



The Need to Market Library Services and its Challenges to Academic Librarians. A Case Study of Delta Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed persistent challenges facing libraries, including traditional perceptions, limited awareness, and visibility within academic communities, resource constraints, technological adaptation, and strategic collaboration limitations. These challenges hindered the imperative to market library services in the dynamic landscape of information dissemination and evolving user expectations. The research focused on exploring the relationship between Resource Availability and User Perception among academic librarians at Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara. Additionally, it investigated the impact of Technological Adaptation in Library Services on Competitive Positioning. The study drew theoretical frameworks from Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (1962) and Fred Davis' Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed in 1989. Employing a survey research design, the population comprised nine staff members at Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, Nigeria, with a total enumeration technique determining the sample size. The hypothesis was tested through Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. Results indicated a significant positive relationship between Resource Availability and User Perception as perceived by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library. Furthermore, the study revealed a significant influence of Technological Adaptation in library services on the Competitive Positioning of academic librarians in the same library. In conclusion, the research underscored that increased resource availability positively impacted user perception among academic librarians, and there was an overwhelming correlation between technological adaptation and enhanced competitive positioning in the academic library. Recommendations included strategic investments in contemporary books, digital resources, and modern technological infrastructure. Additionally, the study suggested prioritizing and investing in advanced technological solutions, such as updating software, adopting emerging technologies, and providing training programs to ensure librarians' proficient use of digital tools.

Keywords: Market Library Services, Resource Availability, User Perception, Technological Adaptation, Competitive Positioning

Introduction

Libraries have long been regarded as repositories of knowledge, serving as integral pillars of education and information dissemination. Traditionally, the role of libraries has been associated with the preservation and circulation of books and other resources. However, in the contemporary information age, where digital advancements and alternative sources of information abound, the need for libraries to actively market their services has become increasingly crucial (Ohams, 2022). The evolution of technology has brought about a paradigm shift in how information is accessed and consumed. The digital age has ushered in a myriad of alternative information channels, making it imperative for libraries to actively engage in marketing efforts to communicate their evolving roles and services.

However, while libraries remain reservoirs of vast information, the challenge lies in communicating their relevance to diverse user groups. The need to market library services is driven by several factors such as changing user expectations fueled by technology and the demand that libraries position themselves as more than just book repositories (Elo, 2021). Libraries must articulate their role as dynamic centers equipped with digital resources, multimedia services, and collaborative spaces. Furthermore, the rise of online platforms presents competition that necessitates libraries to showcase their unique value propositions. In essence, the imperative to market library services is born out of the need for libraries to adapt, communicate effectively, and secure their position as indispensable institutions in the 21st century.

Furthermore, in the landscape of a library's mission, community engagement and outreach stand as integral pillars. Through strategic marketing efforts, libraries can showcase themselves as vital community hubs, offering a spectrum of cultural events, educational programs, and a secure haven for diverse populations. The effective communication of these contributions serves not only to nurture a sense of community ownership but also to underscore the library's enduring relevance within the public sphere. A compelling rationale for libraries to embrace marketing is found in the imperative of advocacy for funding and support. By articulating with clarity, the impact and significance of library services, institutions can exert influence over funding decisions, ensuring a sustained flow of support from government bodies, donors, and the local community. Embracing technology within their marketing strategies, libraries can harness digital tools and platforms to augment visibility, fostering innovative connections with users in the ever-evolving information landscape (Emeaghalu, 2022).

Within the academic environment of Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, academic librarians play a crucial role in facilitating access to information, supporting research, and enhancing the overall academic experience. However, the dynamic nature of information consumption and the evolving expectations of the academic community present unique challenges for these librarians in effectively marketing their services. The challenges encountered are nuanced, requiring a delicate balance between tradition and innovation. Perceptions of libraries as traditional repositories persist, potentially hindering efforts to communicate the expanded and dynamic range of services now offered. Navigating this perception is critical in positioning the library as an essential contributor to academic success and scholarly excellence (Adebayo, 2019).

