

# UNDERSTANDING MARKETING MIX IN INFORMATION SERVICE PROVISION OF NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Maifata, Nurudeen Mu'azu  
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

## Abstract

*Marketing of library products and services in Nasarawa state university libraries is essential to create awareness and utilization of the library resources. This paper defines the concept of marketing and enumerates various methods of marketing practice in order to demystify marketing for NSUL librarians. NSUL libraries have all types of collections for users and these require marketing to attract customers. This paper suggested practical solutions, ways and means of marketing the Nasarawa state university library products and services.*

## Introduction

Many people do not take full advantage of all the services available in academic libraries and could be blamed for the inconsistencies in efficient and effective service delivery. For instance, Osinulu (1998); investigated patterns of library use at Ogun State University, Nigeria and the result of that study revealed low use of library facilities and this was attributed to lack of awareness. Akin and Ajayi (2008) studied the use of Federal University of Technology Libraries in Nigeria and reported that out of 475 students, only 82 used the library on daily basis. This was attributable to ineffective marketing of library services and resources. The reason for this is that libraries do not market their services and resources effectively. The inability of librarians to do this might be lack of knowledge about the procedural requirements for efficient and effective marketing of products and services.

The provision of library and information services therefore, is a sine qua non for readers to make maximum use of the library. Access to, and ability to use, information amongs staff and students is the most important factor by which University libraries can remain relevant in order to achieve their vision and goals (Gwang, 2011). Marketing Mix is the combination of four elements or parts, called the 4P's (Product, Price, Promotion and Place), that every company has the option of adding, subtracting, or modifying in order to create a desired marketing strategy (Kotler, 2016). Marketing Mix is the set of tactical

marketing tools that a firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market (Kotler and Armstrong, 2016).

## Marketing

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (AMA 2013). Kotler (2010) defined "Marketing as a social and managerial process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others." Marketing is the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return (Kotler and Armstrong, 2016). In the same vein, Kotler and Keller (2016), regard "marketing" as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.

Rowley (2001) considers marketing as "the management process which identifies, anticipates, and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably". The Chartered Institute of Marketing, United Kingdom (2013) defined "marketing as the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably". The main focus of the concept is the client, and the goal is client satisfaction. Coincidentally, this is the thrust of all types of libraries. Therefore,

the call for re-awakening of information service delivery in Nasarawa State Universities Libraries is timely and in order.

### **Objectives of Marketing Library and Information Services**

The basic objectives of marketing library services and products are:

- i. to achieve high level customers' satisfaction;
- ii. to ensure the survival of their respective institutions for teaching, learning and research through an effective and efficient library products and service delivery;
- iii. to enhance the perceived value of library services.

### **Background Information of Nasarawa State University Libraries**

The Nasarawa State University Library came into existence in January 2002 when the Governor established the State University during the 2001/2002 academic year. The premises of former School of Preliminary Studies earlier converted to College of Arts, Science and Technology, now accommodates the Nasarawa State University. Up till November, 2002, the collection of CAST Library served NSUK students. The properties of the defunct CAST were inherited by the Nasarawa State Polytechnic including library resources, furniture, equipment and some staff.

The State University Library started building its collection from the scratch. Aggressive acquisition was therefore embarked upon to acquire library resources including the building. The present library building has a capacity for about 60,000 volumes of books and 1,000 readers. At present the collection housed by the main library consists of about 40,469 volumes of books, 239 microfilm items and 2,262 bound volumes of periodicals. The number of journal titles held in the library is about 657 (i.e. both current and back-set). The library subscribes to seven (7) specialized and general databases across disciplines offered by the university. *Searchable full text e-journals and databases: NSUL* provides access to searchable full text of

thousands of e-journals and databases through the university e-library connect, providing broad subjects and other e-journals and databases from publishers/vendors such as: Jstor, Agora, Ebscohost, Teal, Elsevier's Science Direct, Lexis Nexis, Heinonline, DOAJ, Bio MedCentral, etc.

Nasarawa State University Library is made up of four (4) major academic and research libraries. These include:

1. The Library Department, which is the main library on the main campus at Keffi;
2. Agricultural Library in the Faculty of Agriculture, Lafia campus, providing information materials in agricultural research and allied disciplines.
3. Law Library for the Faculty of Law at main campus, Keffi.
4. School of Remedial Studies Library at Pyanku Campus, Keffi.

