



## **Marketing of Information Resources and Services in Special Libraries in Nigeria: Opportunities and Challenges**

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### **Abstract**

*Special libraries are currently experiencing changes in the new information age, due to rapidly changing media technologies, increasing users' preferences and expectations. These necessitate special libraries to adopt marketing approaches in order to reorient themselves. This study therefore, investigate the various opportunities of marketing special libraries as well as the challenges that hinder effective marketing of special library services in Nigeria. Qualitative research methodology was employed for the study. The participants chosen for this study were heads librarians in 7 special libraries studied. Interview method was also used as the data collection instrument, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected using coding system. The findings revealed that the major challenges that hinder effective marketing of library services are; Lack of Appropriate recognition, attention and appreciation of the library by management of their parent organization, lack of electronic and telecommunication resources and services, lack professional librarians lack of marketing skills, outdated information resources, inadequate fund etc. The opportunities of marketing special libraries as reported in the study, the librarians are able to understand clients needs, plan service provision, promote the available services and deliver them efficiently and effectively. Based on the findings in this study, it is concludes that, despite the challenges faced by the special libraries, the use of marketing serves as the tools for proper provision of information products and services in the libraries, it helps in creating awareness of library information products and services for optimum use, collaboration and interaction between information providers and patrons. Marketing also provides the avenue through which special libraries promotes there valuable benefits to there users.*

**Keywords:** Marketing, Marketing information, Opportunities of marketing, Special library.

### **Introduction**

Libraries are the store house of knowledge and information, which collectively act as the driving force for the progressive development of nations. There are different types of libraries, these libraries are of various types namely; public, special, school and academic libraries and each performs different kinds of functions to meet the needs of their users. (Waral, 2020) Several types of libraries exist among which is the special library that is established by government agencies, ministries, parastatal, departments, organizations, companies, and business firms with the purpose of providing specialized information aimed at supporting the aims and objectives of the parent bodies. The role of special libraries is very closely related to their institutional activities, and is therefore mainly focused on making knowledge and expertise available to further the set goals of their parent bodies (Osebequen, Wisdom, and



Beatice, 2018). Special librarians are compelled to use new skills and strategies in order to change, survive and continue to compete in the world of virtual information. Radical change is necessary to restructure traditional libraries into knowledge centers which will be recognized for supporting competitive advantage and strategic decision making.

Information is a critical resource in organizational management and organizations use huge amount of information to enable solve their daily problems. The problems organizations are faced with may be managerial, administrative or technical but no matter the nature of the problems, they can be managed properly if relevant information is provided to them at the right time and in the right form. Information is not just relevant in the personal development of individuals but also in increasing the viability of organizations Ebubechukwu, and Udeh, (2018)

Madu, and Ajayi (2022) define library marketing as an intentional innovative and sustained method of promoting library services and resources anchored on investigative approach that understands the needs and preferences of users driven by entrepreneurship on the part of library managers and indeed library personnel of any given library. Bhatt and GUPTA (2018) Marketing plays an important role between products and related users through the application of different marketing techniques, such as products and service-oriented programs, book talks, book exhibition, study circle, and use of social media, etc. Thus, marketing tools and techniques play a vital and pivotal role in the identification, the anticipation of user needs and dissemination the same to the end-users. The present paper is an attempt to study the challenges and opportunities of marketing of information resources and services in special libraries in Nigeria.

### **Statement of Problem**

The core idea behind marketing special library marketing is to present the library as an indispensable part of its parent organization. This is why marketing serves as an engine room of all special libraries. With the modern days automated library and marketing, special libraries provide information resources and services that are considered current, accurate, relevant, customized and cost efficient to employees for maximum productivity and informed management decisions that will enhance the competitive advantage of their organizations and ultimately influence the realization of set goals and objectives.

