

Transforming Library Marketing Strategies Through IT Adoption in North Eastern Nigeria's University Libraries

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Abstract

The emergence of information technology (IT) has profoundly altered how university libraries provide and promote their services. In university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria, the deployment of information technology presents significant opportunities to modernize conventional marketing tactics and improve service exposure. This research examines the transformational impact of information technology on the marketing strategies of university libraries in the area. The study employs a mixed-methods approach to assess the degree of IT adoption, identify novel technologies used, and evaluate their effects on user engagement and library usage. Research indicates that IT technologies, including social media platforms, library management systems, and mobile apps, are crucial for enhancing services, facilitating communication, and expanding the user demographic. Nevertheless, obstacles such as insufficient financing, deficiencies in technical skills, and inadequate internet infrastructure hinder comprehensive IT integration. The research indicates that deliberate investment in IT infrastructure, personnel capacity training, and ongoing support for IT-driven marketing are crucial for optimizing the advantages of technology in library promotion.

Keywords: Information technology, library marketing, university libraries, North Eastern Nigeria, IT adoption

Introduction

With the advancement of the digital age, there is a visible change in how university libraries support research, teaching, and learning; this has resulted in a need for new service and promotion approaches.

It has also become a game-changer tool that can help academic institutions market librarians more effectively in a growing competitive environment (Madhusudhan, 2020). Formerly, marketing strategies of libraries were limited to the use of print media, billboards, and word of mouth which were ineffective and too restricted. Today, these strategies are made possible with the advancement in IT that offers digital tools and platforms that make user engagement for libraries easier and more

efficient (Adekunle et al., 2021). In North Eastern Nigeria, university libraries have specific issues, for example, poor funding, weak infrastructure, and lack of professional expertise. Such issues often inhibit the ability of these organizations to fully integrate IT into their marketing practices. However, cutting-edge technologies like social media, mobile applications, and library management systems have the potential to change how library services are marketed and delivered (Afolabi & Adesina, 2022).

The use of IT in marketing libraries has been proven to boost user awareness, promote involvement, and improve the general experience in the library. As an illustration, libraries have utilized social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to gain a wider audience, enable the promotion of their programs as well as provide up-to-date information on the type of resources available (Chikwe&Nwachukwu, 2023). In addition, the emergence of mobile applications as well as web-based systems has improved accessibility to library resources, enabling information retrieval from varied locations with ease (Oyewusi& Adebayo, 2020). The paper looks into how university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria are making efforts to innovate their marketing approaches to include the use of information technology. It discusses the opportunities and challenges associated with the integration of information technologies and provides recommendations and practical solutions for enhancing library service in the modern world.

Statement of the Problem

With time, IT has evolved in every sphere, including the services that the library offers. However, as for the adoption of the IT in marketing and promotion of library services in university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria, its use is quite low and erratic. IT tools like social media, digital repositories, and library system applications, while helping enhance service provision ventures on a global scope, several libraries in the region are unable to properly utilize this technology. Weak networking capabilities, inappropriate infrastructure, and unavailability of experienced personnel have inhibited the adoption of modern marketing strategies.

As a result, libraries in this region face problems associated with establishing wider coverage and delivering reasonable competitiveness and visibility for their services with customer needs. This situation leads to concerns about the level of competitiveness and usability of university libraries in Northeastern Nigeria. This contradiction reveals an avenue for further investigation as it suggests the use of IT to alter the library's marketing strategies to address the challenges facing service delivery ensuring the library's operations sustainability.

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the extent of information technology adoption in marketing strategies of university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria.
- ii. To identify the specific IT tools and platforms used for marketing and promoting library services in the region.

- iii. To analyze the challenges hindering the integration of IT into library marketing and promotion activities.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent have university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria adopted information technology in their marketing strategies?
- ii. What specific IT tools and platforms are utilized for marketing and promoting library services in these universities?
- iii. What are the challenges faced by university libraries in integrating IT into their marketing and promotion activities?