Moreover, the academic librarians at Delta Polytechnic Library face the task of enhancing awareness and visibility of their offerings within the academic community. Despite the plethora of resources available, ensuring that students and faculty are fully cognizant of the breadth of services provided presents an ongoing challenge. Resource constraints further complicate the landscape. Academic institutions commonly grapple with budgetary limitations, impacting the ability of librarians to implement comprehensive marketing strategies. Academic librarians at Delta Polytechnic Library must navigate these constraints to creatively promote their services and engage effectively with the academic community.

Technological adaptation emerges as a pivotal challenge, as academic librarians strive to integrate technology seamlessly into their services. Staying abreast of technological advancements and optimizing digital tools to enhance the accessibility and visibility of library resources pose ongoing challenges in an ever-evolving information landscape. In essence, the challenges faced by academic librarians at Delta Polytechnic Library in marketing library services are intricate and multifaceted (Yakubu, 2016).

This study aims to delve into the nuances of these challenges, exploring the experiences, strategies, and outcomes as academic librarians navigate the imperative to market library services within the unique context of Delta Polytechnic Library in Otefe Oghara. The insights gained from this exploration will contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved and inform tailored strategies to enhance the visibility, relevance, and impact of library services within the academic setting.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that the need to market library services is perceived as an essential component of adapting to the evolving landscape of information dissemination and user expectations, there have been visible challenges faced by academic librarians at Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara. Some of these challenges include grappling with traditional perceptions of libraries, navigating limited awareness and visibility within the academic community, confronting resource constraints, addressing technological adaptation, and fostering strategic collaboration (Ojiako, 2022).

In the face of technological advancements and expanded services, academic librarians find themselves grappling with the stereotype that libraries are primarily housing books. This perception hinders efforts to communicate the library's dynamic role as a multifaceted hub offering digital resources, collaborative spaces, and specialized expertise essential for academic success. Limited awareness and visibility compound these challenges. Despite the library's diverse offerings, including cultural events, educational programs, and secure spaces for diverse populations, academic librarians often encounter difficulties in ensuring that students and faculty are fully aware of these opportunities. This limited awareness creates a gap between the potential benefits of library services and the actual engagement of the academic community.

Furthermore, resource constraints further exacerbate the situation. Academic institutions commonly face budgetary limitations, affecting the ability of librarians to implement robust marketing strategies. In the context of Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, academic librarians must navigate these constraints creatively to promote their services effectively and engage with the academic community in a meaningful way. Technological adaptation emerges as a critical challenge in the digital age. Integrating technology into library services is essential for effective communication and outreach. However, academic librarians may face hurdles in staying abreast of technological advancements and harnessing digital tools to enhance the visibility and accessibility of library resources, posing challenges in reaching the tech-savvy academic community effectively.

Understanding and addressing these challenges is paramount to ensuring that academic librarians at Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, can effectively meet the information needs of students and faculty through strategic marketing initiatives. Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate and address the unique challenges faced by academic librarians at Delta Polytechnic Library in marketing library services to ensure their continued efficacy in serving the academic needs of students and faculty. In essence, the challenges faced by academic librarians at Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, in marketing library services are multifaceted and interconnected.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to comprehensively investigate the need to market library services and the challenges encountered by academic librarians at Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara. Specifically, the study seeks to

- a. Examine the nature of relationship between Resource Availability and User Perception by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara
- b. Determine the influence of Technological Adaptation in Library Services and Competitive Positioning by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of the relationship between resource availability and user perception as perceived by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara?
2. How does technological adaptation in library services influence the competitive positioning of academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara?

Research Hypotheses

H0: There is no significant relationship between resource availability and user perception as perceived by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

H0: Technological adaptation in library services has no significant influence on the competitive positioning of academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

Resource Availability in Academic Libraries

Resource availability in the context of academic libraries encompasses the diverse array of materials and services that contribute to the enrichment of learning, teaching, and research endeavors within educational institutions. Recent researchers have approached the definition of resource availability from various perspectives, acknowledging the dynamic interplay between traditional and digital resources, technological infrastructure, and budget considerations.