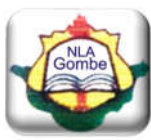
Hence the existence of special libraries is being challenged. This is because special library users sometimes do not know the existence of the relevant resources and services available in the library. It is also observed that one of the deficiencies of many special libraries in Nigeria is their inability to project their resources and services to their user communities. Although some previous studies such as that of Adoma, (2021) in support, opined that there is under utilization of library resources which can be attributed to factors such as lack of knowledge of available resources, lack of training and knowledge of marketing tools and techniques, lack of support to librarians in information provision resulting to wastage of time, energy and space of the libraries and librarians. To ensure maximum utilization of library resources, there is the need for librarians to adopt and implement marketing activities for promotion and use of their resources and services.

### **Objectives of the study**

The major objective of the study is to find out the Opportunities and Challenges of Marketing information resources and services in special libraries in Nigeria:

And the specific objectives are to:

1. Identity the opportunities of marketing special libraries in Nigeria.



2. Investigate the challenges that hinder effective marketing of special library services in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the opportunities of marketing special libraries in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges that hinder effective marketing of special library services in Nigeria?

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **The concept of marketing**

Marketing is regarded as managerial tool that is assisting libraries to face challenges now and in the future. Marketing play a very vital role in creating awareness for library and information products and services (Olorunfemi and Ipadeola, 2018). Marketing in case of libraries is necessary to offer benefits to users' want, reduce barriers to use and access, persuade and inform the users, and carefully plan to satisfy users' needs effectively. Marketing is so basic that it cannot be considered a separate function within the library. Marketing is a central dimension of the entire library. It is the entirety of the library's operations and services seen from a point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer's point of view." Gupta and Savard, 2010) in Olorunfemi and Ipadeola, (2018)

The aim of marketing is informing the users (active and potential) of the multiplicity of services that a Library has provided (Kumar, 2017). Yi (2016) cited by Onwuekwe(2022) stress that, librarians can use personal contacts, circulars, memos, telephone calls, meetings, direct mailing, displays, talks, newsletters, library tours and leaflets, websites, podcasts, blogs and Web applications to promote their products and services. In line with the above Dantus and Park, (2018) maintains that, Marketing tools such as the website, emails, bookmarks, posters, flyer, table tents, and social media are widely used among Libraries in order to extend outreach efforts. Marketing of information products and services required enough effort, this is to build users confidence, and to get high percentage of patronage, and to ensure effective services delivery in the library by satisfying the customers' information need and to successfully achieved the library set goal (Onwuekwe,2022).

Marketing library and information service is an established sub-set of management practices which identifies customer wants and needs and meets those needs within the resources of the organization. Janse and Van Vliet (2020) in their study stated things to consider when working in marketing to includes target market analysis, reaching target audience, differentiation, problem-solving by customer service, Collaborations.

Marketing of library and information services involves creating awareness of the library's' existing and new information and services to library users. 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 (Osinulu, *et al* (2018)

Akinnawo (2018) Marketing is the process by which individuals or groups obtain what they need by creating, offering and exchanging products and services. Marketing in its rapid development has widened its meaning and scope to cover a larger sense with a wider course of activity, many authors have looked at marketing of library and information services in different ways and have arrived at similar meaning. The library is a service organization and marketing of library services is crucial in information handling and management because of its dynamic nature. Marketing is a way of communicating value in an effort to extend services, which is an



important aspect to libraries. It means finding what potential users need and want and tailoring library and information services to meet their demands.

### **Challenges that hinder effective marketing of library services**

Adomaa, (2021) Special libraries are facing major problems, their funding is shrinking, and costs of resources like journals are increasing and reading habits among people are declining due to the availability of easy sources of information and relatively low level of knowledge and lack of user requirements, wants, and needs, lack of business expertise among Librarians and Information scientists. Casual approach in supplying information to the potential users. Aderibigbe and Farouk (2017) concluded in their study on challenges on marketing of information resources and services in federal university libraries that major problems hindering effective marketing of library services were inadequate fund, irregular power supply, inadequate infrastructure like photocopier, computers, air conditioner for the marketing of library services, unavailability of staff, low computer literacy among staff, lack of professional training in marketing, under staffing, limited media access, death of library materials to market, and also library management do not have marketing policy.

