriers that restrict their capacity to effectively market library resources and services. One key difficulty is the dearth of marketing abilities among library professionals, which arises from the absence of marketing components in traditional library science curriculum. Many librarians are trained primarily in technical and administrative responsibilities, not in promotional or outreach methods, resulting to a skills gap that hinders user engagement. This correlates with findings of Salami (2014), who found librarians' unwillingness to engage in marketing activities as a significant impediment to effective marketing in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. Additionally, cultural and language hurdles impede contact with people from varied backgrounds, particularly in a region as ethnically and linguistically diverse as South-South Nigeria.

Financial limits are another key concern; libraries operate under low budgets, which make it impossible to invest in marketing materials, technologies, or training. These findings are congruent with those of Nowrin, Mostofa, and Akter (2020), who found that inadequate infrastructure, inadequately qualified staff, and lack of decision-making capacity further undermine marketing initiatives in university libraries. Similarly, Farouk (2017) noted insufficient

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money and inadequate institutional support as important obstacles hampering the marketing of information resources and services at federal university libraries in the North-West zone of Nigeria. Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) also cited low financing as a critical barrier for librarians in South-South Nigeria when using social media to promote library services.

Moreover, librarians suffer time limits due to the pressure of fulfilling several responsibilities within under-resourced institutions, leaving little room for focused marketing campaigns. There are also communication gaps among library teams and between staff and consumers, resulting to poor information transmission. The low degree of user awareness of library services is aggravated by increased competition from digital information platforms such as Google Scholar and open-access databases, which many students choose due to ease of access. This competition with digital resources reflects findings by Edewor et al. (2016), who analysed how selected African university libraries sell their services and identified inadequate infrastructure as a major concern.

Resistance to change among library workers, especially those accustomed to traditional service patterns, provides additional difficulty in implementing novel marketing techniques and approaches. Additionally, technological hurdles, such as poor internet infrastructure and lack of up-to-date digital tools, impede the ability to apply digital marketing. Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) verified this conclusion in their study, which found low network connection as a significant impediment for librarians using social media to promote library services. The lack of institutional support, including weak policies and administrative backing, further demoralizes people and inhibits strategic ambitions. Benson, Udo-Anyanwu and colleagues discovered comparable difficulties, including insufficient funding and limited ICT awareness, which impacted marketing strategies in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. Omeluzor and Oyovwe-Tinuoye (2019) noted similar difficulties, noting that insufficient training, resistance to innovation, and institutional neglect are prevalent impediments.

Strategies of Overcoming the Barriers Encountered by Librarians in Effectively Marketing Library Resources and Services for Enhanced Client Usage

To address the aforementioned problems, numerous effective solutions have been discovered that can enable librarians to improve the visibility and consumption of library resources and services. A crucial tactic is the use of low-cost or free marketing techniques, such as social media platforms,

email campaigns, and library websites, which can reach a broad audience without significant financial expenditure. This approach is endorsed by Adeleke (2020), who underlined the importance of online marketing methods in promoting library resources and services in Nigeria and observed that librarians must acquire the essential skills to effectively sell library resources online.

Libraries can also encourage a culture of innovation by promoting experimentation with new technologies and outreach approaches. Strengthening internal and external communication is crucial—this includes greater collaboration among staff and more direct interaction with consumers through feedback channels. Another practical option is engaging with marketing experts, either through partnerships with university communication departments or through capacity-building seminars. Prioritizing marketing duties and assigning specific roles ensures that promotional actions are not ignored. These tactics accord with recommendations of Odung and Agungi (2023), who underlined that proactive marketing is vital for enhancing library relevance and visibility in today's digital age. Additional tactics include merging marketing efforts with academic systems, such as embedding library resources in course management platforms to guarantee students connect with library tools during their learning process. This integration fits with the findings of Otuu and Unegbu (2022), who observed that marketing tactics strongly influenced the utilisation of library information services in university libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria. Their analysis found that the 'Seven Ps' marketing tactics were crucial in improving the utilisation of library information services.

Libraries should also run awareness campaigns—both physical (e.g., orientations, posters) and digital (e.g., social media content, webinars)—to increase user knowledge and access. This strategy is confirmed by Salami (2014), who observed that exhibitions, displays of new items, and staff friendliness are regularly employed marketing strategies in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. Equipping staff with technology training is vital for navigating modern marketing platforms efficiently, overcoming the technological challenges mentioned by Bakporhonor and Olise (2015) in their research of social media use for library service promotion.

Moreover, establishing multilingual resources can overcome cultural and language barriers, making services more accessible to all users. Edewor et al. (2016) proposed user-focused marketing techniques to overcome obstacles in African university libraries, highlighting the significance of personalising marketing approaches to fit individual user needs. Long-term, the

adoption of a comprehensive marketing plan—one that resonates with the library's mission, sets quantifiable targets, and includes an evaluation framework—is crucial for sustainable success. Adeleke (2020) underlined the necessity of integrating marketing efforts with the library's goal and objectives to ensure that marketing strategies are focused, consistent, and effective. Garoufallou et al. (2013) underline that strategic planning is the foundation of good library marketing, ensuring that activities are both focused and impactful.

In conclusion, while the constraints are large, they are not insurmountable; via a mix of strategic planning, stakeholder involvement, and institutional support, libraries can recast themselves as vital to academic life and raise client utilisation significantly. The integration of both traditional marketing techniques, as highlighted by Salami (2014), and innovative online strategies, as emphasized by Adeleke (2020), can provide a comprehensive approach to enhancing the promotion of library resources and services in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is obvious that librarians in university branch libraries in South-South Nigeria confront various challenges in effectively marketing library resources and services for enhanced client usage. These problems include lack of marketing skills, limited funds, aversion to change, inadequate technological infrastructure, and low user awareness, all of which hinder the visibility and consumption of library offerings. Despite these difficulties, the study also suggests that librarians can take strategic tactics such as using low-cost digital tools, boosting communication, conducting awareness campaigns, and aligning marketing activities with institutional goals to overcome these challenges. Addressing these limitations is vital to boosting user engagement and ensuring that libraries stay relevant and influential in the contemporary academic setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. Library management should provide regular training for librarians in marketing strategies, digital tools, and user engagement techniques to bridge the skill gap and empower staff for effective outreach.
2. University administrations should formally integrate library marketing into institutional development plans, provide adequate funding, and recognize marketing as a core library function.
3. Libraries should implement targeted outreach initiatives, including multilingual resources and integrated marketing within academic programs, to increase awareness and relevance among diverse user groups.

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