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MARKETING OF WEB-BASED LIBRARY RESOURCES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This research work assessed the strategic issue of marketing of web-based information resources and services via library websites in academic libraries in Nigeria. Current status of university library websites was examined in terms of visibility, online services/resources and networking with subject gateways, professional associations etc. The study adopted survey design, with population of 44 university library websites and sample size of 16 library websites. Checklist was used for data collection and analyzed using simple percentage. The study revealed that academic library websites were under utilized for marketing of information resources as this development is evolving. It recommended that there should be a national policy on the standardization of criteria for the development of library websites in Nigeria set up by NLA AND LRCN. Links to professional associations especially, NLA, LRCN, IFLA NUC digital library be mandatorily implemented on all Nigerian library websites in order to allow users to benefit from unlimited information services and resources. That all academic libraries should provide user survey; which is an effective tool for measuring service satisfaction and service quality.

Key words: Marketing, websites, university libraries, resources, library portals, web-technology, library services, library management.

Introduction

A library portal serves as an integrated interface to a wide variety of digital resources and web-based library services. Web portals are also important tools for users to access and utilize library and information services over a network. This is because an informative homepage provides users with helpful information about the library, its collection, and services. Besides, library portals also host links to important internet resources useful for the parent organization (Letha, 2006).

Marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and social needs. One of the shortest definitions of marketing is “meeting needs profitably” (kotler and keller, 2007). Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders (American Marketing Association, 2004). Therefore, marketing could be viewed holistically. As such, holistic marketing concept is based on the development, design, and implementation of marketing programs, processes and activities that recognize their breadth and interdependencies (kotler and keller, 2007). It recognizes that “everything matters” with marketing and that a broad, integrated perspective is often necessary. There is a paradigm shift in the philosophy behind the marketing concept. Instead of a product-centered, “make-and-sell” philosophy, business has shifted to a customer-centered, sense-and-respond” philosophy (kotler and keller, 2007). These authors opine that instead of “hunting”, marketing is “gardening”.

The digital revolution prevalent in the 21st century is an ongoing or continuous process. Therefore, for the library to remain relevant, it must evaluate its place and strategically market its services in the online world. Sequel to this, many library professionals recognize this inevitable up-coming need and are therefore driving adaptations designed to ensure that libraries remain an integral part of our society commitment to education, equity, and access to information (Hendrix, 2010). Current trends in library services should incorporate new philosophies, new technologies, and new spaces to meet the needs of all users in a more effective manner. It is pertinent to highlight some of the implications of the revolution in information technology on the library such as: technology is changing the fundamental forms of information; and these new forms are changing the way people find, access, and use information; and the attendant changes in the core library missions and services as a result of these new pattern of users’ behaviours. These changes must come from within the library community – i.e. the content creators and distributors, the library staff and most importantly the library users. Pastore (2009) supported this view when he noted that it is essential for museums and

libraries to take a proactive and positive stance in facing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. In a culture highly driven by new interactive web technologies, mobile and smart phone civilization has brought about a dynamic shift in users' expectations of how, when and where people access information on daily basis.

Ultimately, the World Wide Web leaves information seekers with considerably more options. Regarding aggressive marketing of library services to attract users' and potential users' attention to the library, Norshinford & Ziae (2011), asserted that: it is notable that attracting attention to a virtual environment is difficulty, [sic] because there is no mutual communication between users' and librarians, yet librarians have to go round the situation to draw users' attention to the library probably through words, sentences pictures, web pages information, timely responses to emails, moderating the delivery process and emergency delivery.

By implication, they share the same opinion with Siddike, Munshi and Mahamud (2013) that the library website is the primary vehicle used to distribute library information and collections electronically to university students, faculty, and staff. The mission of the library website must be in accordance with library mission of supporting the educational programs and curriculum of the university through acquiring and organizing both internal and external internet-based resources. The library website seeks to provide resources that will teach library users how to evaluate critically and cite correctly, the information retrieved through the website (Rayan, 2003). Marketing strategies in the traditional library setting included publicity activities such as display panels, posters, exhibits, bulletins, promotional materials (Ronan, 2003, and Kibbee et al, 2002).

