

Towards adoption of competitive intelligence in marketing of library services in public university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

The use of competitive intelligence (CI) to market library services is a call for re-organisation of public university libraries. CI is an organisation mechanism that facilitates the transforming of competitive information into practical actions. The advent of technology in the educational services is gradually reducing users' patronage to the library. This call for librarians to map out strategies of retaining the value of libraries and keep their patrons. In line with this, this study examined adoption of competitive intelligence in marketing of library services in public university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria. Related literatures were reviewed to have in-depth knowledge about the new trends that can enhance library marketing and promote library services. As a result, public library need to embrace innovative marketing approaches and leverage digital technologies, by so doing public university libraries can effectively promote their services and resources, thereby maximizing their impact on the academic community. Successful marketing is crucial to promoting university library services and optimizing their influence on research, teaching, and learning. Leveraging diverse communication channels, and understanding the requirements of library users should be paramount to librarians. It is very important that marketing strategies be continuously evaluated and adjusted to guarantee that library services continue to be pertinent and flexible in response to the changing requirements of the academic community.

Keywords: Competitive intelligence, librarianship, marketing library services, public university libraries, Southwestern Nigeria

Introduction

In the digital age, libraries are under pressure to stay relevant and adapt to the changing requirements of their patrons, which has made promoting their services even more crucial. Libraries may improve their marketing efforts, uncover possibilities, and comprehend their competitive landscape with the help of competitive intelligence (CI), which provides a strategic framework. Competitive intelligence (CI) is being regarded as a relatively novel academic study field. CI is also an organization's mechanism that facilitates transforming competitive information into practical actions, thereby the organization further engages in ambidextrous strategies to stay ahead of its competitors (Tuan, 2016).

According to Pellissier & Nenzhelele (2013), competitive intelligence is defined as a process or practice that produces and disseminates actionable intelligence. A collection of procedures and actions known as competitive intelligence are intended to systematically collect, evaluate, and disseminate data regarding rivals, clients, and market dynamics in order to facilitate strategic decision-making. Although definitions differ, CI is generally believed to be the methodical and moral gathering of pertinent data to learn about the advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and threats of rivals in order to obtain a competitive edge. It is equally seen as the abilities to gather, analyse, and use information collected on competitors, customers, and other market

factors that contribute to a business (Moyane, .Dube, Nkomo, & Ngulube, 2020). According to Ailakhu and Kalu (2017), competitive intelligence is a systematic and ethical programme for gathering and managing information that can affect a company's plans, decisions and operations tenable to make informed decisions in achieving their goal and objectives. As a matter of fact, the nature of competitive intelligence varies because it means different things to different people based on their different organisation, industry, circumstance, and a host of other factors. Never the less, the goal of competitive intelligence is to help make better-informed decisions and enhance organisational performance by discovering risks and opportunities before they become readily apparent. In other words, competitive intelligence aims to prevent businesses from being caught off guard, by any oppositional forces. it is an interdisciplinary subject field which is also studied in business management, marketing management, knowledge management and strategic management. The evolution of CI has evolved over ages, beginning with antiquated military tactics. It has developed over time from a discipline largely centered on the military to a complex strategic tool employed in a variety of sectors. The acceptance of CI in various sectors is an indication that it can be adopted and use for effective library services.

In a global perspective, library had gradually moved from analogue tradition of rendering services to digital. As a result, the library had witness a tremendous transformation in the way services are provided to library users. This transformation evolved from the introduction of technology to library services. Technology on its own part tends to provide ample of information to its

general users, to this end, the library users assumed that they could solve their information needs on their gadgets such as phones, laptops, and iPods among others. This assumption cannot be realistic because technology can only be useful in rendering library services and cannot take the place of library. In a general term, libraries are custodians of knowledge. From inception, libraries do store materials that aid ideas, knowledge and experiences to be passed on from generation to generation. Libraries are saddled with responsibility of building collections that are tailored toward the needs and goals of its organisation. The libraries whose primary function is to cover the information needs of learning and research are the public university libraries which include libraries of higher institutions of learning like the universities, college of education and polytechnic. Public university libraries build collections for students, lecturers, researchers and other members of the academic community. The collections acquired for public university libraries are systematically organised by the Librarians for use by the users. The library collection serves as an important resource in education, work, and recreation of millions of people. Earlier libraries were considered merely storehouses of knowledge, and the Librarians' were considered as custodian of the collection, where users were expected to use the libraries on their own.