Resource availability in academic libraries is a dynamic and multifaceted domain that has evolved with technological advancements and changing educational paradigms (Anayo, 2017). While traditional and digital resources continue to coexist, the challenges of budget constraints, technological infrastructure, and the integration of emerging trends such as OER underscore the need for ongoing research and innovative strategies to ensure that academic libraries remain vibrant and responsive hubs of knowledge for the academic community.

Recent studies by prominent researchers such as Saheed (2021) and Phern (2022) have articulated resource availability as the accessibility and adequacy of materials essential for academic pursuits. This comprehensive definition includes both traditional resources, such as printed materials, and modern digital resources, spanning electronic databases, e-books, and multimedia content. These scholars recognize that the evolving landscape of academic libraries necessitates a holistic understanding of resource availability to meet the diverse needs of students, faculty, and researchers.

Resource availability in academic libraries converges on a comprehensive definition that encapsulates both traditional and digital dimensions, acknowledges the role of technological infrastructure, and recognizes the budgetary considerations inherent in sustaining diverse collections. This nuanced understanding sets the stage for a more holistic exploration of resource availability, guiding academic librarians, administrators, and researchers in navigating the complex and dynamic landscape of contemporary library services.

The Concept of User Perception

User perception is a complex cognitive process that involves how individuals interpret, make sense of, and respond to stimuli from their environment. It is a fundamental aspect of human interaction with the world, encompassing a wide range of experiences, from the tangible and physical to the digital and informational. At its core, user perception is the lens through which individuals perceive and understand their surroundings, shaping their attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making (Maduabum, 2016).

User perception is crucial for academic librarians as it provides insights into the expectations and preferences of library users. By comprehending how users perceive library services, librarians can tailor their marketing strategies to meet the specific needs and expectations of their user community. The success of marketing library services hinges on aligning them with user expectations. If users perceive the library as a resourceful and accessible hub for academic support, marketing efforts can reinforce and capitalize on these positive perceptions. On the other hand, if there are misconceptions or gaps in perception, targeted marketing campaigns can address and correct these issues (Chibuko, 2016).

According to Adeola (2020), User perception is instrumental in identifying and overcoming challenges faced by academic librarians. If there are negative perceptions or misconceptions about library services, addressing these issues becomes a crucial aspect of effective marketing. The insights gained from understanding user perception can inform strategies to dispel myths, enhance visibility, and improve overall user satisfaction. Regularly assessing user perception allows for a feedback loop that informs iterative improvements in marketing strategies and library services. Librarians can gather feedback on how users perceive the effectiveness of the marketing initiatives and identify areas for enhancement. This iterative approach is essential for adapting to changing user needs and expectations over time.

Technological Adaptation in Library Services

According to Nwaokoro (2021), Technological adaptation in library services is a dynamic exploration of how libraries leverage digital advancements to enhance service delivery and remain relevant in an ever-evolving information landscape. By understanding the dynamics of technological adaptation, librarians can develop targeted marketing strategies that not only showcase technological innovations but also address user concerns and foster positive perceptions of the library's commitment to technological excellence.

Libraries are adopting technologies that enhance user experiences. Baker (2018) highlighted the implementation of user-friendly interfaces, mobile applications, and personalized digital services. This user-centric technological approach is crucial for attracting and retaining library users, aligning with the overarching goal of effective service marketing. While technological adaptation brings numerous benefits, it also presents challenges for academic librarians. Jones (2019) discuss the hurdles faced during the implementation of new technologies, including staff training, budget constraints, and resistance to change. These challenges contribute to the broader understanding of the obstacles academic librarians confront, which must be considered in the formulation of marketing strategies

Recent literature underscores the profound impact of digital transformation on libraries, necessitating a paradigm shift in service delivery. Scholars like Anderson (2019) and Chowdhury (2020) delve into the integration of digital technologies to streamline processes, expand access to resources, and provide innovative services. Technological adaptation is positioned as a catalyst for libraries to meet the changing needs and expectations of users.

