

## **Significance of marketing library resources in libraries and information centers: Issues and prospects**

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### **Abstract**

In today's knowledge economy, library and information services are viewed as sellable products through marketing concepts. Marketing helps libraries to promote the value of the services in an emerging information communication technology world where patrons prefer the "Web" as their primary source of information because of its promptness in answer to queries. Technological advancement, marketing and globalization have ushered in a great change and challenges in educational environment thereby, by-passing the traditional concept of services in librarianship. The way information is harnessed, communicated, processed, acquired, organized, and disseminated is now changing through marketing principles. For instance marketing of library services (product/commodity) increasingly involved satisfaction of user, by providing maximum value to patrons. Information is a commodity and an information service is the philosophy of marketing the library commodity. The philosophy of marketing states that the social and economic justification for an organization's existence is the satisfaction of customer's wants and needs, while meeting organizational activities through financial sustainability. Keying to the above, also discussed is the growth of library through marketing commercialization, marketing strategy, and promotions. The information world is growing through information technological revolution that has drastically challenged many facets of human existence: from education, industry, economy, marketing and politics to information delivery. The library cannot be left out in this noble innovation. The need for information marketing becomes imperative, given the fact that ICT has improved accessibility to information, and this has changed not only the roles, but also the way information is harnessed. The paper argued that if marketing of information is carefully planned and executed; marketing has the potentials to change the status quo of librarianship. It recommends de-classification, repositioning and re-engineering of library and information services through effective marketing. It concludes that a new dawn is here and information professionals should realize that the right time to strategies is now, in order to be relevant in an environment that is shifting and full of threats.

**Key Words:** Significance, Marketing, Libraries, Information Centers.

### **Introduction**

Barriers are being broken; the world is now a global village. Things are happening at a pace unprecedented. Old ways are giving way to fresh ideas, bold styles, concepts and strategies (Omekwu, 2009). There is a new dawn in information palace which cannot be ignored. We (Librarians) cannot afford to ignore these strides...we cannot resist this change...Change; the only permanent phenomenon in life is rocking the foundation of information service delivery (Gupta, 2010). Smith (n.d.) in his text titled 'Let the Circle Be Broken' stated that the radical changes/challenges that are revolutionizing the entire world came from globalization of information, information

communication technology and information marketing. Globalization has therefore given rise to international industrial structure in which thousands of the world's largest corporations maintain operations in multiple countries through information net-working, information communication delivery, consortia, and information marketing strategies etc. ICT has not only turned the world into a global village, it has also brought what is happening around the world into our living rooms. People no longer feel as if the world of information delivery (library) is secluded. It means that, society can now access information from various points thereby bypassing the custodian of knowledge (Library). Information plays vital

roles in sustainability of the society the world over. In this society, the economic development, social transformation range and quality of life depend on the information and its usage. A society with this characteristic is called an information society. Its basic characteristic is that information is the most powerful economic and social factor therefore its production and usage must be developed. As such information industry has been developed in the 'income' and 'profit maximization' through strategic marketing.

Conforming to the above submission, Hassan and Zahra (2012) stated that "marketing of information serves is a new conception to libraries and information centers." He concluded that it is now an important realm for the libraries and information centers, because information as library product has commerce element. Consequently, information is subjected to measure and valued by economic theory causing the manipulations (competitors) of various information businesses to compete with libraries. Various value systems for information have emerged and information could now be sold, exchanged, transmitted and dominated with a financial context. Also proliferation of modern technology has enhanced the explosion of information, it helps to create, store, retrieve, repackage, preserve and disseminate information in due needs. This reality has prompted Pringgoadisurjo and Luwarsnin (1999) to opined that libraries as institutions are facing challenges due to information revolutions through the concept of Information Technology. Rapid growth of material, rising costs, revised requirements for professional training, networking demands, and financial constraints are issues currently contending with information managers. Technological advancement has also ensured the diversity of information products and now multi-media technology can facilitate the information transfer with

text, sound, graphic, drawings, fixed images or even animation. Various computerized databases are made available at information centers and the demands for knowledge-based products are increasing rapidly. This demand has made a great impact on libraries compelling them to find ways and strategies to mitigate the increasing user (demands) irrespective of financial constraints. But unfortunately, inadequacies of ICT facilities, budgetary cuts and deduce purchasing capacity have limited the rate at which librarian's t can key into this new concepts of information commercialization. These challenges have advice affect on libraries and information centers in living up to expectations.

