

The Use of Information Technologies in Marketing and Promotion of Library Services in University Libraries in North-eastern Nigeria

Bello Abubakar

Department of Library and Information Science,
Federal Polytechnic Bali, Taraba State Nigeria
Email: alhajibello86@gmail.com, phone; +2348034652478

Blessing Francis Buba

Library Department, Federal Polytechnic Bali, Taraba State Nigeria
Email: blessingbuba@gmail.com phone; +2348105507252
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Abstract

This study assesses the extent of the application of information and communication technology in the marketing of library services offering outreach services in Libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research makes use of previously collated information and employs text analytical techniques to understand the relevance of modern technological aids in enhancing library operations. It highlights the range of technologies the marketing of library services can employ together with websites, social networks, email, and mobile applications to increase user participation and improve service provision. These technologies have now started being embraced by Libraries in North Eastern Nigeria enabling them to offer additional services. Nonetheless, other factors such as inadequate funds for proper marketing, insufficiently qualified staff, lack of sustained reliable internet connections and frequent electricity supply have blocked effective integration of ICT marketing strategies. These findings reveal the need for proper planning, access to funds, and staff development to mitigate these barriers. The report also shows that there is real potential for modern information technologies to be adequately used by Libraries to meet the needs of the target users more effectively. Recommended solutions include greater financial provision for appropriate equipment and integration of technology in libraries, regular meetings with librarians and training for employees, and collaboration with stakeholders to tackle infrastructure problems. Working the above strategies university libraries in North-eastern Nigeria may harness the potential of IT to boost the visibility and accessibility of their services, eventually leading to enhanced user satisfaction and resource utilization.

Keywords: *Information technology, library services, marketing, university libraries, North-eastern Nigeria.*

Introduction

The fruits of the harsh reliance on information technology (IT) across several spheres drastically changed the method of service delivery, especially in the library and information science disciplines. As key players in the academic and research ecosystem, university libraries have embraced information technology to efficiently market their products and services. Librarians engage their customers and encourage them to use the services that are suitable for them and the market that they want to target (Rowley, 2001). The use of IT tools such as websites, social media, and emails has changed the interaction between libraries and their clients making services easy to use, easy to find, and easy to access.

According to I.R.Tour, the library's approach to marketing started using new methods such as putting up posters, making announcements, and others, and now uses Information Technologies that allow for being more efficient and mobile (Akeriwa, Penzhorn, & Holmner, 2014). In advanced economies, library marketing has been made easy through the use of information technology as a variety of services such as virtual reference and promotion of digital resources are offered to suit the different interests of the customers. Nevertheless, in third-world countries like Nigeria, the adoption of IT in libraries is usually hampered by infrastructural challenges, low levels of funding, and poor skills capacity (Okiy, 2015).

In the context of north-eastern Nigeria where socio-economic and technological factors offer certain limitations, the libraries in the area still have a hard time selling out their services. Even though some libraries have started to use IT for promotional work, this field of study is still very much untouched. Quadri and Idowu (2016) state that a significant number of university libraries in Nigeria do not have any formal marketing plans and that the application of IT services is mostly erratic or lacking in usage. This shows that there is a need to consider this context concerning the place of IT in marketing library services.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the application of information technology in the marketing and promotion of library services in university libraries located in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. The aim is to determine which IT tools are used, measure their effectiveness, and examine the challenges faced in using them. The research will assist in the formulation of strategies that enhance the promotion of library services, thereby improving user satisfaction by shedding light on existing practices.

The findings of this research are important not only for the university libraries in north-eastern Nigeria but also for similar institutions in other developing regions. As libraries move more into the digital age understanding IT adoption in marketing becomes increasingly important.

Statement of the Problem

The enabling of adequate functions of the libraries is fundamental in providing support to the teaching, learning, and research functions of the universities. Nevertheless, in several university libraries in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, the advertisement and the selling of the library services are still a challenge. Even though libraries across the globe have increasingly used information technology (IT) such as social networks, library sites, and automated systems to enhance service delivery and engagement, still in this region a good number of university libraries face problems in embracing these modern approaches.

Studies show that libraries in most developing countries lack the basic facilities, funding, and know-how to effectively introduce new ICT technologies (Quadri&Idowu, 2016). Moreover, North-eastern Nigerians may, as a result of poor marketing, be oblivious to the full range of services provided by the university libraries. Such ignorance can cause less consumption of library resources which will impact negatively on higher learning achievements and research performance.