Competitive Positioning by academic librarians

Competitive positioning in the context of academic librarianship refers to the strategic efforts undertaken by librarians to establish a distinctive and advantageous position for their library within the competitive landscape of information services. It involves the deliberate crafting of a library's identity, services, and resources to stand out among peer institutions, meet the unique needs of its academic community, and effectively communicate its value proposition. This concept is fundamental for academic librarians as they navigate challenges and proactively engage in activities to enhance their libraries' competitiveness.

Competitive positioning encompasses the deliberate actions and strategies implemented by academic librarians to differentiate their library from others, emphasizing strengths, addressing weaknesses, and aligning services with the evolving needs of users. It involves a holistic approach that considers not only the quality of resources but also the overall user experience, innovative service offerings, and effective communication of the library's unique contributions to academic success.

Competitive positioning delves into strategic approaches that libraries employ to establish and enhance their competitive advantage in the evolving information landscape. Academic librarians face the challenge of not only providing essential resources and services but also positioning their libraries competitively to attract and retain users. By adopting user-centric approaches, fostering innovation, building strategic partnerships, and implementing robust marketing strategies, academic libraries can not only navigate competition but also enhance their overall standing and relevance in the academic community.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Diffusion of Innovations Theory propounded by Everett Rogers in 1962 and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Fred Davis in 1989. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory is a seminal framework that elucidates how new ideas, innovations, or practices spread and are adopted within a social system. Central to this theory is the innovation adoption process, a five-stage journey that individuals traverse, including knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Furthermore, the theory classifies adopters into categories such as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, each representing different stages in the adoption curve. Rogers also emphasizes the significance of communication channels in the diffusion process, underscoring the role of interpersonal networks and communication channels in disseminating innovations.

The relevance of this theory lies in its applicability to understanding how marketing strategies, particularly those involving technological adaptation, are embraced by academic librarians. By employing this theory, the study can delve into the stages librarians undergo in adopting new marketing practices, explore the influence of communication channels within the academic library context, and delineate the characteristics of librarians at different points on the adoption curve.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) focuses on users' acceptance and adoption of new technologies. TAM posits that users' behavioral intentions to adopt a technology are influenced by two key perceptions: perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU). PEOU refers to users' perceptions of how easy it is to use a technology, while PU pertains to their beliefs regarding the technology's utility in enhancing their performance. These perceptions collectively shape users' behavioral intentions, ultimately determining whether they will adopt or reject a technology. Additionally, TAM extends its examination to actual system use, providing insights into users' ultimate behavior regarding technology adoption.

In the context of academic librarians marketing library services, TAM is highly relevant. The framework allows for an in-depth exploration of how librarians perceive and accept technological innovations in marketing. The study can investigate factors such as librarians' perceptions of the ease of incorporating marketing technologies, their views on the usefulness of these technologies in promoting library services, and the subsequent behavioral intentions and actions related to the adoption of marketing innovations.

Empirical Review

Aliyu (2020) identified challenges specific to academic librarians in Bayero University Kano when marketing library services. In-depth interviews and surveys were conducted with librarians from the university, and thematic analysis was employed. The study findings revealed that challenges included limited financial resources, low community awareness, and a lack of collaboration opportunities. The study concluded that rural academic librarians in BUK face unique challenges requiring tailored marketing strategies and recommended that institutions should explore collaborative efforts with local communities and seek external funding for marketing initiatives.

Okonkwo (2021) examined the role of collaboration with faculty members in marketing library services in Federal Polytechnic, Oko, in Anambra. A case study approach involving three faculties, with data collected through interviews and surveys among both librarians and faculty members. The study revealed that collaborative efforts with faculty positively influenced the promotion of library services and increased user engagement. The study concluded that collaboration with faculty is a key factor in successful library service marketing and recommended that the library at Federal Polytechnic, Oko should actively seek partnerships with faculty and integrate library services into academic programs.