The main objectives of libraries today are to obtain self-sufficiency in their resources and to provide optimum level of services to reach more potential users and encourage the use of library resources. This naturally requires a "shift from product or service orientation to customer or need orientation" (kavulya, 2004). This paradigm shift as earlier said, is also applicable to the philosophy behind the marketing concept. Instead of a product-centered, "make-and-sell" philosophy, business has shifted to a customer-centered, sense-and-respond" philosophy (kotler and keller, 2007). There are various marketing techniques and principles which provide libraries with the mechanisms for collecting and analyzing useful data about users information needs.

These in turn will equip librarians with creative and innovative power to design, develop and deliver services structured to be user-centered in line with technological advances. Kaur and Rani (2007) opine that irrespective of the type of library, the need to develop customer-centered and strategic market planning has now become part of effective library management. This implies that libraries must incorporate marketing strategies into their management philosophy and become marketing of library services conscious and proactive. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, marketing refers to

those instruments through which information ... are transmitted to its members (users) (Sharma and Bhardwaj, 2009). Also, a means of ensuring that libraries, librarians and librarianship are integrated into both today's and tomorrow's global culture (Singh and Shukla, 2011). Thus, harnessing the internet and library websites to meet users' needs and be visible and relevant globally.

This study is premised on the hypotheses that academic libraries in Nigeria are not fully utilizing the library websites as a marketing tool and an enabler to reach out to the community for promotion of services and resources; and are lacking in their promotional activities.

Purpose of the study

The main objective of this paper was to examine and describe the current status of the Nigerian academic libraries websites in terms of marketing activities. Specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To ascertain marketing through the visibility of academic library websites from the universities' home page in Nigeria;
2. To examine online services and resources available (marketed) on the academic library websites in Nigeria;
3. To describe the status of networking with professional associations and other information gateways to meet users' needs
4. To provide recommendations to academic libraries for the improvement of their marketing strategies on the web.

Literature review

Several researches have been conducted by various researchers on marketing of academic libraries and services on the web throughout the globe (Ali, 2009; Aziz et al, 2008; Akpom, 2010; Connell, 2008; Detlor, 2006; kaba, 2011; kaur, 2009; kennedy, 2011; Rayan, 2003; Welch, 2005;). These authors focused on present status of marketing of academic libraries and information services, academic library websites as a marketing and public relation tool, academic library visibility on the web, networking, information, consultations and comments on the academic library websites (Kaba, 2011; Welch, 2005), future directions for academic library marketing on web (Detlor, 2006).

Librarians strongly believe in the necessity of marketing library resources and services (Kaur and Rani, 2007;). Brower (2004) developed a specific formula for determining obligator links that should appear on all academic health science libraries web-site. Similarly, Welch (2005) conducted a survey of 106 academic libraries in the USA to study the placement of marketing and public relations links on the homepages and used four main categories to analyze the university and library home pages based on primary goals of library marketing and public relations revealed by an ARL study in 1999:

- Visibility – direct link from institutional home page to library website.
- Fundraising – direct links to friends/associates group pages and gifts/donations.
- Information – direct links to news, exhibits, new collections, or “what’s news” pages.
- Consultation and comments - direct links to “Ask-a-librarian”, e-mail, or comments pages.

King's (1998) findings showed that 44% of 120 ARL libraries could be found in one step, while more than 47% could be found after two or three steps. Astroff (2001) found 24.3% of 109 ARL libraries without direct links from the home pages of parent institutions. Contrary to Astroff's findings, studies by Welch (2005), as well as Gardner et al. (2008), found most of the ARL and non ARL libraries with direct links to the main institutional home pages. In Malaysia, Kaur (2009) found that academic libraries are lacking in their promotional activities. Library web sites are not fully utilized as a marketing tool and an enabler to reach out to the community for promotion of services and collections. Stephen et al (2006) usability survey results at the University of Mississippi library allowed them to redesign the library website and gave more prominence to the 'databases' and subject guides. Singh (2009) explored the marketing culture of Finnish research libraries. 33 libraries participated in the study. Findings revealed strong, medium and weak marketing cultures of libraries. Kaba (2011) confirmed that academic library websites of United Arab Emirates were not fully utilized for marketing library resources and services. A large majority of libraries did not make any effort to provide online literacy courses, live supports, copyright documents, and online user surveys. Likewise, more than 80 percent of the websites could not be read in Arabic.