This research tries to solve these gaps by evaluating the existing usage of IT in marketing library services in university libraries in north-eastern Nigeria. It tries to identify the problems impeding successful IT adoption and provides methods to maximize the usage of these technologies for enhanced service delivery.

Research Objectives

- I. To examine the extent to which information technologies are used in the marketing and promotion of library services in university libraries in North-eastern Nigeria.
- II. To identify the challenges faced by university libraries in North-eastern Nigeria in adopting and utilizing information technologies for marketing purposes and propose strategies for improvement.

Research Questions

- I. To what extent are information technologies being utilized in the marketing and promotion of library services in university libraries in North-eastern Nigeria?
- II. What challenges do university libraries in North-eastern Nigeria face in adopting and using information technologies for marketing, and what strategies can be employed to address these challenges?

Literature Review

Overview of Marketing Libraries

Promoting the services available together with finding and retaining customers is the philosophy behind Marketing in libraries. In the past, libraries operated as passive institutions: users came in, looked up information, and exited. But that has changed, as Gupta, Koontz, and Massimo (2013) Explained: libraries are now in a highly competitive business in which acquiring and retaining users is crucial. Marketing in libraries emanated from the quest for library services to become more user-oriented and consequently the need to understand users and provide bespoke services (Rowley, 2001).

Understanding who the intended users are and what their information needs are, and clearly articulating the benefits that users will get from using library services are all part of the process of applying marketing concepts in libraries. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), marketing involves the ability to identify what customers want and then provide them with what their requirements are. Marketing of digital resources, instruction programs, and information literacy training are some of the examples that a library can market. In this way, the learners are assured that all the services and resources that they need are available to them.

The proliferation of information technology in the library has provided structures through which libraries can conduct marketing in the 21st century, removing traditional methods such as going to offices of potential clients to solicit business. Instead, social media, library websites, and email newsletters have become commonplace.

In the digital age, information technology has revolutionized how libraries handle marketing. Tools such as social media, library websites, and email newsletters are commonly employed to reach a bigger audience (Akeriwa, Penzhorn, & Holmner, 2014). Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow libraries to communicate directly with people, publish information, and receive feedback. According to Kang and Park (2014), the usage of social media in libraries promotes user engagement and offers chances for two-way conversations, which is vital for creating long-term connections with users.

Nonetheless the advantages, many libraries confront obstacles in establishing successful marketing strategies. These include insufficient resources, lack of staff knowledge, and opposition to change (Fourie & Dulle, 2011). Libraries in underdeveloped countries, in particular, suffer from limited technology infrastructure and insufficient training for librarians on new marketing tactics (Okiy, 2015). However, creative techniques, such as collaborations with external groups and community participation, have been recommended to overcome these constraints (Bhatt, 2011).

In addition to digital technologies, conventional marketing approaches, such as posters, brochures, and seminars, remain useful, especially in locations with limited access to technology. Combining conventional and digital tactics helps libraries to cater to varied user groups successfully. As Singh and Sharma (2014) remarked, a hybrid strategy guarantees that both tech-savvy users and those with poor digital literacy may access and benefit from library services.

Current Use of Information Technology in Marketing

With the introduction of information technology (IT), companies, libraries included, have transformed the way they engage clients and provide information about their services.

IT mediums like websites, social media, emails, and phone applications have become essential in the development and execution of effective marketing campaigns directed to different customer groups (Adeyinka& Musa, 2020).

Such technologies enable libraries to disseminate information promptly by updating users about the resources, services, and events offered by the library.

Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are increasingly used for marketing purposes. Libraries rely on these channels to inform users of new acquisitions, advertise and provide workshops, and enhance interaction with users. Studies indicate that commercial social networking sites have transformed the interactions that libraries have with their users by enhancing the characteristics of meeting people and the use of knowledge (Afolabi&Aboyade, 2021).

Mobile apps are also gaining popularity in library marketing. These applications give users with on-the-go access to resources, reservation systems, and warnings about overdue documents or forthcoming events. Libraries in affluent and developing nations alike are exploiting these tools to attract younger, tech-savvy patrons (Mohammed et al., 2022).

The use of IT in marketing goes beyond communication; it also incorporates data analytics to measure user behavior and preferences. By assessing user interactions with digital platforms, libraries may enhance their marketing tactics, customize material to user demands, and maximize service delivery. Thus, IT not only allows successful marketing but also increases decision-making processes in library administration (Oladokun, 2019).