Librarians concentrated more on the collection development and maintenance of the library rather than promoting its use. However, in this present day, library services have changed drastically. Librarians were not only expected to organise the collections, but to also provide assistance to library users in various ways to support teaching, learning, research and other areas of interest of library clientele. Public university libraries are essential for

facilitating teaching, learning, and research activities in higher institution of learning. But in a time of lightning-fast technological development and escalating university rivalry, libraries must now embrace novel strategies to effectively market their services. A methodical framework for obtaining, evaluating, and using data about rivals, industry trends, and consumer preferences in order to obtain a competitive edge is provided by CI. To obtain strategic insights and guide decision-making processes, libraries should collect, analyze data about their competitors (ICT) and users' behaviour. As a result, public university libraries can benefit from CI by better understanding their competitive environment, seeing areas for service improvement, and creating focused marketing efforts to improve patrons' patronage. In marketing public university library services, CI can help libraries better understand the needs of their patrons, foresee shifts in the information landscape, and adjust their services accordingly. In addition, competitive intelligence could provide multiple advantages in which libraries may find opportunities for development and efficiently modify their services to match the demands of their target audience by examining user preferences and competing offerings. CI also has the potential to enable libraries to stay informed about emerging trends in information access and technology adoption, allowing them to adapt their marketing strategies proactively. The purpose of this study is to investigate adoption of CI in marketing of library services in public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria.

This paper is divided into the following sections: the meaning and evolution of competitive intelligence generally and its adoption in university libraries; marketing of university library services; the traditional

library services marketing and their inadequacies in public university libraries in southwestern Nigeria; and integrating competitive intelligence into marketing strategies for library services in public universities in Southwestern Nigeria

The meaning and evolution of competitive intelligence generally and its adoption in university libraries

Competitive intelligence (CI) is the act of gathering and analyzing actionable information about competitors and the marketplace to form a business strategy and gain a competitive edge. CI was first developed in the corporate sector, but it has broadened over time to encompass a variety of sectors and industries, including institutions of learning (Ojo & Olaniyi, 2017). There is no doubt that information is essential for an organization's success. And the systematic methods require for gathering and assessing relevant data that can be process to form needed information is reflected in the growth of CI (Cavallo, Sanasi, Ghezzi & Rangone, 2021). At the inception of CI, according to Arrigo (2016) its main goal was to provide marketing and business development teams with information about the products, pricing, and the market share of business rivals. But due to the rapid growth of the business environment, CI also grew to include environmental scanning, which now included technological advancements, societal trends, and changes in regulations. This change is a reflection of the realization that companies are part of a larger ecosystem that is influenced by other internal and external factors (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Moyane, Dube, Nkomo and Ngulube (2020) posited that the adoption of competitive intelligence in university libraries entails using comparable

information-gathering and analysis techniques to understand the academic environment, identify new trends, and evaluate the competitive positioning of the library in relation to the larger higher education context. This includes monitoring developments in scholarly communication, digital technology, and educational practices to anticipate the evolving needs of students, faculty, and researchers. Diyaolu (2019) opined that by staying informed about developments in the academic sector and benchmarking against peer institutions, university libraries can identify opportunities for innovation, resource allocation, and strategic partnerships.