Sequel to the above, Gupta (2010) lamented that Libraries and information centers are in a time of unprecedented change and challenge due to pressure from their users to be up to date in service delivery. He concluded that information marketing are the only option which is creating new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information by-passing traditional forms of information services deliveries. These innovations have ushered in new method of information harnessing by library users. Library users are transforming into customers with rising expectations, diverse needs, wants, and choices, which are gradually re-shaping the services offered by the libraries. The notion of services has moved from basic to value- added through marketing; from staff assisted to self-services; from in-house to out-reach, from free to price; from re-active to pro-active; and from mass-customization to personalized and individual service. As a follow up, Madhusdhan (2012) observed that libraries are facing crises because of economic meltdown , increase user base, rapid growth of materials, rising costs, networking demands, competition by database vendors, and complexity in

information requirements are forcing the professionals to adopt marketing of library and its services in order to bridge the financial gaps. Marketing in its rapid development has widened its meaning and scope in information delivery. With the proliferation of information, information is scattered in many areas and in order to keep track of this, libraries must embrace the current development in information marketing to close the gaps of ineffective library services.

Libraries are discovering that by applying marketing principles and techniques, they can understand better their users' needs, communicate more effectively with a variety of external audiences, and achieve greater efficiency and optimal results in delivering products and services that meet the identified needs of clients and make more money. Spalding and Wang (2011) stressed that in the last few decades, academic libraries in US have increasingly turned to the business world and its literature for more effective organizational, fiscal and service delivery models. Also Japath (n.d.) in his discuss on 'approach to marketing in academic and special libraries of Sri Lanka' depicted that, the concept of information marketing covers not only the buying and selling for financial gain, but also the achievement of organizational objectives successfully. Thus the term "Marketing" has a wider and deeper sense, which proliferate the organization's successive achievements. Modern marketing is practiced across board-both for the business organization and the non-business organization such as libraries. Marketing in libraries is simply, planning, organizing, dissemination and controlling of information services on a pro-active and user-oriented way that ensures the user satisfaction while achieving the objectives of the parent organization. Rohit and Ashish (2016) submitted that marketing is a stance and an attitude that focuses on meeting the needs of

users. It is a means of ensuring that libraries, librarians, and librarianship are integrated into both today's and tomorrow's emerging global culture. Marketing has spread its wings within library services. By these new concepts libraries are emerging into new categories such as relationship marketing, internal marketing, interactive marketing, technological marketing, emotional marketing and experiential marketing. In library, (no matter what category we call it) it is ideal to use marketing to promote behavioral change. It is to arrest and turn around these patterns of decline that this paper will address and make suggestions. The librarians by the new innovation should assemble and marshal resources to increase their effectiveness, to examine and re-examine their operations, to diversify through commercialization of services and maximize their income streams, and to align their expanding resources in accordance with planned priorities. Hence, to situate librarianship to meet the present challenges in information palace, keying in the libraries' marketing and libraries objectives becomes imperative.