### **Marketing as Leadership Competency for Nasarawa State University Libraries**

Marketing is integral to the longevity and relevance of libraries of all types, there appears to be the basis for considering the extent to which marketing represents one of the leadership competencies or attributes that are needed by librarian's in order to contribute to library success (Mark, and Gretchen 2003). Generally, marketing relates to defining an organization's target audiences, communication of messages intended to position the organization in a market or market segment, encouraging product recognition, promoting the organization's products or services, fostering patronage of and loyalty to the organization's products and services, and establishing venues for the delivery of those products or services (Kenneth and Terry, 2002).

In today's information era, marketing is crucial for librarians of all types, who are compelled to know their customers and potential customers. The environment is competitive from various information sources such as the Internet and information vendors and brokers, as well as increased customer confidence in their own ability to retrieve and select the information they need. These are

compelling reasons for librarians of NSUL and indeed librarians generally to demonstrate continually their role in meeting organizational goals and fulfilling users' information needs by adopting marketing principles.

Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives (Kotler, 1985). Nooshinfard, & Ziaei (2011), asserted that, marketing is a systematic process which is a combination of planning, concentrating on customer needs and their satisfaction. Kaur and Sarita (2008) stated that marketing is concerned with customers and the satisfaction of their needs with appropriate products and services. Libraries and information centres have begun to see that marketing of information products and services is essential to improve user satisfaction and promote the use of services by current and potential users (Jestin, 2002).

Marketing takes service from the library to the customer. It involves market research, analysing programs and services, setting goals and objectives, and using persuasive communication (Walters, 2004). Marketing is useful to university libraries to improve their image and to attract more users. Marketing helps librarians improve their reputation within their organizations and as a profession within society (Nooshinfard, & Ziaei, 2011).

Similarly, Schmidt (2004) believes the products and services provided by libraries have changed considerably, due to changes in education, the impact of technology, new methods of providing information and declining library budgets. University libraries in the digital age are eager to be current in information technology and provision of tools for conducting research and current information. This has led them to emphasise on marketing their services (Mu-chen, 2008).

Marketing in libraries can lead to better understanding of users and their requirements. Effective marketing can increase the use of services, help to train customers and non-customers, change user perceptions and ideas, and promote the reputation of the library and its staff (Steadley, 2003).

#### **Professional Skills Required for Information Products and Services**

The Librarian is required to have the following skills and attributes to be a good marketer and satisfy customers.

- good service delivery skills to achieve customers' satisfaction;
- a clear understanding of their organization's overall aims and objectives;
- ability to assemble and interpret information for the benefit of the customer;
- good communication skills, both oral and written;
- enthusiasm and commitment; and
- technical knowledge such as use of internet, web page design and presentation skills.

These attributes are required for successful provision of information services. Thus, skills, attitude and judgment of the service providers are important while marketing library and information services and products.

#### **Ranganathan's Concept of Marketing of Library Services**

The Ranganathan's famous Five Laws of Library Science are well aligned to marketing theory. From these laws logical corollaries are derived that can be directly related to marketing. The reader (sometimes called the customer) is king, and is the focal point of the library; thus the whole organization (resources, services, facilities, rules and regulations, procedures) becomes customer focused. As the table below demonstrates, each of these laws has important implications in regard to basic marketing strategies (Gupta, 1999).

**Table 1: Five laws and marketing implications**

The law	Actions to be taken	Marketing implications
Books are for use	Optimum use of resources, facilities, and services.	Acquiring appropriate information material and ensuring sufficient resources and services are available for the use of users. Convenient location, effective signage, and longer opening hours; helping hands for using resources and services.
Every reader his/her book	Meeting users' needs satisfactorily	Collecting and interpreting information, understanding the needs of users, and matching with the organizational resources
Every book its reader	Reaching out to users	Publicizing value and benefits, promotional campaign, advocacy, public relations, personal communication, etc.
Save the time of user	User benefits and preferences	Repackaging information into appropriate form, availability of information when they are needed. Ensuring quality of services and offerings
Library is a growing organism	Adapting to future user needs	Mobilizing resources, dealing with uncertainty about future user needs, new services, new customer groups, new environment, etc

Source: Gupta 1999

**Need for Marketing of Library and Information Services**

Marketing is the process that successful businesses and organizations use to ensure continuing success (ALA, 2007). The survival of a library depends among other things on its image in the minds of the users and management. This image is based on the outcome of the quality and effectiveness of the services, the ability to anticipate the desires and requirements of actual and potential users and their fulfillment (Narayana, 1991). Marketing is the instrument through which these library objectives can be fulfilled. Shakuntala (1996) as cited in Onuoha, & Subair (2013) observe that marketing is essential because those who lack information may not even be aware of this need.

