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INFORMATION MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING LIBRARIES IN AN INFORMATION AGE

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Abstract

A library is an example of a non-profit organization that primarily produces services rather than products. The qualities of being intangible, indestructible, verifiable, and perishable make services special in their nature. In light of the current economic climate, information marketing and entrepreneurship have thus become prerequisites for maintaining library services. This essay critically explains this pattern in explicit detail. It explains the ideas of entrepreneurship, information, and information marketing. The value of entrepreneurship and marketing to librarians and library users. It went on to explain why entrepreneurship holds the key to the substance of libraries in this competitive age by citing factors that work against the success of entrepreneurial opportunities in information marketing, such as a lack of entrepreneurship skills among librarians, a lack of infrastructure facilities that aid marketing in libraries, and deficiencies in proper funding, among others. This study makes several recommendations, including the need for information practitioners to receive updated training in marketing and entrepreneurship, as well as the inclusion of information marketing and entrepreneurship in library and information science programmes.

Keywords: Information age, entrepreneurship, libraries, and information marketing

1. Introduction

Everywhere in the world, service providers come up with ways to advertise their companies and services to current and new clients. The fact that library and information services are common helps them stay competitive. Despite the fact that many people joined the services as the information boom of the 21st century began, libraries continue to be the most important and well-known sources of knowledge.

In the information era, entrepreneurship and information are crucial components of marketing and maintaining library services. With the shifting roles of libraries in the information age, the

notion of marketing and entrepreneurship has evolved from being things that happened outside the library organization. In his submission, Aina (2018) concurs that libraries should include fresh subjects and employment opportunities for librarians who, in addition to their core library competencies, also learn database management, information architecture, knowledge management, public advocacy, fundamental statistics, information marketing, and entrepreneurship.

Must offer prompt services. Gupta (2017) makes the argument that the concepts of marketing and entrepreneurship are broadly relevant in the field of information services. The field of marketing has given librarians a wealth of chances for the commercialization of novel ideas and the provision of information to meet the demands of clients or users. Any library, information Centre, or documentation hub's main goal is to fulfil its users' informational demands. As a result, the library's services are completely user-focused. Users require speedy online access to information for all types of academic assignments, employment prospects, problem-solving, product purchases, finding dates, and expert help. Everyone requires information organization that is simple to understand, in essence. It might be anything, including talks, films, seminars, and e-books.

Liberians handle information, and as libraries are information-driven, it is under their control to utilize the internet to gather information, process it, market it, and profit from it. This is a trustworthy way to prevent the extinction of libraries. As a result, the librarians will have a better understanding of their users' diverse information demands and seeking habits. To tempt and persuade people to visit the library, librarians should inform them of the availability of the information they require. Marketing, promoting, and advocating for library information resources are used to do this.

This involves persuading the consumers of the value, relevance, and significance of the library in addressing their requirements. The use of entrepreneurial talents improves this. The focus of entrepreneurship is on opportunity identification, self-sufficiency, and customer base growth through improved service delivery, client loyalty, and revenue growth (Ibrahim 2017). To further methods of sustaining libraries in the information age, this article investigates the opportunities and difficulties facing Liberians in information marketing and entrepreneurship.

2. Information marketing and entrepreneurship concepts

Marketing: In our local slang, marketing refers to activities carried out to promote the buying or selling of products or services, but it goes beyond that, particularly in libraries and information services. Marketing is a business activity that entails the planning, pricing, promotion, distribution, and manufacturing of goods for consumers. Indeed, until the classic "Broadcasting the Concept of Marketing" article by Kortler and Sydney Levy and Theodore Levitt's article titled "Marketing Myopia," which improved the concept of the customer rather than the product and made it applicable in non-profit organizations, the concept of marketing did not find a prominent debate in the literature of library and information science. Ali (2019) defines marketing activities as collectively forming the "mark." This also covers packaging and public relations about librarian marketing. Nwegbu (2015) asserts that this goal is to raise awareness of libraries' potential among librarians, library patrons, and the general public. It

entails using outlets like print and media to publicize, promote, and advocate for what libraries can offer. The role of the librarian should be that of a marketer, with marketing skills ingrained in how they package and sell information to their users.

