
Awareness and Preference of Three Popular Marketing Strategies Used in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

Awareness and preferences of popular marketing strategies were explored using respondents from University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross-River University of Technology (CRUTECH) being academic libraries in Cross River State. This indicated that marketing strategies had been and are still in use today in libraries. Librarians' had come to the realization of the necessity to market its services and resources. These had been found to boost users' knowledge of what libraries hold in stock, their exploration methods and influence on utilization. However, this study revealed that users' are mostly aware of market segmentation strategy 382(66.09%). Followed by organized event 166 (28.72%) while very few seem to know about word of mouth (WOM - 5.19%). Study also revealed that in spite of this knowledge, users' had numerous challenges that debar them from participating at such events when organized. The researcher therefore advised that admissions regardless of the batches, be done timely so that users' can benefit from orientation, which is one major event for all new students.

Keywords

Awareness, Preferences, information, marketing strategies, Marketing segmentation, word of mouth, organized events, librarianship.

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INTRODUCTION

It is no longer news that academic libraries mainly exist to support the curriculum of their institutions in research, and personal development of staff. Hence, regardless of the age and technological philosophy in vogue, librarians have been firm to the tenets of librarianship by proffering ways to inform patrons of what happens in the system to aid their use, expertise for research and information literacy. By implication, library clients who are on training (for different disciplines / profession) are not allowed to wonder in ignorance of how they should be satisfied when they have needs especially because they may not be aware of the code of belief of librarians. In addition, some users' come from timid environment and may not even have the boldness to ask questions where necessary. Hence, librarians' have often labored to give information, teach users, refer and get involved in different user studies to enable clients properly utilize the library resources as well as satisfy academic needs. In fact, Aina (2004) understood this fact when he emphasized that library users' are critical in librarians' job performance as library could not exist without them. Over time, many strategies had been adopted to market the library in resources, personnel and services so that clients from diverse disciplines can satisfactorily utilize the library. Marketing strategies could be defined as a progression that could enable an organization to direct its funds, resources and services to meet optimal opportunities with the aim of increasing utilization for libraries and sales for other profit-oriented businesses. This study therefore intends to find out users' awareness and preferences of the three popular strategies used in academic libraries in Cross River State as in; market segmentation, word of mouth marketing, organized events marketing.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Myriad of services, resources and programs are provided by academic libraries which spend quality time to gather data, assess its value and users' are surveyed about their satisfaction with a service although little is written about what value or recognition students put on particular services for their own academic success and accomplishment of their work using daily efficiency. What is unique in this particular research therefore, is the connection of students' perspective of academic efficiency and success with specific library initiatives. However, the following objectives were formulated to guide the study;

1. To access users' awareness /preferences of the existence of the three popular marketing strategies used in academic libraries
2. To find out users' reasons for their preferences in objective one above.
3. To find out the limitations of those marketing strategies not preferred.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Market segmentation strategy

Madhusudhan (2008) revealed several things that compelled librarians to learn and begin market segmentation in spite of their long debate. One of it is that with the rapid change brought in librarianship by information and communication technology, not all users are ICT literate, thus requiring different attention span for the literate ones. The author explained that at Goa University library, users were segmented into Individuals, definitive as post-graduate students, research scholars, talented members, research acquaintances and supporters, project helpers and non-teaching employees, corporate and institutional members and other libraries. He reasoned that the services of the library had to be made known to users to enable them think of the library in times of need, which remained apparent in segments. Millsap (2011) posit that with GIS-based consumer data, segmentation could be done beyond the reliance on names, addresses, gender, age and perhaps how people use library collection to include demographic, socio-economic, residential information linked to where people live, interest, buying habits, leisure activities and strategies for communicating with specific segment audience. Author further revealed that, CT; www.civictchnologies.com had already developed tools that combine integrated library system (ILS) data, household data of clients, market segmentation and geographic data with GIS mapping technology and concluded that segmentation fights misperception. Therefore, it can be inferred here that successful segmentation depends upon partnership with those who understand the aims and objectives of the segmenting clients -Building relationships.