In Nigerian libraries, especially, academic libraries, researches have been conducted on traditional marketing of library and information products and services (Ukwoma, 2014; Komolafe-Opadeji and Haliso, 2012; Ali, 2009; Akpom, 2010). Hence, this study attempts to assess efforts of academic libraries over the web to promote and market resources and services. The next section describes the methodology and results of a study conducted to examine how university libraries in Nigeria were facing up to the challenge of using the library website as a marketing and public relations tool. The findings are discussed and recommendations for academic libraries are put forth. Finally the paper presents the derived conclusions.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design. Population was 44 libraries. Sample size was 16. Random sampling technique was adopted to select from the 6 geo-political zones. Next step was to determine a list of criteria that would identify marketing strategies via the library's website. Based on the result of literature reviewed, the researchers decided to adapt key features used by Brower (2004), Detlor

(2006), kaur (2009) and kaba (2011). Researchers used checklist to analyse university websites. Most of the websites were visited at least twice during the assessment. Each assessment started by checking the availability of direct and non-direct links from the home page of the parent institution. Next the library homepages were evaluated against the list of assessment criteria. On the other hand, academic libraries without direct link to the university websites are excluded from this study. 16 academic library websites (see appendix) were examined from 10th February to 30th March, 2015. Changes within this period were considered and incorporated in this paper. Any changes after that have not been incorporated in this paper.

Results

Marketing through visibility of academic library websites

Table 1: Marketing through visibility links to library from the university's home page

Nigerian University	No	Visible		Not Visible	
		No.	%	No.	%
Federal	40	23	57.5	17	42.5
State	39	7	18.0	32	82.0
Private	59	14	24.0	45	76.3
Total	138	44	32.0	94	68.1

Visibility academic library websites was analyzed using the total number of universities in Nigeria (138) according to NUC list of Nigerian universities. Table 1 shows that out of 40 federal university libraries in Nigeria, 23 (57.5%) library websites have direct links from the institution's home page to the library. Only 7 (18.0%) state university libraries and 14 (24.0%) private university libraries were visible.

Table 2 : Marketing through networking

Direct link to	No	Percentage (%)
NLA,LRCN,IFLA	0	0
Other Libraries	10	62.5
Subject Gateways	15	93.7
Nigerian University	0	0

Table2 reveals no networking (0%) with NLA, LRCN & IFLA. Networking of library websites is important both in national and international levels. But in Nigeria, the present status of networking and resource sharing with professional associations like NLA, LRCN, IFLA, is not satisfactory. Out of 16

academic libraries, 10 (62.5%) were linked with other libraries while 15 (93.7%) were linked to subject gateways 0% was for links to other Nigerian universities.

Table 3: Marketing through online services

Links to online services	No	Percentage (%)
Application forms	6	37.5
Reservations	3	18.75
Interlibrary loans/loan	3	18.75
Renewal	6	37.5
User education	7	43.75
User survey (comments)	5	31.25
Downloading	7	43.75
Document delivery	2	12.5
Library opening hours	7	43.75

Online service is defined as links to application forms, reservations, interlibrary loan, renewal, request, user education and user survey (Siddike, Munshi, and Mahamud, 2013 and kaba, 2011). Table 3 shows that 6 (37.5%) library in Nigeria use their websites to provide links to application forms and renewal services. While 7 (43.75%) library websites each provided links to user education, downloading and opening hours; 5 (31.25%) library websites provided links to user survey and comments while 3(18.75%) had links to reservation and interlibrary loan services and only 2(12.5%) provided document delivery services.