In addition, the implementation of CI in university libraries highlights the significance of evidence-based decision-making and proactive planning in response to dynamic academic environments (Diyaolu, 2019). Libraries can better align their resources and services with the changing needs and expectations of their stakeholders by incorporating CI into their management practices. This could entail making investments in new technologies, improving collections in emerging fields of study, or creating creative service models to boost user engagement and satisfaction. By integrating CI into their management procedures, libraries can more effectively match their services and resources to the evolving requirements and demands of their constituents, in other to increase library users' engagement and satisfaction. This requires that libraries need to invest in new technology and establish an innovative service models.

Marketing of university library services

Marketing of library services should be of great importance in this technological age, as technology is tactically challenging all areas of discipline. For librarians to create

awareness about the available resources in their custody and for them to remain relevant in the global information space it is important they embrace competitive intelligence to enhance marketing of library services. Joshua and Michael (2020) affirmed that university libraries must effectively market their services. Because academic demands are changing and digital material is becoming more widely available, libraries need to use strategic marketing techniques to engage their target audience and convey the value they offer. Libraries may better assist teaching, learning, and research by increasing usage, improving exposure, and ultimately achieving their mission through effective marketing.

Knowing the wants and needs of library patrons is essential to effectively marketing library services. Finding out what kinds of resources and services are most in demand may be learned a lot by doing surveys, focus groups, and usability tests. To ensure relevance and efficacy, Thompson and Black's (2018) study, for instance, underlined the significance of user feedback in shaping library services and the necessity of continual review.

Libraries can adjust their marketing strategies following the needs and tastes of their target audience once they have been identified. This could entail advertising particular materials or offerings using a variety of platforms, including social media, email newsletters, the library website, and physical signage located inside the building (Akpornor & Fasse, 2020). Furthermore, working with academic departments and faculty members can support curriculum integration and student awareness-raising efforts related to library services. According to research by Luo and Liu (2019), cooperative partnerships are important for marketing library services because they can increase visibility and encourage the usage

of library resources. In addition, modern library marketing requires a strong embrace of innovation and technology. Emerging technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can be used by libraries to create immersive experiences that highlight their resources and services. For example, a virtual reality tour of the library can give potential students an overview of the resources and collections that are offered. Furthermore, tailored recommendations and notifications based on user interests and preferences can be sent via mobile apps and web platforms (Morgan, 2020).

The traditional library services marketing techniques and their inadequacies in public university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria

The promotion of library resources, services, and activities is the goal of traditional library services marketing techniques, which include a range of tactics. Urhefe-Okotie (2023) found that the several conventional marketing strategies that public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria frequently use are:

- i. *Print materials:* To promote their collections, services, and events, libraries frequently create print materials including flyers, brochures, and posters. Usually, these resources are made available within the library's walls, though occasionally they are also found elsewhere on campus.
- ii. *Word-of-mouth:* Librarians and other library personnel rely on word-of-mouth advertising to provide adequate information to library users about the materials and services offered by the library.
- iii. *Library orientation programmes:* public university libraries host

library orientation programmes to familiarize new students with the resources, policies, and services available to them. These events promote the library's resources and increase the library patronage.

- iv. *Exhibitions and displays:* Libraries host exhibitions and displays to promote the library cultural heritage. These encourage use of the library's resources.
- v. *Guest lectures and workshops:* libraries host lectures and workshops on various subjects on academic research, information literacy, and library services. These activities teach user on how to use library resources efficiently and assist increase public knowledge on the services offered by the libraries.

Though the conventional marketing strategy which is the traditional library services marketing strategies are still widely used in public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria, never the less, it's have a number of shortcomings which necessitate reason why library need to embrace competitive intelligence. Among such are:

- i. *Restricted reach:* the primary audience for print materials and word-of-mouth marketing are library patrons who visit the physical location. With this marketing strategy librarian will not be able to reach-out to other potential users especially those that have limited or no time to the library physically
- ii. *Passivity:* conventional marketing strategies sometimes depend on passive communication tools like fliers and posters, which might not

- actively involve consumers or inspire them to take action.
- iii. *Ineffective Communication:* misunderstandings or underutilization of available offers may result from print materials and word-of-mouth promotion failing to fully communicate the variety of library services and resources.
- iv. *Absence of targeting:* conventional marketing strategies might not be able to successfully target particular user groups or take into account their particular demands and preferences. Missed engagement opportunities and poor resource usage may arise from this lack of targeting.
- v. *Restricted feedback mechanisms:* libraries find it difficult to evaluate the success of their marketing campaigns and make the required adjustments because traditional marketing strategies offer few avenues for users' input and assessment.

