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## Marketing Library and Information Services in Nigeria

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### Abstract

In a rapidly changing world, the perception to adapt to change is inexplicable and a constant as well. There is virtually the possibility of upturning many assumptions such like the issue of marketing library information services (LIS) which many libraries/librarians deemed to be unsellable. The scope of marketing in itself is evolving and portray different connotations; to different personalities. The marketing of LIS is an ongoing project determined to give the customer a place of pride in terms of providing much needed satisfaction. This is because the whole essence of library and information set up is to serve the clientele also referred to as the king, or the master. Most library staff of developing countries have low compliance level to change or innovation especially as it pertains to ICT and use of modern gadgets in performing their duties. All these could be linked to the lack of skills/ knowledge needed to handle the sophisticated facilities. There's no doubt that some of the Librarians are well equipped in terms of ICT compliance level, but there is urgent need to train vast majority of the others who are lagging behind.

### Keywords

Academic Libraries, Information Service, Marketing Strategies, Library Services,

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## Introduction

At the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there lay a new awakening (Chandratre & Chandratre, 2015) to the way of doing things differently from the last century. Also Staff (2010), opines that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is faced with numerous challenges on one hand while on the other hand, humans strive to arrive at safer, more democratic, more prosperous and more equitable world. Needless to say that libraries and information centers are equally facing a time of unprecedented change and challenges (Gupta, 2004). The libraries and librarians, who are considered as gate keeper of knowledge (Chandratre & Chandratre 2010), remain the veritable solution to positively influence the managerial gear to meet information needs of the community, the nation and the world at large. In today's world, several professions and vocations exercise creation of wealth and profit. Hitherto the same cannot be mentioned of librarians until recently. Gupta (2014), suggests that marketing concept itself is changing and has different meaning for different people. According to him, there has been an increasing procedure on libraries to mobilize resources and become self-reliant. The drive to become merchants is ever rising as there has become a paradigmshift from mere customer or clientele satisfaction, to being reactive to proactive. Thus the principle of marketing library and information services (LIS) has gradually snowballed from charity to commercial oriented services providers. This paper focuses on the perception of librarians (LIS) as of now and whether it is profit driven and what the marketing entails as well as to decipher if LIS is difficult to commercialize or not.

## What is marketing?

By and large, there seems to be a little confusion to what is considered marketing. Akinnawo (2018), describes marketing as a process by which individuals or groups obtain what they need by creating, offering and exchanging products and services with others. Marketing may also imply assuming the library as a business, and in the process sell commodities to consumers (Dike, 2009). Similarly Ibrahim (2010), defines marketing as processthat can satisfy the needs of c7ustomer.Thus, it implies sales rather than customer satisfaction? However, only a handful of LIS workers have capitalize on full potentials of marketing (Gupta, 2004). A veritable tool to understand what marketing entails are as follows:

- Marketing in libraries is an organization with wide philosophy
- Marketing implies management in services delivery.
- Marketing put people to task
- Marketing is not tied to a few group alone, but involves all and sundry
- Marketing is not merely advertising but a subset of the whole.
- Marketing is not selling
- Marketing is open-ended and never really ends

Gupta (2004), categorized marketing concept into four groups:

- 1 Marketing as a set of techniques. He viewed marketing as an organisation with see philosophy The whole essence begins with market research, analysis of needs and with preferences of the user community.
- 2 Marketing as a philosophy: Here the user/customer is the initiator of every library activity. Thus the goal is to satisfy the customer often referred to as the king and consequently the focal point of the library( Gupta, 2004 )

- 3 Marketing as an approach: the view is not for creation of a new department and engagement of new staff, rather a team work of all including top managers to frontliners
- 4 Customer-Driven marketing: This imply an in-depth understanding greater intimacy and mutual trust among library workers and the users.

### **Why Market Library and Information Services?**

Renborg (1997) reported that ‘marketing ‘ is not new to libraries, but that it is as old as modern librarianship and the origin of marketing dates back in the 1870’s. One other fact however shows that librarianship is experiencing rapid changes (Chandratre & Chandratre 2015). Various internal and external facts are reshaping the roles of libraries. The under listed factors are responsible for initiation of marketing in LIS.

- a. the technology revolution
- b. the information explosion (rapid growth of reading materials)
- c. Escalating library cost/budget cost
- d. increased user based services
- e. networking demands/complexity in information requirement
- f. Reading habits among people decline due to factors like the advertisement on televisions, internet and mobile phones

### **Librarians and Marketing**

Gupta (2004) States that librarians deals with important and strategic resources otherwise known as concept and that as a practice, it is still unknown to many library and information personnel (Chandratre and Chandratre, 2015). Some LIS professionals feel that marketing of library resources is somehow inappropriate for public services institution and see no room for such practice in a not-for-profit profession like librarianship. A few other information services managers feel that marketing is inimical to the nature of their activities. But with increased competition in the world of information, marketing of LIS is therefore a factor for survival (Gupta, 2004). At the same time, there is a misconception that promotional activities alone constitute marketing.

Gupta, (2004) also argued that many changes have occurred in marketing of library and information services with the passage of time. Freeman amd Katez (1978) documented that most libraries and librarians started observing marketing during the early 1970s. They opined that the focus of the libraries were on users' needs, user training and economics of practitioner’s account. Tucci (1988) similarly noted that the breed of libraries marketing services were thriving in the 1978-1988 era but no one took the advantage of such opportunities. In other words, there was clear vintage position for marketing of LIS, but no political will not take on the golden potential. The whole essence of library and information is hooked to service delivery, hence building reputable relationship with the customer ‘the King’ is key (Besant & Sharp,2000), engaging in internal marketing (Dworkin, 2003), building trust and customer loyalty.

## Means adopted by Libraries in Marketing Library and Information Services

To effectively market LIS in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the libraries and all its stake holders must embark upon designing information services and resources that would bring satisfaction to clientele or customers (Horsfall, 2020). However, the implementation of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the library depends largely on librarians attitude towards it (Adekunle *et al.*, 2007). The automation of the library certainly provides a platform that would enhance the library staff job efficiency and reduce drudgery. But it is a known fact that attitudes tends to affect behaviours and it is an aspect that is most considered in managing staff especially when it comes to change and innovation (Spacey and Mury, 2004). It is regrettable that the technological change is posing a particular challenge to librarians in developing countries (Horsfall, 2020). Ramzan (2004) reported that librarians in developed countries adapt quickly to modern technology, but the same cannot be said for most of the librarians in developing countries. This has direct link with poor knowledge of ICT and unnecessary phobia for machines and computers. Similar projections were made concerning lack of knowledge on ICT by library workers of developing countries (Mohamed *et al.*, 1992). Khan (1995); Mohmood (1999). Horsfall (2000) respectively, observed that training and knowledge update of library officer are crucial to erasing the fear factor, and non-compliant nature of library staff in developing countries.

## Conclusion

Traditional libraries/librarians hold the creed that LIS are not commercial properties and have their justification for their thoughts. And because, nothing remains static forever, such values have been swept aside with the advent of ICT in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both libraries and library officers are now functioning under this new dispensation. The new framework had reordered proceeding in service delivery in information handling and management. The use of ICT in developing country has some draw backs such as lack of skill, and phobia for innovative machines. But consistent training and retraining of library staff, will definitely bridge the gap between them and their counterparts overseas.

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