### **Marketing and library objectives**

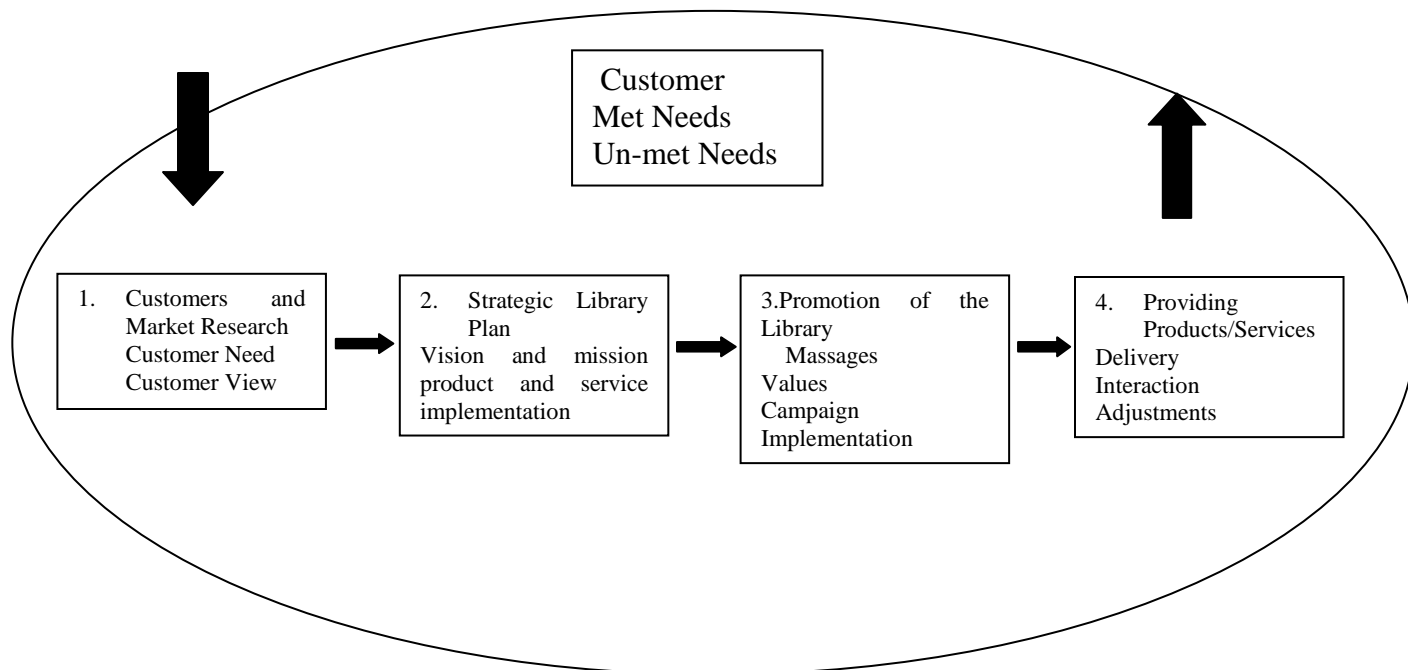
All processes of marketing undertaken by libraries and information centers must be guided by its policy and objectives. The marketing process begins at the library's core, namely the library's purpose/goals. These statements reflect its values and explicitly state its philosophy. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) in their wisdom outlined the major objectives of university libraries as thus:

- Provision of materials for support of learning and research.
- Provision of materials for research for student and faculty

- Provision of materials to help library users in their personal development.
- Cooperation with other libraries to broaden access to materials for the benefit of all, (Consortia).
- Meeting the specialized information needs for university community.

Bringing patrons to appreciate these functions and services are libraries role in information/knowledge environment that ushered in marketing strategies. A marketing strategy is a cyclical process that must be continuing activities for the library. It is a data driven decision making and service quality improvement process that must begin with market research of the target audience. The data gathered must be

analyzed to determine what the met and unmet needs of patrons are. Objectively gathering and analyzing of data requires that librarians must avoid the issue of assumption of what the audience perceives, wants, or needs. By avoiding assumptions, librarians will understand the target audience, communicate better with them and meet their desired information needs. By doing this, the library is better positioned to develop successful communication and service delivery goals, design communication tools that are most effective in reaching the target audience. Assessment is an essential part of the strategic marketing planning process, for analyzing measurable outcomes that will enable the library to improve services and set new, relevant goals for the future as it is illustrated in the diagram below.



**Figure 1: Marketing planning process in library environment**

Source: ACRL strategic marketing (Iran-the-the Trainer Workshop (2011))

Effective strategic marketing requires careful planning, creative approaches, and focused strategies. Librarians must think beyond traditional methods of information services deliveries, keeping in mind that a marketing campaign doesn't need to take months and cost thousands of naira to achieve stated objectives (Caballero, 2012). Referring to the above model, the first step is the librarian's holistic position to the architectural environment that involves designating of the entire marketing scenario which entails, who will do the planning and what their specific roles and interactions will be. In scanning the library environment there are things to consider. These include assessing the library's mission, its strengths and weaknesses, what can be gained, and what can be changed? And what are the available opportunities? These comes either the acceptance or modification of the diagram. Planning help to prioritize the steps needed to launch product and seek approval for the project. The final step is the implementation of the strategic plan by following the steps outlined in the model Olayinka and Aminu ( 2016).

Also the marketing plan includes:

- i. Patrons and market research that generate data on clientele.
- ii. The context of current and future opportunities and challenges facing the library that allow it to clarify its vision, mission, and prioritized services.
- iii. Long-term goals to achieve patrons understanding the value of library's role in supporting knowledge consumption.
- iv. The most important key messages is to deliver frequently and consistently information to others through the

most appropriate communication tools.

- v. Prioritized audiences as well as how and when to communicate with them.
- vi. Implementation of strategies for information delivery to patrons.
- vii. Evaluation for measuring outcome achievement that represents progress toward goals and suggests how to improve communication and service delivery.