Table 4: Marketing through consultation services

Links to consultation services	No	Percentage (%)
Ask-a-librarian	4	25.0
Email service	11	68.8
Copyright	0	0

Consultation services through university library websites provide e-mail or a link to the librarian in the web site for contacts is known as Ask-a-librarian. A total of 11 libraries (68.8%) provided an e-mail address for users to contact the library. None of the libraries provided information about copyright (Table 4). Ask-a-librarian services were provided by 4 (25.0%) university libraries.

Table 5: Marketing through provision of online resources

Links to online resources	No	Percentage (%)
E-books and E-journals	16	100
Databases	14	87.5
E-newspapers	7	43.75
multimedia	11	68.8

This is defined as links to an OPAC, e-books, e-journals, and multimedia collections (Table 5). All the 16 (100%) library websites analyzed provided links to e-journals and e-books, while links to databases were provided by 14 (87.5) library websites and links to e-newspapers were provided by 7 (43.75%) libraries. 11 (68.8%) provided links to multimedia resources available on their home pages.

Discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations

The finding shows that academic libraries in Nigeria are evolving and in the early stage of development of library website as well as utilizing it as an instrument for marketing web-based information resources. Library websites are not very visible considering the popularity of university homepages in Nigeria since less than 1/3 (i.e. 44) out of 138

University libraries have active library portal (website). Visibility is defined as the existence of direct link from the university website to the library website. Immediate visible links are defined as direct link. Pull-down, pop-up or mouse-over links are not considered as indirect link (Siddike, Munshi & Mahamud, 2013; Brower, 2004 and Detlor, 2006).

It shows that the university libraries of Nigeria are providing online services like application forms, reservation, renewal, request, and user survey. It is recommended that all the surveyed academic libraries should provide online application forms, reservation, renewal, request and user survey.

It is important to note that over 85% of the surveyed libraries offer access to electronic journals, e-books, and multimedia resources. These libraries understand and respect the current needs of library users of the 21st century, where the availability of online resource is vital for easy and rapid access to information.

Findings revealed that no surveyed academic libraries of Nigeria have direct links to Professional associations like NLA, LRCN related associations and other indigenous universities. This shows lack of commitment to collaboration between academic libraries and professional associations/universities at national level (0%) (Kaur, 2009). Networking with other libraries and related associations provide free access to electronic resources. Therefore, denying users this privilege is not a healthy development. Links to other libraries and related associations allow users to benefit from unlimited

information services and resources. As a result, it is indispensable for these libraries to provide links to other libraries and related associations.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that academic libraries in Nigeria are evolving in the development of marketing web-based information resources via the library website. They should develop robust user-centered web-based interfaces that not only provide patrons with access to online catalogs, subscribed resources and other electronic content, but also create virtual environments which enable patrons to contribute to the selection of these collections, to channel the delivery of value-added services, to engage in two way communication with library staff and, in some cases, to even collaborate with other library users.

Robust library websites can include broadcast search tools, electronic reference services (for example, Ask A Librarian). Personalization features for example, customized home pages, virtual bookshelves), and enriched content (for example, author biographies, book reviews, tables of content, book covers). These library websites can function as portals or gateways to an integrated and varied collection of information resources and as sophisticated guidance systems which support users across a wide spectrum of information seeking behaviors-from goal-directed search to wayward browsing.

Recommendations

The paper, based on the findings recommended the following:

1. That there should be a national policy on the standardization of criteria for the development of library websites in Nigeria.
2. NLA AND LRCN should set-up a committee to develop this policy.
3. Links to professional associations especially, NLA, LRCN, IFLA NUC digital library be mandatorily implemented on all Nigerian library websites in order to allow users to benefit from unlimited information services and resources.
4. That every university library in Nigeria must develop website for the library: which will serve as a criteria for accreditation of the university.
- 5) That all the surveyed academic libraries should provide user survey; which is an effective tool for measuring service satisfaction and service quality.
- 6) That every university library in Nigeria must develop a website for the library, this in sense will serve as criteria for accreditation of the university.