CivicTechnologies (2009) accounted that academic libraries face a plethora of information age challenges and this to be because the world is of customized services hence; libraries have an opportunity to re-invent their customer relations and to strategize how to create meaningful relationships with potential customers. Bahraon (2010) noted that another strategy to market library services was market segmentation. This meant grouping users for best product delivery.

Library resources could then be allocated to each specific group for instance, undergraduate, postgraduate, lecturers and researchers. From this scenario, the aim of marketing segmentation was to target the patrons rather than the product or the service. Another purpose of market segmentation was to provide services that satisfy individuals' needs rather than a generalized service. Hague and Harrison (2016) revealed segmentation as the first step in marketing. It is also the key to profitable and successful satisfaction of needs. They gave an example of how CVS pharmacy had a huge success through segmenting their customers. Authors analyzed that the company looked at its customer base, found that 80% were women so they redesigned their market to meet the needs of the busy, multi-tasking women by offering shorter waiting time prescription, wider, better-ignited shopping aisles, and more beauty products. Segmentation helped to identify the needs of customers and organized the offers of the pharmacy to better satisfy their customers'.

The study by Bozkurt (2016) in brand segmentation strategy for tablet chocolate and convenience product purchases by women used simple random sampling and product least squares with a sample of 172 female tablets chocolate consumers. The study concluded that branding has significant activities with female customers' decision-making and purchases. The study has two implications:

- (1) This implied that there should be a clever way of targeting clients who really need librarians' services to utilize resources; the Library can assign knowledgeable staff at different points of users' query with tags like--- quick reference, easy location, information services, one-on-one-counseling etc. to enable the time of the users not to be wasted while they get satisfied. This would encourage patrons to inform their friends and utilization will increase.
- (2) It reveals the difference between library marketing and promotion. In the library, promotion pressurizes users to look at the information resources at hand almost regardless of their real needs. This, in the profit oriented economy is called "brutal selling" because it may leave the customer with the product they wish they never bought and as such, may never return as a customer again, but market segmentation takes a longer-term view to do what should constantly bring back patrons.

As marketing needs to be planned on continuous basis, Potter (2012) suggested that libraries need to look at

their value. In his assessment, what was key was that not everyone perceived the same value in library services therefore, for every library doing services, it was key to undertake segmentation, because it was the differences within the segments that were actually important. It was no good to look for a one specific way but if the value each segment attaches to the library was looked at, the marketing librarian then had the core of what marketing was about thus, marketing needed to be planned on continuous basis. The San Antonio Public Library Strategic Plan (2011) identified marketing segmentation to help organizations find new customers, gain insights, improve services delivery and become customer-centric. It presented the process of using marketing segmentation to identify different work groups in the library as support education and learning by selecting segments that present people who needed focus. For example, this could be done by tracing youths at risk or low educational attainment and develop specific agendas / materials and other resources to meet the defined interests, needs and preferences of the clients who are literacy- challenged. Support economic development among users and focus on delivery of career development and financial planning services. Foster community connections by identifying specific locations to target efforts for increasing materials. Support marketing and public relations by utilizing appropriate and relevant channels of communication and communicate relevant services, programs and resources.

Word of mouth marketing strategy.

Jacques, Jonathan and Ole (2010) noted that customers have constantly valued opinions expressed directly to them, thus a word of mouth (WOM) recommendation from a trusted source quickens customers' decision to use products. Inyang and Lawal in their study of 2015 revealed that 85.97% respondents received WOM awareness through the strategic teaching of library skills. According to them, this helped to promote utilization of the library in all disciplines, while 58.52% agreed that current collections were moderately marketed. Again, for them the revolution of digital librarianship had amplified and accelerated it reach so that word of mouth was no longer only an act of intimacy, but operation through one –to –many processes. McClary (2014) explained that WOM help to build trust and credibility add value to the users' community especially those whose access to the library were limited. The author viewed WOM to be of two directions:

1. It is human that speak and not marketing: There is genuineness and exchange

of trust. Millennials want to connect at the human level with organizations, be it through informal and interactive so, conversations both online and off-line win over groups of library users and inspire their loyalty.