Strategic marketing plan allows librarians to concentrate limited resources to grab the greatest opportunities to increase sales and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. It is a written plan which combines the efforts to plan information product, its development, promote information products, and fix the price of information, its services, and distribution. It identifies the libraries' marketing goals, and explains how they will be achieved within a stated time frame. Marketing strategy determines the choice of target market segment, positioning, marketing mix, and allocation of resources (Nwaosu, 2011)

This written document referred to as strategic marketing plan helps librarians to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the current situation regarding the libraries, the product or the services?
- ii. Where should the information centre/product/services be in future?
- iii. How do the information centre/product/services get to realize specific targets?

- iv. To assess whether the information centre, product or services realize the goals and target it set to achieve?

The conceptualization of the said goals will help the library in actualizing the promotional strategy to re-position the library products and services.

### **Types Of promotional strategy in product services**

Ian Ruskin-Brown ( 2013) explained that this involve positioning the library to meet the needs of the clientele. The library must demonstrate its value in meeting patron's need through informational, educational, research and outdoor services. Promotional strategies include and not limited to:

- i. *Personal selling*: This originates from marketing strategy which commercial firms use to boost sales which libraries have keyed into. It involves personal presentation of products/services to potential customers.
- ii. *Segmentation*: Marketing segmentation is another basic marketing strategy. It is very relevant because of its roles in identifying one's target audience. Eileen Elliot de Saez (2014) describes segmentation thus:

Essentially, segmentation is the division of the library or information centre's market into smaller, more manageable, groups that have like characteristics. Marketing mixes can be fine-tuned to serve the need: these groups or segments and marketing communication targeted more precisely. The practice of marketing segmentation leads to better use of resources since those resources can be targeted with maximum effectiveness.

This can benefit libraries which tend to offer a broad range of product and services to target market. An understanding of segmentation can help libraries organize and define the characteristics of its functions. Kotler (2014) maintained that library will benefit through target marketing thus:

- i. *Target market*: Means that library must study the target markets' needs, design appropriate product/services to meet their needs. The most useful method to achieve target market is through marketing segmentation. Marketing segmentation is the division of market into certain categories according to buying habits of patrons. Each of these groups of users has distinct needs behaviour that must be taken into consideration for proper and effective marketing to be carried out. One of the vital components of target market is research.
- ii. *Market research*: The need or desire of the library clients are the core of the marketing process (research). For this reason the concept of the 4Ps comes to play (Product, Price, Promotion and Place). Marketing is about planning and executing your (proceed) process which includes marketing research to develop services and products, then evaluate the results and integrating the findings into future services and products. The majority of mission statements of academic libraries neglect the concept of letting the users' needs dictate the services orientations.

The conceptualization of the user needs will enable the librarian to understand the following issues:

- i. Who uses your services the most?
- ii. What are the most common competitive tasks?
- iii. What are recent customer complaints?
- iv. Are any of these recurring complaints?

Identifying the distinct groups of patrons and their needs/desires help librarians to allot priorities and concentrate on the most productive services to be offered, and also create an opportunity to meet these needs. In addition, subject areas that are in high demands should be captured through strategic marketing research thereby meeting the needs of the users. Also customer complaints as well as feedback should be given adequate and satisfactory attention through research implementations which will enhance the role of commercialization of information.

### **Roles of marketing in libraries.**

Marketing in its rapid development has widened its meaning and scope to cover a larger spectrum with a wider course of activity which includes the information industries. As the transition of economy move from industrial based socio-economy to information-based economy (information age) the importance of information has become highly imperative, and the concept of marketing has permeated into the library and information sector. Information has become a valuable commodity that people tend to buy for their needs. Hence, the criteria to determine the power in the society have shifted from the industry-ownership to the information globalized economy thereby perverting the entire world (Jagath n.d.). Information has keyed into industrial product which is bargained and paid for. It

will not be out of context to state that information has assumed the position of a commodity or economic goods of worldwide significance which contributes directly or indirectly to National Economy Empowerment through the marketing mix. Olson and Mosieman (2011) posited that marketing roles include determining market niches, defining products and services, setting prices, promoting services, and building good image. They maintained that in Library setting, marketing library products entails understanding the objectives/goals of the library, researching the needs of the target market, packaging the library and its services to meet these needs, then promotion of library and its services to attract the target markets. The fundamental objectives of most businesses are survival, profits and growth. Marketing contributes directly to achieving these objectives. It involves those activities which are vital to business organization, assessing the wants and satisfaction of present and potential customers, designing and managing product offerings, determining prices and pricing policies, developing, distribution strategies, communicating with present and potential customers.