Information is the key to the door of knowledge, according to the librarian's perspective. The main purpose of creating a library has been to provide access to recorded knowledge. Information today is a stimulus with a purpose. When information is entered into and stored on a computer, it is typically referred to as data in various contexts. When data is compiled or used to more fully comprehend something or perform a task, it becomes knowledge. Processing steps like formatting and printing output data allow data to be recognized again as knowledge. Information has come to be seen as a commodity that can be bought, sold, and obtained. Information is a necessary component of existence, and how it is sought out determines how relevant it is (Ugah 2018). It is regarded as an economic resource on par with labour, materials, and capital. This viewpoint is the result of the widespread desire to obtain it. This leads to the information age, which is defined by society (LAL 2019) as the era in which the vast majority of people work to create, collect, store, process, or distribute information. Such a society heavily relies on information for its economic, social, cultural, religious, and political systems. Therefore, this information age's guidance and control are characterized by quick improvements in new, enhanced technology, computerization, the internet, and online resources. These modern developments will aid librarians in marketing information products to users all around the world.

Knowledge Marketing: Information marketing is a business that involves developing digital products that provide worthwhile knowledge that your target customer is willing to purchase at a certain price. These informational items include knowledge that can address a specific issue in any industry or topic of interest. In essence, this is selling important information to those who want it and are willing to pay for it. Rowley (2016) asserts that information products can be distributed and packaged in a variety of forms, including the following: e-books, webinars, online video courses, DVD video courses, cheat sheets, report and analysis seminars, live event recordings, and web-based information services, among other formats. In other words, it is the art of recognizing clients, predicting their information needs, and meeting those wants in exchange for money, gain, or profit.

Agua (2016) concurred that information marketing products are in high demand because of the public's insatiable thirst for knowledge and their willingness to pay any price to obtain it. Librarians must embrace a commercial perspective if they are to be long-lasting. The client, or what librarians typically refer to as end users, is where marketing orientation in libraries begins and ends. According to studies, for marketing-oriented libraries to succeed, librarians must develop their full suite of commercial abilities.

Information has a special quality as a resource and a commodity, the utility of which, in combination with its other values, is so pervasive that it results in the now-common appellation given to the period of history ahead as "the information age." But in this modern age, information has become a commodity that is quickly and widely disseminated and easily available, especially through the use of computer technology. The transition from traditional industries that the industrial revolution brought about through industrialization to an economy

based on information and computerization is what defines the digital era as a period in human history. The quality of life as well as opportunities for social change and economic development in this society are becoming more and more dependent on information and its utilization. In this civilization, the vast majority of individuals work in the production, collection, processing, and dissemination of information. Kopin (2016) claims that such a society makes extensive use of information in all spheres of life, including the political, social, cultural, and economic ones.

3.1 Benefits of Entrepreneurship and Information Marketing

Olayinka Kofo (2016) asserts that information marketing helps find what potential users need and want and tailors library and information services to meet these needs. Marketing involves negotiating and discussing with users to understand the varying needs of these users and reacting to them. They argued that marketing information aids the librarian in fulfilling the overall goal, which is to meet the users' information needs.

Librarians have learned several methods for gathering and disseminating knowledge and information through information marketing. In this information age, where everyone uses the internet to create, gather, store, and process information, it is incumbent upon librarians to profit from this usage of the internet and other ICT facilities to buy and sell information to their esteemed users. Most of the time, users need knowledge quickly in multimedia packages that are available electronically, and the only way to deliver this is through information marketing. Many users detest spending a lot of time in libraries, poring over mountains of books.

Information marketing enhances the value of information products and services and helps the library develop a positive reputation among its patrons and business partners. Librarians are working to gain the trust of users and survive the challenges brought on by the integration of ICTs into library practice with the help of information marketing. Through information marketing, librarians can work in every setting where people live, including jails, hospitals, refuges, camps, and communities without libraries.