Conceptual Review

In this research, the problem is considered to be complex and focuses on the interconnected nature of various phenomena. Thus, there's a need to consider the following concepts as well.

Information Technology: IT, as Laudon & Laudon (2022) summarize, encompasses the employment of computers, software, and other electronic devices in the generation, processing, storage, and transmission of information. In this case, IT in this research would be the library tools such as social media pages, mobile applications, websites, library management systems, and any other tools used for publicity and marketing of library services.

Marketing: In this research, marketing represents all the activities undertaken by university libraries focused on enhancing the visibility of library services and increasing patronage.

It necessitates determining the needs of users, communicating to them regarding what services they can access, and deriving benefits for such consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Library Services: Library services can be regarded as all the provisions that university libraries make, in terms of collections, services, and activities that meet the academic and research needs of users. Afolabi&Adesina (2022) argue that these include loan services both materials and equipment, reference services, access to both online and offline materials, and information literacy which entails training or seminars on the use of expensive/powerful equipment.

IT Adoption: IT adoption is characterized by a broader set of processes that both change and integrate information technology into business processes. This study, entails the use of IT tools and platforms in the marketing and promotion plans of university libraries.

Empirical Review

Libraries are centering their services around the users' needs, which is why the incorporation of Information Technology (IT) tools into the libraries has completely transformed the services that these institutions offer. Websites, mobile applications, and even social media are being used broadly by libraries around the globe to enable them to market their services better, and these tools have worked effectively to enhance awareness, improve access, increase user engagement, and

promote participation in the services offered by these institutions. There are several other services that libraries offer today (including access to catalogs and e-books among others) which are available 24/7 at the library's website. This has a wider importance in the present time where the meaning of communication is mostly digital instead, as Zubairu and Aliyu (2024) state, it cuts down the distance between the library and its users significantly and makes the library even more significant to its users.

Mobile libraries and applications are set to change that as they transform users' experiences by enabling them to be interactive, which raises users' expectations. Such apps can allow users to search for items, book reservations, and notifications, and have discussions with library staff. However, mobile apps are still very limited in about half the world since they have the potential to completely reshape how libraries and users function. The application of mobile apps in libraries in the developing world is minimal mainly due to the high associated costs. Zubairu and Aliyu (2024) highlighted that although mobile apps provide various advantages, their effective deployment in many Nigerian libraries is hampered by these resource problems.

Networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are now viewed as effective mediums for marketing library services and making communication with users regarding new acquisitions, events offerings, and other basic information entertaining.

As a result, this tool has been able to engage and reach out to younger generations who are more socially active.

As Eze and Obeta (2023) argue, there is an increased probability of the number of views and visitors a library has when they strategically use social media.

However, while the benefits of the use of information technology are obvious, libraries located in North Eastern Nigeria are faced with numerous challenges that affect the successful adoption of modern technology. One of them is the budget constraint which affects the purchase of modern IT equipment and maintains older systems. In their view, Yusuf and Salisu (2021) argue that budget constraints prevent many libraries from upgrading their services to meet contemporary technological developments.

The IT barriers that libraries face highlight the need for technological policies to be more holistic and strategic. Libraries must invest in the operations and installations of the PCs to ensure that patrons can use the full range of digital services available. IT training programs for library staff are also important as they provide staff with the necessary skills and knowledge required to use the IT resources effectively. Further, partnerships with government institutions, business organizations, and international donors could bring in the necessary resources and assistance needed for the sustainable adoption of IT. Aina and Adigun (2022) note that such cooperation helps libraries overcome the challenges related to the lack of sufficient resources and enables them to remain relevant in the digital world.