Organizations including libraries and information centers regardless of area of specialization or responsibilities need to be familiar with the terminology and fundamentals of marketing concepts especially in this information age. Kotler (2014) affirmed that some institutions like museums, universities and libraries etc need marketing for their offers and products in order to gain an economic, social and political support. He stressed that the major challenges existing in information business field is lack of business specialist among librarians and information scientists. Matching, adapting, executing and optimizing organizational resources, services and facilities that are best suited to satisfying customers, are the basic mantra in

modern marketing. Marketing has therefore become the central focus and force on every successful organization, whether profit-making or non-profit making. The organizations success depends on its effectiveness in meeting identified customers wants or needs, both explicit and implicit. Customers are people whose behavior we want to influence and with whom we want to develop long-term loyalties for our library's offering, thereby capturing the lost glory that was created by globalization and ICTs. The integration of marketing in information domain is imperative because it reinforces and reiterates the basic values and re-invigorates the beliefs of the profession in the changing environment. The age long notion that library services (revolved around) aim to provide the right information to the right user at the right time is gradually narrowing because of some factors that are being envisaged in information delivery which are adversely competing with libraries.

Aniil and Sharm, (n. d.) conclude thus:

While libraries have been dosing or struggling to stay afloat, enterprising companies have began to discover the commercial potential of what we do, and are competing with us to sell much of the information, the public has declined to pay for through taxes.

So survival of library depends among other things on marketing its potentials through segmentation, diversification and commercialization of its services. Munchen (2010) submitted that information professionals should begin to realize that marketing of information products and services have bridged the financial constraint in libraries. It is pertinent to state that stakeholders have been propagating that social institutions such as universities libraries, hospitals, etc should look beyond their present state of

functioning/services and become self-sufficient if they are to purposefully work and demonstrate their relevance and competence to their clients. The age-old generosity for the socially desirable institutions is drying because of the change in the political outlook and the economic squeeze. Librarians and information managers therefore are being asked to generate revenue to become self-sustaining as much as possible (Jain et al, 1999). The present trend in information palace has prompted information managers to take a giant stride and embrace the information age with its attendant opportunities as captured by Modhusudhan (2012). He stated that there are two roles of marketing in libraries: (i) Achieving the purpose/goals of libraries and (ii) Satisfying user/customer needs and wants. These roles entails:

- i. Promote the use of information resources;
- ii. Create perception of need and thereby create demand;
- iii. Ensure the optimal use of information;
- iv. Improve the image and status of the libraries and library professionals;
- v. Tackle the problems of rising cost of reading materials, journals and databases;
- vi. Cope with the information explosion;
- vii. Introduce cutting-edge information technology system in library services;
- viii. Balance shrinking funds;
- ix. Save libraries from devaluation;



- x. Save libraries from declining reader-support;
- xi. Uphold the dictum that information is power;
- xii. Place the libraries as the centre of knowledge and
- xiii. Attract customers who do not currently use their services

Effective implementation of marketing will automatically create awareness and enhance information delivery. To situate library in the contest of discourse, it must effectively consider the marketing concepts. Librarians must realize that by keying into marketing, they can understand better their users' needs, justify

their services, communicate more effectively with a variety of external audience, and achieve greater efficiency and optimal results in delivering products and services that adds value and meet the identified needs of their clients. In marketing oriented library, the process depends on the customer's preferences and desire to their requirements. Customers are an important partner to the process because they put forward their views to overcome their problems and work with the staff in solving them. Librarians have been able to take the 5P's of the traditional external marketing mix to paint a more accessible service-oriented picture of library offerings for their customers. The 5P's of the traditionally external marketing mix with an internal twist for libraries should be considered as stated below.

**Table 1: The 5P's of the traditionally external marketing mix with an internal twist for libraries**

<b>Product</b>	Information resources and research services
<b>Price</b>	Free to employees. In other words, company sponsored. This is particularly important in an R&D environment where research budgets are tight and the company many not realize Return on Investment (ROI) in a project for some time.
<b>Place</b>	Not necessarily a physical location anymore. A strong web presence is necessary. Libraries are virtual as well as physical space now and the possibilities in both worlds are endless.
<b>Promotion</b>	Internal bulletins, e-mail, the company intra-net, the library web site, newsletter and poster campaigns, bill boards are all effective promotional vehicles for highlighting new tools and advertising events.
<b>People (Staff)</b>	Staff are relatively a new element in marketing mix as its importance for the development of strategies has only recently been realized. It is difficult to achieve satisfactory exchanges with public without suitable staff. That is why marketing experts now talk about "internal marketing", emphasizing that the entire staff must be at all cost involved in the organization of marketing strategies.