Increased use of online and library resources for information may result from information marketing. According to Anyo (2014), libraries currently confront a serious problem of survival due to the current economic climate, so those that lack creativity and innovation will face enormous hurdles. Without innovation, libraries would inevitably lose touch with their target audiences, which would have a detrimental influence on funding, patronage, and other factors. Constant information marketing will aid in the promotion of events, raise awareness of the information's availability in libraries, and improve the relevance or image of the library. Information marketing initiatives may also result in the development of new tastes or preferences, adding value to information products and services as well as helping to create a positive corporate reputation.

Entrepreneurship and information marketing as a means of preserving library and information services since traditional library services are rapidly disappearing as a result of the advent of the internet; marketing and entrepreneurship are real factors that can be used to sustain them. In the information age, libraries need innovative concepts, abilities, and methods to survive. A

necessary condition for libraries to be sustainable in the world of virtual information is the acceptability of new skills, strategies, and ideas. Keller (2019) advised forward-thinking librarians to embrace the challenging economic climate as an opportunity for change and that this could even be the driving force for innovative libraries. Such novel ideas include the concepts of marketing and entrepreneurship in library administration.

According to Dike (2009), marketing and entrepreneurship in libraries entail promoting libraries, making resources and services known, and informing people of the importance and value of the library. As a result, librarians should no longer wait for uniformed users to arrive at the library but rather go out and actively seek out users in public spaces like playgrounds, shopping malls, markets, hotels, and other places. In affluent nations, librarians pay divers to explore the ocean and capture images and detailed reports of their discoveries for the libraries. To gather information for their users, librarians often venture into unfamiliar or challenging environments. This is a surefire method to keep the library alive in this cutthroat industry.

ICT integration in librarianship has created a variety of business prospects for those working in the field of information. The following is a complete list of all library sciences:

Among other businesses, the library equipment, publishing and printing, information beverage, consultancy, stationery, rural information, provision, ICT-based, reprographic, and freelance information industries Professionals in the field of library and information science can enter one or more of these fields and succeed financially. It is essential to have a thorough understanding of how each of these businesses functions. What its scope, setting, and marketability are all about the library can also offer for-profit services, including binding and printing, document scanning, internet access, indexing and abstracting, and calendar and almanac printing, for a fee. These offerings may be able to bring in enough money to partially support the library.

Pre-tertiary institutions can perform information marketing through conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. Libraries can host debate quizzes, exhibitions, book hours, and book talks. On these occasions, librarians highlight what libraries aim to do or stand for, particularly for the benefit of young minds. They exuberantly impart to these impressionable brains that libraries are the only places to find information at reasonable prices. They should promise in conferences and seminars that they are prepared and able to provide, store, and disseminate information to all stakeholders, regardless of their location, status, or position.

3.2 Challenges of Entrepreneurship and Information Marketing in Libraries

Despite the enormous advantages listed above, marketing library information resources has been difficult due to several internal and external factors.

Nwedu (2017) outlined several challenges facing the marketing of library resources, including a lack of funding, marketing's relative youth in the field of librarianship, users' attitudes towards information marketing, a lack of time, librarians' apathy, and others.

The authors agreed that information marketing and entrepreneurship are relatively new areas of endeavour in librarianship that must be fully utilised. Ali (2019) adds a lack of related library and information knowledge, an inadequate infrastructure to operate, a lack of library job

security, a fear of sales, a fear of taking risks, an inability to keep accurate information, a high cost of development, obsolete library facilities, etc. However, there is still disagreement among many librarians as to why they should abandon their original traditional library services in favour of seeking out clients. They still don't understand that the information age is a new era in society. This resistance to change is a challenge. Additionally, because many librarians are not ICT proficient, the advent of the Internet and ICT facilities in library services has made them hesitant to participate in marketing and entrepreneurship. This is the fear of new technologies, according to Waston (2018). ICT apathy has "quenched the flames" of information marketing advocacy.

The lack of infrastructure facilities is another issue. Access to internet-based information requires an inadequate and epileptic power supply. Additionally, the high expense of alternative energy sources like solar energy and inverters, the fluctuating power supply, and technological issues prevent websites and cybercafés from operating effectively.