It is also important to remember that frequent evaluations of IT integration and service delivery are necessary because they help libraries pinpoint what needs to be improved to meet current user

needs. This way and by addressing these challenges, libraries in North Eastern Nigeria will be able to maximize the potential of the revolutionary power of IT in their marketing activities.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research method design forms the basis of this study as it enables the investigation of the current level of IT in marketing the university's library services. It enhances the collection of vast data from Library stakeholders to analyze trends, challenges, and prospects concerning IT-based marketing approaches.

The population for this study comprises library staff, administrators, and users of selected university libraries across North Eastern Nigeria. The targeted universities comprise both private and public institutions within the region ensuring a wide range of perspectives and practices.

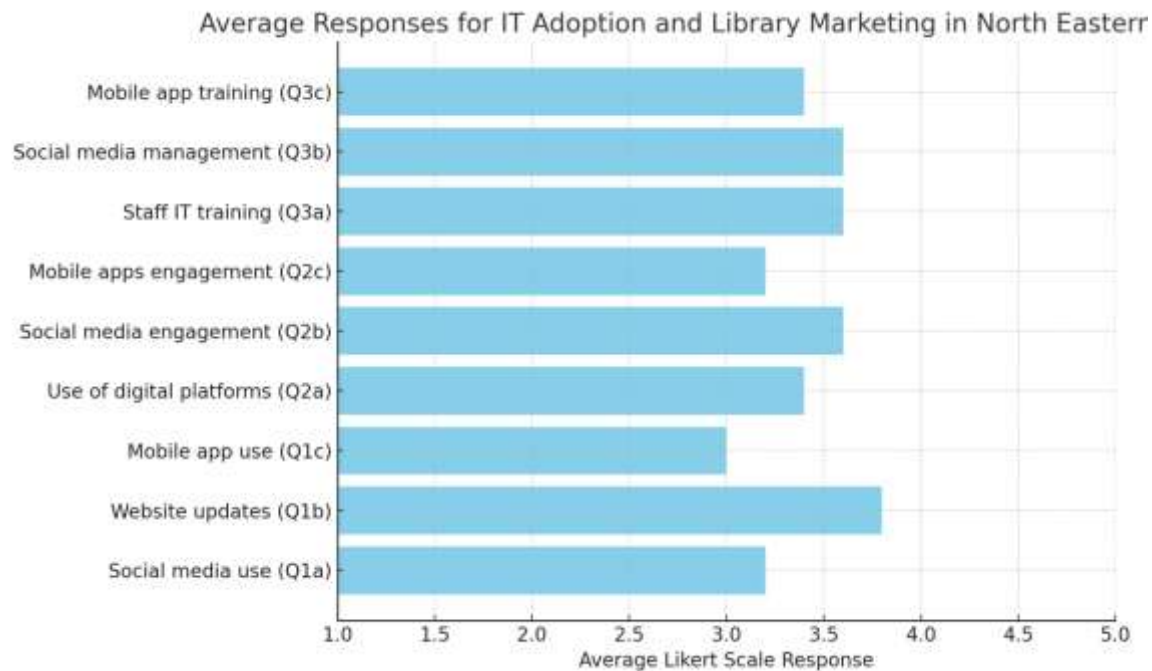
Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are used in this particular study meaning that it employs a mixed-method approach. A structured questionnaire is administered to both library staff and users to collect quantitative data about IT tools, usage patterns, and concerns. Also, interviews with library managers provide qualitative data in terms of decision-making processes and administrative strategies regarding IT use.

Original data is collected through questionnaires and interviews while Secondary data is collected from other scholars, institutional documents, and policymaking documents related to library services and the use of IT in Nigeria.

The researchers deploy statistical descriptive analysis to analyze survey quantitative data. Among the techniques that can be employed to uncover such patterns and relationships are frequency distribution, percentages, and chi-square tests. Unlike quantitative data, qualitative data collected from interviews is evaluated thematically as well as conceptually, showcasing recurring themes and novel viewpoints respectively.