2. It is people who help people: This involves marketing that connects people to people with similar interests, while the marketer gets out of the way so that the connected persons can directly talk one to another. It supports the use of the digital media by which new technologies are adopted to cause people to move easily and faster. The author reiterates that experts who connect people together on Facebook and similar fora provide an invaluable service.

Adegoke (2015) advised that WOM be presented through advocacy, advertising and direct marketing if it should accomplish the required success. Hence, if the librarians should understand how and why messages work, they should make them demand a coordinated and consistent response that would arise from the right users in meet of the right content and the right setting or environment that would generate an exponentially greater impact. This would need to be at the utilization of e- resources patrons recommend, and the library acquire for users to become loyal in their use. Jacques et al (2010) opined that WOM was influential throughout the customers' decision journey (Initial consideration set, Active evaluation stage and the moment of use of products) and constituted three forms. These are experimental, consequential and intentional. Therefore, Powers and Shedd (1995) presented WOM as the best communication strategy, which always began with doing what you did very well and in such a way that people talked about what was going on with enthusiasm and excitement, and all people associated with the organization were well informed. The critical driver in WOM was, according to him the identity of the person who sent a message, since the receiver must trust the sender and believe that he/she knew the service or product in question. To Bhattacharyya (2010) word of mouth marketing strategy could be regarded as the most powerful tool of marketing.

Inazu (2009) opinion regarded radio, television and readership promotion campaign as very effective strategies in the marketing of library services. According to the author, libraries should have a slot or quiz on television and radio in order to announce library issues, especially its products and services. Television and radio should be very effective means to

reach several users; especially those residing in remote locations. The radio should be very effective because it could be very cheap and cost effective. Some academic institutions now have radio stations. Librarians do embrace these opportunities to inform and educate users about their various products, services available and accessibility to utilization. Syracuse University Libraries (2015) also revealed that because of the importance of the word of mouth marketing strategy, many organizations have taken to the business of establishing roots for advertisements by starting points guide for advertising research. They include World Advertising Research Center (WARC), Mintel Reports- Mintel Academic, Mintel Reports International reporter, Simmons Oneview (sm), Kanta Media SRDs, and Ebsco Communication Source etc, which are online version of advertising age. In addition, WARC (n.d) cited in Syracuse University Libraries (2015) presented a case studies covering advertising, marketing communications and branding. The organization identified effective advertising practices and industry trends as opportunity to the popularity of its own publication- Ad map, International journal of Advertising and videos from advertising campaigns.

Organized- events marketing.

Popoola (2008) listed events that could commonly be used to inform faculty members of library products and services since there had been a growing demand for academic libraries to maximally provide efficient and effective services to spur utilization of e-resources. These were meetings/social interactions 68.8%, bulletin /newsletter at library boards 80%, contacts/ public relations 67.5%, orientation 25% and library handbook 45%. In addition, Inyany and Lawal (2015) also identified procedures with which to market library activities to include; Orientation 86.9%, bulletin 90.5%, referral services 91.4%, online databases 78.7%, assistance of searching literature for users 75.6% and library publications 26.7%. This is because scholars, students and researchers face an ever-growing mass of information that is distributed in various formats –print and online/internet thus; users who lack essential information search skills, find it difficult to search, locate and retrieve relevant information when need. This is substantiated by Kasowitz-Scheer (2002) and Murugan (2011) who observed that students today face daily explosion of information resources and they remain challenged by the use of these resources effectively and responsibly.

Arua and Chikezie (2006) observed that students often fail to exploit to the fullest the intellectual content of

the library. This according to them, necessitated the introduction of programs, in most academic libraries, to enable users maximally utilize library services and resources. In the view of Adebayo (2009), the teaching function of the academic library indicates that, as most librarians lean towards this concept, they expect that users' find their way through utilization of the resources; regardless of the format that follows the initial help from librarians or other library staff. Adegoke (2015) remarked that organized -events that could influence utilization could be done through clientele education courses, book sales, friends' groups, contest, and orientation.