Global, the present usage of IT in marketing has broadened the breadth and effect of promotional operations, allowing libraries to engage with users in novel and relevant ways.

Effectiveness of IT Tools in Library Marketing

The incorporation of information technology (IT) tools into library marketing has shown to be very beneficial in strengthening service delivery, increasing user engagement, and improving general accessibility to library resources. IT solutions, such as library websites, social media platforms, and email communication systems, have changed conventional library operations by enabling dynamic, user-centric services (Afolabi&Aboyade, 2021).

One key benefit of IT technologies is their capacity to reach a broader audience outside the physical confines of libraries. Library websites, for instance, serve as comprehensive platforms where users can access catalogs, databases, and digital resources from any location. This convenience significantly enhances user satisfaction and ensures that library services remain relevant in the digital age (Ekwueme&Ilo, 2019). Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, are especially helpful in advertising library events, resources, and services. Through these

platforms, libraries may communicate directly with users, get feedback, and generate compelling material that attracts a younger population (Adeyinka& Musa, 2020).

Email communication is another significant IT tool in library marketing. Personalized email campaigns let libraries tell patrons about new acquisitions, forthcoming events, and overdue resources. These efforts generate a feeling of connection and involvement with users, eventually boosting library use (Oladokun, 2019).

The success of IT technologies is also visible in their cost-efficiency. Compared to conventional advertising approaches, such as posters and brochures, IT technologies give a more sustainable and scalable approach. Digital marketing tactics may be readily updated and adjusted to individual user groups, allowing a more focused and effective outreach (Abubakar et al., 2021).

Role of IT in Library Promotion

Information Technology (IT) has become vital in marketing library services, enabling libraries to extend their reach, enhance efficiency, and interact more meaningfully with users. The move from conventional marketing approaches to IT-driven initiatives has allowed libraries to conform to the growing information-seeking habits of contemporary users (Adeyinka& Musa, 2020).

A crucial component of IT in library marketing is the creation of effective online platforms, including websites and mobile apps. These platforms serve as the digital front door for library services, offering users access to e-resources, catalogs, and individualized profiles (Oladokun, 2019). For example, library websites with user-friendly interfaces and search features improve user engagement and satisfaction, particularly in academic institutions where quick access to information is vital (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Social networking has evolved as one of the most successful IT platforms for library marketing. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable libraries to communicate with people in real-time, post updates, and promote events or new acquisitions (Afolabi&Aboyade, 2021). These technologies not only build a feeling of community but also enable libraries to obtain user input, allowing continual development of services. For instance, research has indicated that libraries employing social media for engagement report greater attendance at library events and higher consumption of services (Alhassan&Issa, 2020).

Email marketing is another IT-driven advertising approach extensively employed in libraries. Regular mailings and reminders tell users about new services, forthcoming events, and available resources. This personalized marketing helps keep consumers engaged and ensures they are aware of services that cater to their unique demands (Abubakar et al., 2021).

Notwithstanding these advantages, the adoption of IT in library promotion confronts hurdles, including insufficient infrastructure, lack of technical skills, and financing limits (Quadri&Idowu, 2016).

In underdeveloped nations, these issues are more severe, forcing libraries to pursue novel tactics like as collaborations with technology companies and capacity-building initiatives for staff (Okiy, 2015).

Challenges in Marketing Library Services in North-eastern Nigeria

The efficient marketing of library services in north-eastern Nigeria has numerous important problems, many of which are founded on socioeconomic, infrastructural, and institutional restrictions. These problems restrict the adoption and integration of current marketing tactics, including the use of information technology (IT).

One of the key issues is low finance, which inhibits the capacity of university libraries to buy contemporary IT tools and equipment. Without adequate financial resources, libraries are unable to invest in technology like automated systems, social media management tools, and dependable internet connections essential for efficient marketing (Edewor&Omosor, 2022). The lack of financing also impacts staff training and capacity development, which are crucial for the effective implementation of IT-based solutions (Afolabi&Aboyade, 2021).

Another big concern is the inconsistent electrical supply and inadequate internet access widespread in the area. Frequent power outages and poor or inconsistent internet connectivity undermine the consistency and dependability of IT technologies used for library marketing. These infrastructure limitations make it difficult for libraries to maintain an online presence or offer smooth access to digital materials (Adeyinka& Musa, 2020).