Information marketing by Nasarawa State University Libraries is essential in order to:

1. promote the use of available reading materials in the library and create awareness among the users;
2. optimize the use of information within limited resources and manpower;
3. due to information explosion, readers require precise and correct information for their research and study;
4. create perception of need and thereby create demand;
5. improve the image and status of the libraries and library profession;

6. tackle the problems of rising cost of reading materials, journals, and databases;
7. save libraries from declining reader-support.

The priority of the library is how to make users aware and consult its products and services they may not be aware of. For example, now-days libraries spend heavily to acquire reading materials and subscribe to periodicals including online databases to fulfill the needs of their readers. Investing such amount for the resources, the usage of these resources should also increase. Libraries should consider the cost benefit analysis of this investment (Patil & Pradhan 2014) and ensure the maximum use of its resources and services.

For marketing to be successful, Grunenwald (1984) prescribes some essential elements as:

- o Marketing represents an attempt to match needs. In the case of libraries, the needs of the public are matched with the needs of a local library. In general, the needs of the public with regard to the library can be categorized as professional, educational, and recreational. On the other hand, the needs of the library are to be viable, responsive, and cost-effective.

- o Marketing involves defining a target audience, anticipating their needs, and planning specific strategies that will make them value particular library services, so that they will want to "consume" and support them. The "exchange" part of the marketing process consists of continued taxpayer support in exchange for the valued products or services.
- o Marketing is also on-going and dynamic because customer needs and library products change. Marketing orientation has shifted over the last several decades from being product centered to being more customer centered. This is a fundamental paradigm shift.

Stover (2006) states this about today's new market place: Marketing is changing... a lot. It is no longer a means of pushing products on customers. Customers demand products and services customized to their exact needs and don't tolerate being "sold to." Progressive companies understand that customers are more informed and empowered than ever before and that effective marketing planning must consider customers at every stage in order to create useful products that fulfil their needs.

For better or worse, librarians are part of the marketing continuum in the communities they serve. Simultaneously, they are influenced by marketing and they are in a position to influence. He added further that "consciously or not, librarians engage in marketing activities all the time.... by planning or implementing services, constructing Web pages, conducting needs assessments, promoting events[,] or interacting with patrons, etc" (Stover, 2006). It is expected that as librarians understand marketing concepts and use those techniques wisely, it will be to each respective organization's advantage, and the whole community will reap the reward.

#### **The Four Ps of Marketing**

The four Ps of customer-centered marketing are product, price, place and promotion (Wood, 1988). This is also

called the marketing mix. The library's products include not only the books and materials that circulate but also information services, friendly professionals, comfort, and life-enhancing programs (Kansas State Library [KSLI, 2002). The library offers access to information and also includes services such as children's programming, book clubs, reader's advisory, and reference services (Lang, 2002).

The price is what it actually costs to bring the product or service to the customer. "There is simply no profit-oriented business that does not know exactly what costs are involved in producing a product; such information is critical in order to establish a price tag for each item" (Weingand, 1995). Pricing takes on a slightly different dynamic in a non-profit organization such as a library because that information is rarely considered and money allocations are generally fixed. In the library marketing mix, price is what the community must pay to keep the library functioning at a particular level (Wood, 1998).

Place concerns where the product is offered. For libraries, place is obviously a building, but it also includes other points of access to library services including a bookmobile, the library's website, and accessibility for the handicapped. "Placement can refer to internal organization and display of collections as well as the safety and comfort of users" (Dimick, 1995).