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APPENDIX 1: ACADEMIC LIBRARY

NORTH CENTRAL

1. University of Jos, Plateau state

www.unijos.edu.ng

2. University of Ilorin, kwara state

www.Library.unilorin.edu.ng

3. Federal university of Technology,

Minna, Niger state

NORTH EAST

4. University of Maiduguri, Borno state

www.unimaid.edu.ng

NORTH WEST

5. Ahmadu Bello University, zaira, Kaduna state

www.abu.edu.ng/Library

6. Federal university, Dutse, Jigawa state

fud.edu.ng/Library

7. Usumanu Danfodiyo University, sokoto state

pg.udusok.edu.ng/Library

SOUTH EAST

8. Federal University of Technology,Oweri, Imo State

www.futo.edu.ng/library

9. University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu state

www.unn.edu.ng/Library

10. Nnamdi Azikire university Awka, Anambra state, NAU Library

SOUTH SOUTH

11. Federal University of petroleum Resources,

Effurun, Delta www.fupre.edu.ng

12. University of Calabar, Cross River

Library.unical.edu.ng

13. University of Port Harcourt, River State

Library.uniport.edu.ng

SOUTH WEST

14. Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo ,Lib.futa.edu.ng

15. Redeemer's University, Mowe, Ogun State

run.edu.ng

16. Osun state University, Osogbo, Osun State

Library.uni osun.edu.ng

NORTH CENTRAL

University of Jos Library, Plateau state.

www.unijos.edu.ng/library

University of Ilorin Library kwara state

www.Library.unilorin.edu.ng

Federal university of Technology Library

Minna, Niger state

NORTH EAST

University of Maiduguri Library Borno state

www.unimaid.edu.ng

NORTH WEST

Ahmadu Bello University Library zaira, Kaduna

www.abu.edu.ng/Library

Federal university, Dutse Library Jigawa state

fud.edu.ng/Library

Usumanu Danfodiyo University Library sokoto

pg.udusok.edu.ng/Library

SOUTH EAST

Federal University of Technology Library Owerri, Imo State

www.futo.edu.ng/library

University of Nigeria, Nsukka Library Enugu state

www.unn.edu.ng/Library

Nnamdi Azikire university Library Awka,

Anambra state, NAU Library

SOUTH SOUTH

Federal University of Petroleum Resources

Library Effurun, Delta www.fupre.edu.ng

University of Calabar Library, Cross River

Library.unical.edu.ng

University of Port Harcourt Library, River State ,

Library.uniport.edu.ng

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Redeemer's University Library Mowe, Ogun

State run.edu.ng

Osun state University Library Osogbo, Osun

State Library.uni osun.edu.ng

APPENDIX 2: CHECKLIST

NO	CHECKPOINTS	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
----	-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

	Marketing through visibility (links to library from the library's main homepage)										
	Is the library visible?										
2	Is it a direct link										
3	Is it an indirect link?										
4	No link at all										
	Marketing through readability of website (language options)										
5	English language only										
6	English and French languages										
7	Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba only										
8	English language and any of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo										
	Marketing through elements of information available on the library portal, library news (i.e. Information to users)										
9	library news (i.e. Information to users)										
10	Library programs										
11	Notice board										
12	Photographs of events										
13	Online bulletin										
14	Updates on new books, journals, databases etc										
15	Mission and Vision Statement										
16	Opening hours										
17	Newspapers										
	Marketing through Networking on library portal										
18	Links to NLA, LRCN, IFLA and other professional association										
19	Links to other libraries										

20	Links to other universities										
21	Links to information gateways										
22	Links to internet resources										
	Marketing through consultation services										
23	Email service provided										
24	Ask-a- Librarian or the like										
25	Copyright Information provided										
	Marketing through online services										
26	Links to application forms										
27	Links to reservations or interlibrary loans										
28	Links to request and Renewal										
29	Links to user education										
30	User surveys (comments)										
31	Downloading										
32	Document delivery										
33	Links to social networks – Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr etc.										
	Marketing through online resources										
34	OPAC / Catalogue										
35	E-books and E-journals										
36	Databases										
37	Multimedia										
38	Newspapers										