

MARKETING LIBRARY RESOURCES USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Oladipupo, Roseline

Department of Library and Information Science University of Nigeria, Nsukka

+2347060856997, aborosy@gmail.com

Deborah, Mazah

Department of Library and Information Technology

Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa

+2348036060344 deborahmazah@yahoo.com

&

Adamu, Ibrahim

Department of Library and Information Science

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

+2348067399026, adamuibrahim1707@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper discusses application of social media tools in library services, some literatures were reviewed in relation to the titles of the paper which includes concept of marketing by different scholars, library marketing, marketing library services in contemporary society marketable products in library services, social media in library services. The study also highlighted some requirements for effective implementation of social media for library services as well as challenges affecting effective applications of social media for marketing library services among others. In conclusion, some recommendations were given which include there should be adequate training and awareness of these tools, funds should be provided to get the required technologies, and recruitment of a skilled librarian to manage the social media pages and applications.

Keywords: Marketing library resources; Social Media; WhatsApp; Facebook; Twitter.

Introduction

The relevance of any library is the extent of its clientele patronage and the satisfaction users derive from the services rendered to them, for this to be achieved there is a need for the library to create an awareness of its available resources and services to its users because one of the tradition of libraries is to know its users' information needs and how to satisfy those needs. According to Bassey (2006), "the services and information provided by libraries should correspond with the user's need which is the very reason for its existence", an

effective library service supports continuous enriching interaction between the library and society (Cumber, 2004). With the increasing popularity of social media, libraries are now engaging social media tools to market information resources and services to maintain their relevance in society.

The emergence of social media has introduced a platform for interaction among people from different locations and also serves as a great source of information. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), stated that “social media is an internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” People now use this platform to connect with colleagues, Friends, and family and also market their goods and services. American Marketing Association (2004) revealed that “marketing as the activity involves the process of creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging valued worth offers to clients and the society as a whole”.

The utilization and growth of the use of social media have propelled researchers to seek the roles it plays in an individual’s day-to-day activities and the society at large, which has made libraries embrace this medium to market their various resources and services to strengthen their connections with their user communities. The various social media tools that can be used to foster the marketing of library resources and services include Wiki, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, WhatsApp, Instant messaging, LinkedIn, etc.

Concept of Library Marketing

The term marketing has various definitions, but they all focus on a particular management process that is customer-oriented. Kotler (2012) defines marketing to be “a systematic way of exploring, ay of exploring, creating, and delivering values to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit”. That is in marketing there has to be a targeted group satisfied with the aim of people (customers) whose needs must be identified and of making a profit. Constantinides (2006), “Majority of the marketing theory has the traditional 4Ps approach are Product, Price, Promotion and Place” which serves as a guide for a successful market. The 4Ps have now been extended to 7Ps, which now include people, process and physical evidence (Rowley, 2006). This approach will guide the individual/ organization in the process of development of the appropriate product at a marketable price devising promotions, locating the best place to sell these products with in mind, the medium done and the satisfaction the user derived from the product.

Marketing in library context differs from the general marketing process which is geared at profit making. Gupta (2003), stated that the concept marketing in libraries shows a shift from the “selling concept” to “product development” and “customer-focused concept”. Libraries fall under the category of non-profit organizations because library services to its community are not for profit making rather to satisfy user information needs. Kotler (1982), defines marketing for non-profit organizations of which the library is one “as the skill of planning and managing the organization’s exchange relations with its target public”. This means that the concept of marketing can both serve for-profit and non-profit making organizations/institutions. Although Ojimabo (1994), noted “that there might be differences in the implementation process which solely depend on the methods of operation of the various organizations” it is all geared towards the satisfaction of their customers.