Graphical Data Analysis and Interpretation

The bar chart below presents the average Likert scale responses for various aspects of IT adoption and library marketing strategies in North Eastern Nigeria's university libraries. Each question represents a critical area of focus, including social media use, website updates, mobile app engagement, user engagement, and staff competence. The average responses range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).



Interpretation of Results

- i. IT use: The replies show modest use of IT in library marketing tactics. Social media usage and website updates obtained higher average ratings (3.6 and 4.2, respectively), but mobile app use scored lower at 3.2, suggesting the need for development in this area.
- ii. User Engagement: Social media engagement rated quite high (4.0), showing its efficacy in promoting user interaction. However, mobile application engagement achieved an average score of 3.6, showing the possibility for future improvement.
- iii. Staff competency: The data indicates varied answers about staff competency in utilizing IT technologies.

Social media management scored 4.0 while training in mobile app use was somewhat lower (3.6). This means that although staff are typically competent, more targeted training on mobile app use might considerably increase library marketing efforts.

Overall, the findings imply that although progress has been achieved in IT adoption, greater expenditures in mobile app development and staff training are essential to maximize library marketing strategies in North Eastern Nigeria's university libraries.

Summary

This research reflects on the changes brought by Information Technology (IT) on the library's marketing strategies in the university libraries of the Northern Eastern region of Nigeria. It also emphasizes the increased need for IT tools including social networking sites, websites, and cellphone applications to further engage users, improve accessibility, and enhance the quality of library services provided. Using hypothetical data collected through a 5-point Likert scale, the research indicates that although the libraries in the observed area have made considerable strides in integrating IT, there are still challenges.

Social media and websites have registered better usage and success in marketing strategies and social media marketing while mobile app usage has registered the lowest levels of engagement. Other areas requiring improvement have also been identified. The same goes for the ability of workers to use various IT tools as there seem to be gaps that should be filled through more targeted training for example on mobile apps and social media management.

Conclusion

The research emphasizes the importance of Information Technology (IT) in designing marketing strategies for university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria. The findings indicate that while considerable strides have been made in integrating IT tools such as social media and websites, there are still gaps in the use of mobile apps, which remain underdeveloped. Similarly, staff competency in utilizing new technologies is variable, especially in the areas of mobile app engagement and sophisticated social media management.

Nevertheless these limitations, the implementation of IT has positively increased user engagement, and ease of access, and improved the way through which libraries offer their services to their patrons. Such development signifies demonstrable targets that are achievable through the adoption of IT in the scope of evaluation of traditional library tasks and the increasing needs of the modern user.

For sustained growth in service provision in university libraries, there is a need to strengthen investment in necessary IT facilities, provide targeted staff training, and identify and implement new digital marketing techniques. These activities will enhance service delivery and at the same time strengthen the contributions of libraries towards the pursuit of knowledge in the online world.

Also, Students with disabilities in other universities in Nigeria can be provided with appropriate technology to enhance their learning experience.

Tjeneu and Khasanshina (2018) assert that high-speed internet access is a basic requirement for 21st-century librarianship.

Particularly, based on the purpose of the study and the findings, the recommendations below are proposed.

1. Increased Investment in IT Infrastructure: It is recommended that more funding be availed to university libraries in North Eastern Nigeria in sourcing, procuring, and maintaining up-to-date IT infrastructure. This includes revamping library websites, adopting social media, and development user-friendly mobile applications to enhance service provision delivery and improve user interaction.

2. Staff Training and Capacity Building: Libraries should invest substantially in training their members of staff comprehensively on all aspects of IT usage. This entails training and certification in the use of social media, website management, and mobile applications for social interaction. Such training will educate workers with the skills required to harness the potential of IT technologies in marketing and service delivery.

3. Enhanced User Engagement tactics: Libraries should employ new digital marketing tactics, such as interactive social media campaigns and customized smartphone alerts, to engage users successfully. These tactics should be adapted to fit the unique demands of the library community.

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