Chijioke (2019) examined the impact of digital marketing tools on library service promotion in Abia State Library. Case studies involving the use of digital analytics, social media metrics, and user surveys. The study found that digital marketing tools significantly increased online engagement, but librarians faced challenges in data interpretation and resource constraints and suggested that Abia State Library librarians should invest in digital marketing skills and address resource limitations for sustained success. The study recommended that Abia State Library should provide training in digital marketing, and librarians should explore cost-effective digital strategies.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the survey research design. Survey design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised the librarian of Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria which stands at 9 staff.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Since the population of the study is relatively small and easily accessible, the entire population was considered as the sample size. Consequently, the total enumeration technique, also known as a census, was appropriate and practical for this research. According to Emmanuel (2023), total enumeration technique involves studying every single unit or element within the population, which is feasible when the population is small and manageable.

Research Instrument

For the purpose of this study, we adopted quantitative (Questionnaires) method to provide a comprehensive understanding of the need to market library services and its challenges to academic librarians. A case study of Delta State Polytechnic library, Otefe Oghara. Questionnaires was designed to gather self-reported data from librarians regarding of the need to market library services and its challenges to academic librarians.

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study was collected from primary source. The primary data was generated through the use of structured questionnaire to elicit required information. Copies of structured questionnaire will be administered and the participants was placed on objective response for each statement on a likert scale.

Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered from the survey was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive statistics will be used for mean and correlation coefficient analysis was used to test the hypotheses. This was be in a bid to establish the nature of relationship that exists between the dependent and independent variables. The level of significance used will be 5 percent interval reliability. The test of hypothesis was addressed through the application of Pearson Product – Moment Correlation analysis. A 5-point Likert scale assigned numerical values of Very Great Extent (5), Great Extent (4), Moderate Extent (3), Small Extent (2) and No Extent (1) will be used.

$$\text{Mean } [\chi] = \frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = 3.0$$

Test of Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between resource availability and user perception as perceived by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

Table 4.3.1: Correlation Analysis of resource availability and user perception

		RES AVAIL	USER PERCEPTION
RES AVAIL.	Pearson Correlation	1	.921**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	9	9
USER PERCEPTION	Pearson Correlation	.921**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	9	9

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver. 29.0

Decision: the computed r (0.921) is greater than the critical (0.903) value for two - tailed test at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted which implies that there is a significant relationship between resource availability and user perception as perceived by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: Technological adaptation in library services has no significant influence on the competitive positioning of academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

Table 4.3.1: Correlation Analysis of Technological adaptation and Increased Competitive Positioning

		TECH ADAP	COMP POS
TECH ADA	Pearson Correlation	1	.968**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	9	9
COMP POS	Pearson Correlation	.968**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	9	9

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver. 29.0

Decision: the computed r (0.9621) is greater than the critical (0.903) value for two- tailed test at 0.05 level of significance. Null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted which implies that their technological adaptation in library services has a significant influence on the competitive positioning of academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings from this study are as follows;

1. There was a significant positive relationship between Resource Availability and User Perception as perceived by academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara

($r = 0.921 > r = 0.903$; $\alpha = 0.05$)

2. Technological Adaptation in library services has a significant influence on the Competitive Positioning of academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe Oghara.

($r = 0.968 > r = 0.920$; $\alpha = 0.05$)

Conclusions

1. The findings suggest that as resource availability increases, there is a corresponding positive impact on user perception among academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library. This strong correlation underscores the importance of ensuring ample resources to enhance the perceived quality of library services, ultimately contributing to a positive user experience.
2. The findings suggest an overwhelmingly strong and statistically significant positive correlation between technological adaptation and increased competitive positioning among academic librarians in Delta State Polytechnic Library. This robust correlation underscores the pivotal role of technological advancements in influencing the competitive stance of the library within the academic landscape.

Recommendations

1. The library administration should strategically invest in up-to-date books, digital resources, and modern technological infrastructure. This focused approach aims to not only enhance user perception but also elevate the overall quality of library services.
2. The library administrators should prioritize and invests in advanced technological solutions that includes updating software, adopting emerging technologies, and providing training programs for librarians to ensure proficient use of digital tools. A proactive approach to technological integration will not only enhance the library's competitive stance but also contribute to improved services and user experiences.

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