*Sources: Basanta and Sanjay (2015)*

In the competitive world, for library to be sustained, remain valued, relevant, and be proactive, it must change and deepen its image. It must transform from the age long highly fortified storehouse of knowledge guarded by staff and security devices, a treasure house where the borrower must be physically present, into a marketing oriented information dissemination concept that communicate to clients through marketing devices. The new-age librarian ought to be true service institutions, a group of professionals who are knowledgeable in application of marketing principles and can quickly identify the vast ocean of knowledge and the kind of information that different customers desired.

### Challenges

Libraries the world over are facing surmountable challenges as a result of globalization and information technology, rising cost of resources (books, journals periodicals) and today's dynamic economic climate. As a result, marketing concepts are gradually being adopted in library especially in the developed world to argument these challenges. However; in the process of trying to satisfy the users need, librarians are faced with challenges which include:

- i. *Lack of marketing skills:* One constraint in operating a profitable information business is the lack of business expertise among librarians. Marketing is a comprehensive term which stipulates all the processes and interactions that result in satisfaction of the users and revenue for the library. This implies that skillfulness is necessary both for meeting the needs of the users and profit maximization.
- ii. *Poor cross-fertilization of information:* The culture of information infrastructural

development and maintenance is not widespread in most libraries. For instance, consortia, networking and information sharing are alien in most libraries. This implies that libraries are not united in such way that librarian in the West can have access to materials from the librarians in the North. These especially in the developing nation has affected cross fertilization of knowledge.

- iii. *Inadequate of human resources:* We are at a point of change in the information economy of which libraries are part of. Change here is focused on innovation, technology, user experience, resources management, and service marketing. This change call for additional training for information professionals. Knowledge of marketing by librarians is inadequate and this needs radical restructuring to produce librarians who will be suited to serve in a product-knowledge-based society.
- iv. *Funding:* Financial sustainability is the prerequisite in marketability of library resources. The economic meltdown that is affecting the entire economy in the developing world does not spear information environment. Most libraries do not have sufficient funds to run the affairs of the library. It was against this backdrop that Mac Arthur Foundation (2009) submitted that many university libraries cannot compete with other information resources centers due to poor financing, poor infrastructure and lack of quality learning resources. It concluded in its reports on university libraries in Nigeria, that

many students and faculty members view the libraries as weak, backward and unable to support research.

### **The way foreword**

Libraries in Nigeria can borrow from the marketing mode for special libraries in Botswana as propagated by Nkanga (2011) as clear example of marketing on a tight budget. The Botswana library marketing model is based on the Working Improvement Teams (WITS) a program created by its government in 1993 to enhance productivity in organizations in her country. These libraries were encouraged to adopt economic measure as advocated in the program. For instance, the library model involved separating marketing from the day-to-day operations of the libraries and giving specific responsibilities for marketing to an officer or teams of officers. With the present trends in information delivery, librarians need to diversify in their acquisition of knowledge to include marketing skills. Also this can be achieved through conferences, seminar presentations, and work-shops, short and long-term marketing courses. Time has come for the library schools in Nigeria to include business courses in their curricular in order to equip graduates with marketing skills that will aspire them as practitioners. Libraries and librarians will meet the desires of their patrons through the various marketing concepts highlighted in this paper. Commercialization of information is in a position to address the issue of self sustenance of libraries.

### **Recommendation**

Libraries are becoming obsolescence owing to poor financing from their stakeholders. This development has mandated the library to look beyond its traditional concept by embracing services diversification through marketing concepts and information technology which will elevate the standard

of library products, enhance the image, draw users closer and increase its resources. The contemporary library is now generally named an information market and the library user is a consumer of information. Information is an essential resource for research and development of any nation. Marketing is vital in building the proper planning, designing and use of information services and products for the better and best possible use of information. The library should give priority to provide superb customer service; enhancing its image as information provider in the information age. The library and information center should be user-oriented in order to satisfy their information needs effectively. The ultimate aim of marketing here is to provide the right information to the right user at the right time and increase library finance.

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