Authors like Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002; and Sanborn, 2005 presented major purposes and benefits of library users' education. These included development of awareness for and appreciation of library services and resources; encouragement of users to exploit these services and resources to their intellectual growth and development; impartation of users' with material exploration skills, indispensable of life-long scholarship; and development of autonomous and efficient learners and library users. Bhatti (2010) therefore recommended that organized-events should be a continuous process prearranged for all user groups to guarantee that they were furnished with efficient methods of accessing, evaluating, and synthesizing information into a coherent whole.

Das and Karn (2008) accentuated to the position above by observing that new users did not know about library rules and regulations. Therefore, it was the duty of librarians to give library orientation to users for maximum utility of the library. It was pertinent to them that all academic institutions mount library users' education. So, apart from the normal orientation that was to be given to fresh students, every higher institution should offer use of library as a course in the institution's curriculum. This was to enable librarians educate patrons on how to effectively utilize library products and services. Such education was to be done through organization of workshops and seminars. Sharma and Bhardwaj (2009) even advised that Librarians endeavor to attend academic lectures where a prominent number of users could be found. Librarians could then meet users to discuss and gather information about their needs and as well promote the services offered by the libraries.

Akpom (2010) advocated that refresher courses also mounted to enlighten students and staff on new developments in the library. To Kotler (1997) libraries have to endeavor to display new arrivals, book reviews, and organized exhibitions, book fairs,

library visits and get-together and sponsors' programs in order to effectively market library services. Patil and Pradhan (2014) corroborated the position above by supporting that continuous training programs be organized for students and staff of the library to boost already existent library instruction and career services and cultivate a continuous relationship, which would make it easy to present resources for utilization. To this end, Powers and Shedd (1995) presented two options of organized events that would properly market the library. They included:

1. Organized networking management, instead of hierarchical management to marketing libraries.
2. Marketing audit to examine and assess library activities, needs and capabilities. These, with previous internal and external analyses expose the organization's achievement and why. This offers possible pathways towards a desired direction, and improvement in the organization's marketing position and performance effectiveness.

Authors also revealed that organized events could aid six types of strategies: **Segmentation**: offering a new service to existing people, **Development**: develop new clients, **Penetration**: increased use of services by existing clients, **Diversions**: new services to new clients, **Distribution**: new ways of delivery, **Communication**: messages to link library philosophy to product and services (p 486). More so, academic libraries often suffer from trying to do too many things for too many people without adequate resources. Organized events may want libraries or librarians to recognize what few "right things" they could focus on and why. According to Patil and Pradhan (2014, p253), Hollister, (2005) described how he was able to cultivate continuous relationship between library and university career services by providing e-resources to students studying for competitive examination. Patil and Pradhan (2014) in broader terms asserted that unless and until what was available in academic libraries, how it would be accessed and disseminated to users was made known to users, they would not be aware of the e-resources subscribed for utilization. Moreover, considering how much academic libraries often invested as huge amounts of money to purchase /subscribe to e-resources of periodicals and online databases, the authors prescribed six organized events as strategies (p 250).

Organized - events could be 'eye openers' to areas where time and resources were spent unproductively or where there was, lack of

cohesiveness, so that areas that has missed opportunities could be focused on and given attention. Marketing strategy is in this regard an ongoing well-executed process of planning for favorable relations that help in achievement of library objectives. Therefore, marketing strategy, which presents organized events, would be that of exchange relationship. It would involve taking something of value and exchanging it for something needed to communicate a link up of messages vis-a-vis the philosophy of the academic libraries. Ukwoma (2014) further suggested excursion and visits to other libraries, which are already in practice, were important dimensions of marketing library services for adequate utilization.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in the University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH). Simple random sampling technique was used to select 600 undergraduate registered users who used the library at least three times per week. Consequently, 600 questionnaires were distributed in all the units of the reader services of the two libraries, which included; social sciences, Law reference, medical, humanities and science and technology. Only 578 (96.33%) usable copies were returned and analyzed for the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information of Users.