Promotion is the aspect of marketing which is most familiar to librarians. Promoting refers to getting the target audience to notice what the library has to offer them. Newspaper advertisements, flyers, mail-outs, radio and TV commercials are part of promotion. "The image that we project is also an issue to be considered" (Lang, 2002) in our promotion efforts. Library staff should be friendly and sociable. "We need to be identifiable. We know that in a small and rural library there is not much chance of people not being able to identify us, but we can still use those things like name tags and logo clothing to differentiate staff for possible assistance" (Lang, 2002).

All marketing programs have the 4Ps in mind even if they are not explicitly stated. "At its core marketing is about getting the right product or service to the right customers at the right place and the right price... rather than avoid marketing, librarians should embrace it to fulfill patrons' needs" (Stover, 2006.)

**7Ps of Marketing Strategies of libraries**

The application of the 7Ps (Koontz and Rockwood's 4Ps plus Rafiq and

Ahmed's 3Ps) of marketing mix in libraries which is defined in Table 2. Koontz and Rockwood (2001) suggested that marketing strategy is a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated plan that combines four marketing elements, commonly called the '4Ps' they are: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion and 3Ps of the marketing mix are: Participants, Physical evidence, and Process.

**Table 2: 7Ps of Marketing Strategies of libraries**

7 Ps	Definition
<b>Product</b>	Products or services of the general reference and information service department. This is, of course, the information, reference, and ancillary services that add value such as personal assistance, referral services, online database searches, document delivery, and interlibrary loan.
<b>Price</b>	Pricing is usually the time and effort the user spends traveling to the library.
<b>Place</b>	Place of service, is essential in order to identify users and their discrete information needs and wants. To expand the service area, the library may have branches, bookmobiles, or electronic access, etc.
<b>Promotion</b>	Promotion includes utilizing persuasive information about general information services, and communicating this information to target market segments that are potential users. Five kinds of promotion include: publicity, public relations, personal representatives, advertising, and sales promotion.
<b>Participants</b>	All human actors who play a part in reference and information services delivery, that is, the library's personnel.
<b>Physical Evidence</b>	The environment in which the reference and information services are delivered that facilitates the performance and communication of the service
<b>Process</b>	The procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities by which reference and information services are acquired.

Source: Sharma & Bhardwaj (2012).

**Marketing Strategies in Library and Information Services**

Strategy is viewed in different ways by various authorities. The Oxford Advanced English Learner's Dictionary defined 'strategy' as art of planning and directing an operation in a war or campaign or skill in planning or managing any affair well, or a plan or policy designed for a particular purpose. Chandler (1962) sees strategy as "the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary to carry out the goals". To Daft (1988) strategy is the plan of action that prescribes resource allocation and other activities for dealing with the environment and helping the organization attain its goals.

Marketing strategies do not just include what collections and services are

being offered, but it also contributes to building a relationship with library customers that begins and ends with awareness of the library's users: their values, their concerns and their needs (Kaur, 2009). Most academic librarians agree on the necessity of marketing library services. Whether it is called outreach, liaison work, or public relations, many have embraced the need to actively promote library resources and services (Lee, 2005).

Marketing strategy according to Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders and Wong (1999) is the marketing logic by which the business unit hopes to achieve its marketing objectives. That is show how strategies for target markets and positioning build upon the firm's differential advantages. It should detail the market segments on which the company focuses. These segments according to Kotler et al (1999) differ in

their needs and wants, responses to marketing and profitability. The company should put its effort into those market segments it can best serve from a competitive point of view. It should develop a marketing strategy for each targeted segment.

In other words, strategic marketing is seen as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future (Anderson and Jack 2008; Bryson, 2004). Libraries guided by these shall be repositioned not only to attract and retain clients but to include clients in decision making and responding to clients' information needs.

#### **Marketing Library and Information Services and Products in Nasarawa State University Library**

The following strategies are recommended for the effective and efficient service delivery to library customers/clients.

##### ➤ **Customer Profile Service**

Customer profile service is an outreach unit of the library. Services of the unit comprise compiling clients' profile to service their information needs, with emphasis and preference on research focus of enrollees. Furthermore, the unit disperses available information on library collections, information resources and services. It also provides any additional information required by the clients from the unit.

The service operates as a "Just in time" as against "just in case" procurements of information and dispersion of resources and services. This means that selection and purchase of information resources is tied to the research focus of lecturers, departments, and courses offered.