Integrating competitive intelligence into marketing strategies for library services in public universities in Southwestern Nigeria

The implementation of competitive intelligence (CI) presents a strategic method to improve the marketing of library services in the dynamic academic library landscape in Southwest Nigeria. The process of acquiring, evaluating, and using data on rivals, industry patterns, and consumer preferences in order to obtain a competitive advantage is known as competitive intelligence Maluleka & Chummun, 2023). By utilizing CI, public university libraries can create marketing strategies that effectively cater to the demands of the

academic community, even in situations where resources are scarce and user expectations are ever-changing.

First and foremost, it is imperative to have a thorough grasp of the competitive environment. Southwest Nigerian public university libraries according to Mayende, Awuor and Namande (2021) are able to systematically evaluate the services provided by their peer universities' libraries, including their resources, infrastructure, technology, outreach programs, and collections. Libraries can customize their marketing campaigns to emphasize distinctive features and fill service gaps by comparing themselves to competitors and determining their areas of strength and weakness (Yi, 2016)). For example, if a rival institution is really good at providing access to digital resources, a library might leverage this information to make investments in comparable technologies or highlight other characteristics that set its services apart.

Additionally, Yuliana and Ifadah (2022) opined that CI helps libraries remain aware of new trends and user preferences, which makes proactive marketing tactics possible. Libraries can anticipate changing user demographics, technology improvements, and academic trends in order to modify their service offerings in response to changing information demands. Libraries could create focused marketing campaigns to promote specialized services like research consultations, interdisciplinary resource guides, or collaborative spaces designed to support interdisciplinary collaboration, for instance, if there is an increasing need for interdisciplinary research support.

Moreover, CI gives libraries the ability to take part in cooperative projects and strategic alliances that improve service delivery and broaden their audience. Saunders (2020) stated that libraries can improve their service offerings and expand

their audience by identifying possible partners, be it internal university stakeholders or external partners. These partners can offer pooled resources and expertise. This could be engaging with academic departments to co-host information literacy courses or working with student organizations to plan events with a library theme can increase awareness and encourage community involvement.

There were several techniques that could be imbibed to improve the marketing of library services to overcome the shortcomings of conventional marketing techniques. Among such as postulate by Masizana and Salubi (2022) are:

- i. *Digital marketing*: librarians need to embrace digital marketing channels including social media, email newsletters, and library websites to reach a larger audience and engage people outside of the library.
- ii. *Targeted outreach*: create marketing efforts that are specifically designed to reach particular user groups, like researchers, faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduate students, in order to meet their individual requirements and preferences.
- iii. *Encourage interactive communication channels*: this will enable librarians to actively engage large audience, get input, and offer tailored help. Examples of these channels include online forums, webinars, and live chat support.
- iv. *Data-driven decision making*: its enhance the evaluation of the success of marketing campaigns, pinpoint areas in need of development, and allocate resources as efficiently as possible by using user data and analytics.

- v. *Collaborative relationships*: in order to effectively promote library services and resources, librarians should take advantage of networks within the campus environment to form relationships with academics different departments, student organizations, and other campus stakeholders.