Opara (2019) Observed that challenges such as inadequate power supply and network problems should be critically looked into to avoid wastage of money and efforts invested in acquiring information products and services in academic libraries. Yusuf, (2019) Stated that various challenges are hindering the marketing of information resources and services in Nigerian libraries which mostly are inadequate funding, inadequate internet facilities and other information and communication facilities, absence of defined promotional staff, as well as the perception of users on the library and services it provides. Osinulu, et al (2018), In there study stated that unstable Internet connectivity, inadequate funding, low usage of digital media due to lack of ICT resources and services, lack of marketing knowledge, experience and skills among librarians, are major challenges to effective marketing of library resources, services and products, An additional problem is the issue of non computerization and non-automation of library operations and services, as a result of inadequate telecommunication facilities, low level of computer literacy among library staff, dearth of computer gadgets and poor level of internet capabilities, clumsy and error-prone manual procedures are seen as threats in marketing services in Nigerian libraries (Osebequen, Wisdom, Beatice 2018).

### **Methodology**

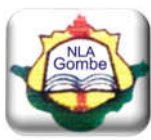
Using a qualitative methodology, the researcher interviewed (7) Head of Reader Services from (7) special libraries in Nigeria. A structured interviews and observations were the instruments used. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher recorded information about the challenges and opportunities of marketing of information resources and services in Special Libraries in Nigeria. The aim of the study is to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with Marketing of Information Resources and Services in special libraries in Nigeria.

### **Findings from the Paper**

The researcher asked about the challenges as well as the opportunities they encountered in the course of marketing their resources and services. The data presented the various challenges as well as opportunities associated with marketing of information resources and services.

### **The opportunities of marketing special libraries in Nigeria**

Participants A1 reported that by marketing library services to users, they are able to understand needs, plan service provision, promote the available services and deliver them efficiently and effectively.



Participants **A2** Narrated that marketing information resources and services provides the means by which users are made aware of the resources and services provided by the library and enlighten the users on the relevance of library use, to encourage the use of library.

Participants **A3** Stated that marketing helps them to provide the information needs of users and to achieve the objectives of the library. The librarian indicated that in order to market library services successfully they need to be competent in answering users query and have the ability to proper library services.

Participants **A4** stated that good communication and computer technology helps them in selling the resources and services, proper answering queries and display of the available library resources as well as interpersonal competences of librarians for effective marketing of library and information services.

Participants **A5** Revealed that provision of access to information technology, effective communication between librarians and users, advertising, endorsement by the librarians in order to successfully market library services has enhanced the image of their libraries.

Participants **A6** Reported that marketing assists in management of the library, makes librarians more committed to users' needs, to satisfying those needs and, understanding users. Marketing also improves the image of librarians, which increases usage of services, and changes perception and reputation of the library.

Participants **A7** Stated that Marketing increases the use of the library resources and services by their potential users. Marketing helps the patron to define and fulfill their needs, wants, and demands. It also helps the librarians to plan and deliver appropriate products and services.

### **The challenges that hinder effective marketing of library services**

Participant **A1** Reported that the major problem of marketing in their library is the lack of professional librarians, because most of the librarians are not professionals and they lack marketing skills due to inadequate training. He further stressed out that most of their resources are outdated and that there are no enough books to cater for all the needs of the users, problem of fund and lack of stable electricity are some of the problems militating the library marketing.

Participant **A2** outlined that the attention and appreciation are not given to the library by management of their parent organization. They have to compete with other department for fund. Lack of training and retraining of staff, and lack of electronic and telecommunication resources and services.

Participant **A3** revealed that the rapid change and development of information sources and resources shift the role of librarians and causes most of the librarians and information resource to became outdated. He further revealed the inadequate fund, inadequate training facilities, poor electricity, inadequate and relevant resources and services to carter the needs of their targeted users.

Participant **A4** stated that lack of good communication between the librarian, the management of the parent organization and the users of the library is one of the most disturbing issue challenging the proper marketing in the library. There also insufficient of funds to provide relevant resources and services. Low patronage by the targeted users, absent of workers in the library.