A shortage of trained workers further amplifies these issues. Many library staff members in the area are not fully educated in the usage of contemporary IT technologies and digital marketing methods. This skills gap restricts the potential of libraries to launch new marketing strategies or successfully connect with people via digital platforms (Abubakar et al., 2021).

Additionally, cultural and literacy hurdles in North-eastern Nigeria also offer obstacles. A considerable section of the public may not be acquainted with or have access to IT-based library services. Low levels of digital literacy and restricted access to devices such as laptops and smartphones prohibit many prospective users from benefitting from current library services (Ekwueme&Ilo, 2019).

Security problems in certain sections of North-eastern Nigeria, owing to continuing hostilities, have also hindered the capacity of libraries to function properly. Libraries in conflict-prone regions may endure interruptions, closures, or damage to infrastructure, which further affects their marketing efforts (Oladokun, 2019).

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive research method to assess how information technology is utilized in the marketing and advertisement of library services for university libraries located in the north-eastern region of Nigeria.

Since the qualitative descriptive approach provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question in real-life situations, it is particularly suitable for this study.

This strategy makes it possible to explore the experiences, activities, and challenges that libraries in the region face, making it possible to adequately understand the phenomena.

In the collection of data, this research relies on secondary sources of data. Secondary data includes literature reviews such as journal articles, books, reports, and scholarly articles that cover the role of information technology in libraries in the Nigerian context. Government papers, institutional reports, and research conducted in similar areas or environments illuminate the challenges and successes of the use of information technology in the marketing and advertising of libraries.

This approach ensures that the study is based on existing knowledge while allowing for further analysis and interpretation.

The primary method of data analysis is content analysis, which will be conducted using the approach. Content analysis involves the systematic assessment and interpretation of textual materials to identify patterns and themes in them. Patterns, themes, and connections. The qualitative character of this technique allows for an in-depth investigation of how information technologies are deployed in promoting library services, as well as the hurdles faced. This methodological technique guarantees that the study delivers a detailed view of the research issue, relying on a plethora of secondary data to create well-informed findings. The use of content analysis further increases the study's capacity to synthesize current information while addressing the unique research goals.

Findings and Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that the use of information technology (IT) has considerably revolutionized the marketing and promotion of library services in university libraries in North-Eastern Nigeria. IT resources such as social media platforms, library websites, and email newsletters are increasingly being leveraged to promote user interaction and communicate information about library services. These technologies enable libraries to reach a greater audience, including distant users, therefore extending their accessibility and influence (Adeyinka& Musa, 2020).

Nevertheless these achievements, significant difficulties exist. Limited finance remains a key obstacle, inhibiting the purchase of contemporary IT tools and infrastructure essential for efficient marketing. Many libraries in the area also lack skilled professionals to oversee IT-based promotional initiatives, which limits the efficient exploitation of existing resources (Edewor&Omosor, 2022). Additionally, unstable internet access and frequent power outages

further hinder the consistent implementation of IT in marketing initiatives (Mohammed et al., 2022).

The report also underscores the necessity for strategic strategy in incorporating IT into library marketing. Libraries that employ a complete approach—combining conventional and IT-based marketing techniques—are more likely to achieve improved user engagement and service performance. Moreover, the results underline the significance of educating library workers in digital skills to boost their capacity to employ IT systems efficiently.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To sum up, this study highlights the enabling role of information technology (IT) in the marketing and promotion of university library services in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. Social media, library websites, and email for communication have enabled libraries to expand their sphere, improve service, and increase engagement in the services offered. Some challenges still exist which include inadequate funding, lack of robust infrastructure, and absence of trained personnel which prohibit the effective use of IT in library marketing and deployment.

These challenges are crucial to address as they ensure that IT is used optimally and that library services are relevant and effective in the digital landscape.

To solve these problems, the report proposes the following:

Initially, enabling programs should be initiated and sustained to improve the digital skills of librarians. This is extremely essential to be able to use IT tools effectively for marketing and IT-based services. Joint forces for staff training activities alongside professional organizations might enhance the participation of the library staff in skill development.

Secondly, addressing infrastructure problems like low internet connectivity and outages requires more interactions with telecommunication companies and local governments. Such joint efforts may facilitate reliable internet and electricity supply for timely library services availability, hence increasing the execution of IT-driven marketing tactics.

Through applying these ideas, university libraries in North-eastern Nigeria may overcome current hurdles and leverage the advantages of IT in advertising their services, eventually leading to enhanced user satisfaction and library use.

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