#### **Profiling of Customers includes**

- a. Collating and maintaining profile data of all registered clients of the library.
- b. Identifying and documenting clients' areas of specialization.

- c. Circulating topical titles to the appropriate clients registered with the library.

##### ➤ **Customers Service Engagement**

Strategies for the implementation of engagement are to identify, meet, and facilitate communication between faculty members and students about their information needs and service expectations.

- Actively engage with faculty, students, and staff in assigned departments or institutes in order to develop strong working relationships.
- Promote library services and collections.
- Assess user needs, design and implement user studies, share information about users with library staff and with departments or institutes.
- Seek opportunities for collaboration with departments or institutes in the areas of collections (e.g. creating digital collections; contributing to institutional repository), teaching, and research.

##### ➤ **Research Services**

Strategies for the Implementation of Research Services:

- Provide assistance and instruction in finding and evaluating information.
- Provide in-depth, specialized research consultation and reference for library users.
- Provide assistance in accessing library resources and services.
- Answer questions in person and through e-mail, phone, and instant messaging.
- Provide consultations for specialized areas of expertise.
- Extend services through office hours, embedded librarianship and support of student research.
- Participate in the promotion of library research services and materials.

##### ➤ **Ask A Librarian Services**

*Ask a Librarian* provides users with both physical and virtual reference services through live chats, text, email and a host of other e-platforms,

resolve chat queries, answer mails & calls, respond to text messages and schedule a consultation with a reference librarian

### ➤ Online Learning & Digital Tool

Promote use of subject-specific information resources and services to meet user needs and expectations, utilizing current technologies and information tools.

- Identify areas where new online learning and digital tools can place the library into the flow of teaching, learning, and research.
- Participate in the coordination and integration of online tools in support of teaching, learning, and research.

### Strategies

- Create awareness on available database in line with courses in the department
- Organize periodic training for online search skills
- Organize and disseminate online resources and digital tools using accession list
- Create SMS alert and train others.

### .1. E-Resources Workshops Services

This is a service designed to acquaint library users with requisite skills needed for optimal use /access to e-resources by organizing seminars and workshops in that regard.

#### Activities

- Identify available e-resources
- Identify areas where access is difficult
- Organize seminars/workshops
- Monitor usage statistics

### .2. Database peer tutoring services

This has to do with the provision of professional guide to a group of library users that will make use of free, fee based or the institutional repository.

#### Activities

- Identify peer groups
- Organize tutorials
- Deliver group tutorials

### .3. Library without border services

Library without border service is aimed at providing link of a library, resources, services and objectives on the globalized network by adopting the information and communication tools to be consistent with what is obtainable globally. The platforms most patronize include:

- Library Website services
- Twitter
- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- Email
- Text alert services
- Blogs etc

### Tasks of Librarian Responsible for Library without Border

- a. Create accounts and subscribe the library to appropriate prescribe service targeting a particular audience for the platform.
- b. Publicize all library contacts/links/ website to clients.
- c. Generate and maintain patrons list according to subscription and platform.
- d. Responsible for ensuring real-time and update of library news and requests.

### Promoting the use of Online Databases/Electronic Resources

This is to encourage the customers on the use/ exploitation of the subscribed e-journals and database and to make customers aware of all their availability and what information they can provide.

#### Activities

- Provides knowledge on effective electronic document delivery and online inter-library loan.
- Provides up to date subject knowledge.
- Facilitates writing and publishing of research works.
- Put together links/ websites to access various e-resources
- Serves as a gateway to access electronic resource and provide access to information.



## *Marketing Mix in Information Service Provision*

### **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that information professionals must understand that it is essential to actively market library and information services. Library marketing is critical for information professionals in order to publicise the library. It doesn't matter the type or size, there is need to draw attention to library services worth, community, administration, staff and users.

### **Recommendation**

This paper recommends the repositioning of NSUK library to satisfy the needs of the users by understanding the

evolving needs of their users and institution, conveying the importance and process of marketing to all the staff, implementing a campaign to promote the 'new' library for increased usage and implementing all the marketing strategies highlighted in the paper including:

- Customers profile service
- Customers service engagement
- Research services
- Online learning and Digital tool services
- E-resources workshop services
- Database peer tutoring services
- Library without border services etc.

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