There is no doubt that the aforementioned will tactically enrich the marketing of public university libraries, as it is a process of adopting competitive intelligence in marketing of library services among library users. This will enable libraries and librarians to be at the forefront of the information global village. Information and communication technology (ICT) had come with pools of information overload which make it impossible for ICT to take the leading place of library as custodian of information. However, library and its personnel were being challenged by ICT, it is now left for library to rise up to this change and take a better advantage of what technology have to offer to promote and enhance the library services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as information becomes more recognized as a key component in fostering organizational performance across a range of professions, competitive intelligence's definition and development reflect this. Adopting CI in university libraries entails using data about the academic environment to guide strategic decision-making and increase the library's influence and relevance in the higher education community. To sum up, successful marketing is crucial to promoting university library services and optimizing their influence on research, teaching, and learning. Libraries may improve the visibility, engagement, and usage of their resources and services by

embracing technological innovation, leveraging diverse communication channels, and understanding the requirements of their users. It is very important that marketing strategies be continuously evaluated and adjusted to guarantee that library services continue to be pertinent and flexible in response to the changing requirements of the academic community.

In summary, public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria suffer from a number of shortcomings with traditional library services marketing strategies, such as restricted reach, inactivity, poor communication, lack of targeting, and inadequate feedback systems. Libraries can use techniques like digital marketing, targeted outreach, interactive communication, data-driven decision making, and cooperative collaborations to address these issues and improve the marketing of their services. By embracing innovative marketing approaches and leveraging digital technologies, public university libraries can effectively promote their services and resources, thereby maximizing their impact on the academic community. A viable approach to improving service quality, user engagement, and institutional exposure in public universities in Southwest Nigeria is to incorporate Competitive Intelligence into marketing plans for library services. Libraries are better able to promote their services and cater to the changing demands of the academic community by using CI to gather insights on the competitive landscape, new trends, and collaborative opportunities.

In the light of what has been written in the paper, the following are recommended:

1. It is imperative that university libraries invest in ongoing training programs for staff members who are involved in competitive intelligence

(CI) activities, given the dynamic nature of the field. These programs should include workshops, seminars, and online courses to keep staff members up to date on emerging trends, tools, and techniques in CI. By guaranteeing that staff members possess the requisite knowledge and skills, libraries can improve their ability to collect, analyze, and use competitive intelligence effectively.

2. Librarians should encourage Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing by promoting university libraries and academic departments to collaborate in order to share best practices and insights pertaining to competitive intelligence. The establishment of networks or consortia
3. Librarians should be enthusiastic to spread the word about library resources and events among their peer groups in order to involve students as ambassadors or champions for library services. Student ambassadors can share their positive experiences and inspire their classmates to use the resources available to them in order to raise awareness and utilization of library services. Student ambassadors should receive assistance and training to make sure they are aware of the resources available at the library and capable of conveying important messages.
4. Librarians should boost Digital Presence to make judicious use of digital marketing platforms including social media, email newsletters, and the library website to fortify the library's online presence. Provide interesting and educational content that is suited to the tastes and

interests of the intended audience in order to highlight library services, activities, and events. To enhance and optimize digital marketing tactics for maximum impact and reach, employ analytics tools to monitor user interaction and feedback.

5. Librarians should consider cultural relevance when creating marketing plans for public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria, Librarians should take into account the customs and tastes of the immediate environment library. If traditional marketing strategies are not culturally relevant or customized to meet local requirements and expectations, they may not effectively connect with the target audience. To ensure increased efficacy and engagement, Librarians should invest in research to understand the cultural background and preferences of library users. Then, tailor marketing strategies accordingly.
6. Librarians should adopt Digital Transformation by recognizing that traditional marketing strategies are insufficient to connect with Southwest Nigeria's diversified and technologically literate library users. Librarians should invest in digital marketing tools and platforms to enhance conventional strategies and increase the library's influence and audience. Librarians should Utilize social media to make sure student ambassadors receive training and assistance so they are prepared to convey important messages and are aware of the resources available at the library.

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Fauziyah Nihinlolawa Adenekan, Basirat Olubukola Diyaolu and Dorcas Adebisi Rahman:
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Fauziyah Nihinlolawa Adenekan, Basirat Olubukola Diyaolu and Dorcas Adebisi Rahman:
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