Another significant barrier to information marketing is inadequate library financing. This has an impact on the expense of acquiring current information resources, advertising, installing ICT in libraries, and paying for staff, storage, and training. Inadvertently, the absence of the aforementioned amenities hinders the library's marketing efforts. Furthermore, there are no rooms that are appropriate for an ICT library setting. The area is scarce since several libraries in wealthy nations have poor architecture and don't even involve librarians in the design process.

Few largely unnoticed, skilled information practitioners work in the field. This scarcity may result from a variety of issues, such as a lack of formalization of the profession, a lack of training and study programmes, and even self-misidentification (those who identify as doing information design but have alternative job titles or duties). The issue of rivalry between people in other professions exists. The provision, strange, dissemination, and marketing of information has become a trade for "all jacks" due to the necessity and affordability of ICT facilities; even trained librarians use them for information generation. People are turning away from librarians in favour of these rivals due to the fierce and lucrative competition. This has caused a lot of worry.

Studies like Ibrahim (2018) and Nwedu (2017) have revealed that there is a critical need to teach information marketing and entrepreneurship in all libraries and information science, as many libraries are not selling their material as a result of the numerous issues mentioned above. This shows that the needs of the consumers were not determined and analyzed.

Despite this discouraging survey, a growing number of librarians and information specialists are keen to embrace information marketing as a fresh approach to satisfying their consumers. Improved Information Marketing and Entrepreneurship Techniques for Maintaining Libraries in the Information Age.

Despite the apparent growing pains mentioned above, the marketing of information resources in libraries should be strongly promoted. The following are suggestions for solving the issues: The government should enhance financing for libraries, and libraries should step up

their internal revenue generation through internet services, photocopying, publishing, indexing, and abstracting services, among other things. Adequate funding is required to advertise some of the products and services of libraries. This means that some promotional tools, including ICT facilities, may not be functional or available without funding effective. Ample funding is also required to send staff members to workshops, conferences, training sessions, and other events that will prepare them for work in information marketing. It makes sense to try to increase financing by allocating more money to libraries. To support ICT services, which improve information marketing and entrepreneurship, libraries need funding.

A librarian must be guided through the fundamentals of this activity to effectively market content to attract more users, enhance library visibility, and maintain the library. As a result, he needs to take a course in marketing or entrepreneurship. The first plan of action is to incorporate marketing and entrepreneurship into the curricula of library and information science. There should be two sections to this course: theory and practical.

To better prepare graduates in library and information science for the problems of information marketing in the information age and to help them understand the importance of satisfying all users, regardless of their differences. Due to the difficulties of competition facing librarianship in the modern information era, this is important. Conferences, training sessions, workshops, and seminars are other possible strategies. Due to the loss of job prospects in library and information science and the struggling economy, professionals in the field require exposure to marketing and entrepreneurship. Librarians should also be empowered and encouraged to earn more money from their work.

The way that librarians feel about library services needs to change. They shouldn't be classified according to the conventional custodians of acknowledgement rules. There should be activity among the employees. By providing services for selective information dissemination, indexing, and abstracting, they should sell their services.

The purchase of a dedicated generating plant is required for the efficient operation of ICT and the marketing of electronic information resources in libraries. This plant will serve as a backup for the energy supply. Because practice makes perfect, libraries and other information managers ought to be friendly with ICT. Continual interaction with ICT will improve skills. Providing a suitable foundation for business and marketing. There have to be up-to-date educational resources. To improve the marketing and entrepreneurial processes, librarians should make sure that there is proper record-keeping and control.

4. Conclusion

Despite the difficulties facing marketing in our libraries, the future of information marketing and entrepreneurship in Nigerian libraries seems extremely promising. This is due to the information age and the rise of entrepreneurship. There has never been a time when the general public has paid so much attention to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, and this trend is predicted to continue. The benefits of marketing and entrepreneurship are generally well-received in the field of library and information sciences. It has excellent benefits that make trying it worthwhile.

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