University	Soc/Sc	Sc/Tech	Medical	Human..	Law	Total
UNICAL	108	123	38	70	89	428
CRUTECH	52	57	-	41	-	150
Total	160	180	38	111	89	578

Out of the 578 respondents, 335 (57.96%) were males and 243 (42.04%) were females.

OBJECTIVE 1: To Access Users' Awareness /Preferences Of The Following Marketing Strategies.

Mkt Segment. Strategy %	WOM strategy %	Orgn. Evt strategy %	Total %
382 (66.09)	30 (5.19)	166 (28.72)	578 (100)

This study tallied with the works of Hague and Harrison (2016) who revealed segmentation as the first step in marketing.

OBJECTIVE 2: Reasons For Users' Preferences Indicated In Objective One

Respondent 8: Segmentation allows us as students to go directly to where we can find materials to solve our needs as a group----- on the same class level.

Respondent 12: The library is so large that one could be lost, not finding his way through needed materials. Therefore, segmentation of users' means straight search at the area that concerns one and this will reduce the students' time that would have been wasted.

Respondent 27: It is easy to quickly meet your colleagues rather than the library staff who may laugh at the student's show of inability.

Respondent 214: The library setting (classifying materials to different disciplines), was segmentation. Therefore, for the sake of leaving information materials orderly, segmentation is still good for the identification of knowledge boundaries.

Respondent 318: Students were taught that knowledge needs to be organized to reduce fatigue and encourage the use of information resources in academic libraries. Therefore, classification of the library materials express segmentation and aids easy usage.

Study tallied with Ajiboye and Tella (2007), whose study results revealed that when academic activities are segmented Users' turned to parts that relate to their interest more easily.

OBJECTIVE 3: To Find Out From Users' The Limitations Of The Strategies Not Preferred

Respondent 5: Admissions are not given evenly (at the same time) so, not all users are admitted before orientation. Thus, not all users participate in orientation ceremony.

Respondent 37: When students resume school, there is always a rush to meet up with academic activities and it is difficult to attend any event that is not directly in the timetable.

Respondent 301: The General studies "use of library" which is supposed to teach students what is actually expected is too packed so we just read to pass exams and later ask questions where we get confused of how and where to go.

Respondent 398: It is boring after running up and down between lectures, to wait for another event, which will conflict with doing assignments.

Respondent 455: Lecture halls are not conducive. Therefore, after struggling with the heat to listen to

lecturers, we have to find airy places to relax and the interest in events are not remembered.

Respondent 519: There is no entertainment to refresh students. It becomes difficult for a hungry student to cope with any organized event.

Study agreed with Inyang and Lawal (2015) who held that orientation helped to market the library.

DISCUSSION

Study revealed that a critical look at the various strategies show that either of the other strategies has its base from segmentation. Before WOM can be used or before one can have success at organized event, a particular segment with identical characteristics must be viewed and carried along, together. Study also revealed that users do not know word of mouth as a marketing strategy. They feel that whatever is said to them falls within the ambit of question and answer. Study still agreed with the findings of Arua and Chikezie (2006) who held that users often fail to exploit to the fullest, the intellectual content of the library. These could be attributed to the many challenges recorded earlier.

CONCLUSION

Librarians have long settled on marketing the library and its resources even though there seem to be daily emergence of challenges. The study had revealed users' limited knowledge of the strategies in use especially word of mouth (WOM); it is imperative for librarians to continue to sort for positive ways to make users' understand and get interested in partaking on organized events where major issues concerning the library can be discussed. The university management could also be used to incorporate these library events into the school main activities while the library can plan and give gift items to users and as high points. This would make it formal, show its rightful place / value, aid their knowledge and influence utilization.

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