Participant **A5** reported that Lack of marketing strategies for promoting information resources and services, lack of technical knowledge such as ability to use the internet, other electronic



resources and databases, inadequate fund to provide basic needs of the library that will help in marketing library resources and services.

Participant A6 indicated that there is lack of technical know-how to market the library resources and services, lack of motivation on the side of the management, , lack of proper training and retraining of staff, and lack of power supply, lack of modern library facilities.

Participant A7 confirmed that lack of marketing skills, inadequate resources and library personnel, The respondent further indicated that the major challenges being encountered in marketing of information resources and services include inadequate funds, lack of training of staff, lack of conducive library environment and poor power supply.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **The opportunities of marketing special libraries in Nigeria**

The findings has inferred that marketing assists in management of the library, makes librarians more committed to users' needs, to satisfying those needs and, understanding users by understand clients needs, plan service provision, promote the available services and deliver them efficiently and effectively. Marketing also improves the image of librarians, which increases usage of services, and changes perception and reputation of the library, provides the means by which users are made aware of the resources and services to achieve the objectives of the library, marketing helps special libraries in selling their resources and services, helps the patron to define and fulfill their needs. This is in line with the findings of Atuase and Maluleka (2022) in their study they stated that marketing of library resources is the basis for the effective delivery of services. The importance of library services and resources is determined when libraries extend these extensively to target user groups. Libraries are involved in marketing with the aim of high-value services to encourage patronage of their services. Effective marketing efforts in using appropriate techniques could bring significant improvements in the use of library resources and further impact the achievements of its users.

### **The challenges that hinder effective marketing of library service**

The findings has also inferred that the problems of marketing in special libraries in Nigeria are of lack of Appropriate, recognition, attention by the management of the parent organization, lack professional librarians, lack of marketing skills, lack of training and retraining of staff, and lack of electronic and telecommunication resources, rapid change and development of information sources and resources, inadequate fund, inadequate training facilities, poor electricity, inadequate and relevant resources, low patronage by the targeted users, absent of workers in the library, lack of marketing strategies for promoting information resources and services, lack of technical knowledge of electronic resources and databases, lack of motivation on the side of the management, lack of modern library facilities and lack of conducive library environment are the major challenges encountered by special libraries in marketing of information resources and services in Nigeria. These findings are also supported by Mohammed and Ibrahim, (2021), In their Study, they identified certain impeding factors to library marketing strategies, such as inadequate funding, lack of library marketing skills and marketing policies, limited access to marketing media, lack of stakeholder cooperation and limited time for library marketing, irregular updates and a lack of marketing policies.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, it can be concluded that Libraries especially special libraries needs to promote their libraries to make potential users aware of their resources and services through marketing. Marketing of special library services and resources in this information age is crucial for the



survival and recognition of the library by its parent organization. Therefore, the management of organizations in which Special libraries are established must also support their libraries by employing professional librarians and provision of adequate fund to cater for the libraries needs, also the training and retraining of professionals in ICT for the identification, understanding, processing and dissemination of information to meet the needs of the library users. The role of special libraries is therefore, mainly focused on making knowledge and expertise available to further the set goals of their parent bodies. Special libraries can not function well without the presence of a marketing. Librarians and library staff should take this internet age as an opportunity rather than a challenge. The special libraries should rethink, repack and alter their existing activities and encourage innovative technologies for the promotion of the effective and successful flow of information resources to meet the objectives of the organization as a whole

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the research it is recommend that:

1. Special library should be provided with enough funds to procure a modern library resources and services, they should rethink, repackage, alter their existing activities and encourage innovative technologies for the promotion of the effective and successful flow of information resources to meet the objectives of the libraries
2. Special libraries should market their resources and services in the same way a private firm markets its products in order to make users aware through advertising of resources and services on the organizational website, regular organization of current awareness services, user awareness programs, SMS alerts, leaflets and posters, and social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, blogs, Twitter, and so on to their targeted users.

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