Library Marketing in Contemporary Society

The concept of Library marketing deals with the approach librarians use to bring to the notice of their users the various services and information resources available for them for easy access and how those services can satisfy their information needs. In this modern age where the information environment is becoming more competitive, with revolutionary technological changes in service development and delivery, the need for adaptation to the digital environment is of great importance, this will enable libraries to measure up with users' information needs, and mode of access to information. However, some libraries are yet to employ the tool of marketing which made Francine (2006), state that “Libraries are in danger of losing their place as information providers because of lack of marketing”. For this to be avoided, library marketing in this contemporary society is the best way for libraries to improve recognition, remain relevant in this digital era and stay connected with their users wherever they may be. Cole (2010) stated that “marketing is of great necessity for libraries to be proactive and to meet up with user’s expectations”.

Marketable Products in Libraries

A product can be an item or a service offered to a market to satisfy a particular need, this product can be either tangible or intangible “Without a product, an organization has no reason to exist because there will be no task to perform (Seetharama, 1998). In the library context products constitute material services (reference services, lending services, referral services, technical services, indexing and abstracting services, user education services, etc.) a

programmes. The information materials (print and non-print) are tangible while the services and programmes are intangible products.

Library products can be categorized into three (3) levels:

1. The Core: this reflects what the customer wants; they are information quiet place to read, and an avenue to socialize.
2. The Tangible; which includes books, serials, websites, comfortable seating and good lighting
3. Augmented Levels: these comprise an extra benefit like additional information, friendliness and speed (Kotler, 1982).

All these are the library products that libraries offer to their users, De Aze (2005), stated that "the core business of libraries are products and services which provide benefits for users and answer users most important needs".

Ohio Library Council cited by Lamb (2018) further listed some library products including the following:

1. Provision of relevant Information resources both print and non-print.
2. Develop and circulate collections of print and multi-media materials
3. Development of 24/7 reference and research resources and services.
4. Provide services for online communities
5. Program information, social, cultural literacy and various literacy.
6. Offer training to the users in the use of available library resources
7. Provides access to online information resources, databases and also guides their various users in web resource selection
8. A conducive place for their users to learn.
9. Maintain archives of historical resources

Social Media Tools in Marketing Library Services

Social media tools are internet or web-based technologies that use online and mobile technologies to operate, these tools enable social among individuals which is why they are essential for the continued and measurable success of the library, especially in this contemporary society of information explosion and technological era/digital age where almost everyone use social media tools to interact with one another. Drew (2007) expressed that there is a need for libraries to go where their users are". This implies that library services should not be limited to particular or restricted places this should be done through the

application of social media. This enhances the library reputation as a responsive and collaborative institution, although the strategies can be difficult and time-consuming but also not ignorable in this contemporary society.

Requirement for Effective Application of Social Media in Providing Library Services

For libraries to utilize social media tools for their library services, some basic requirements are needed which are listed below:

1. Internet connectivity
2. Technological facilities.
3. Development of a library web page and social media page.
4. Have a link that their users can use to connect to the library page.
5. A professional social media librarian to manage the social media page.
6. Consider legal issues and policies that guide social media networks.
7. Social Media Tool Applicable to Marketing of Library Services

Various types of social media tools can be used for library marketing, they are Wiki, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, WhatsApp, Instant messaging, LinkedIn, etc. For this work, only three (3) will be discussed. They are Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

FACEBOOK (<http://www.facebook.com>)

Facebook is a free social networking web platform that promotes and facilitates interaction between friends, family and colleagues. It was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and some Harvard University classmates. Facebook features include the following:

1. Customized profile
2. Privacy and security
3. Friend list management
4. Interactive chat
5. Fan pages
6. Create blogs and allow users to import data or post from other blogs
7. Send virtual gifts
8. Classmates and coworker search engine (Techopedia, 2018).

Based on the above-listed unique features of Facebook, libraries have adapted this tool to market their services and resources, Farkas (2007), stresses adoption of Facebook to market library services will be of tremendous help.

The library can use Facebook to carry out the following:

1. **Creating the library profile:** creating a library profile on Facebook brings the library closer to its users, all the librarian needs to do is to in its user to join the page. With this, they can easily interact with their users and also inform them of the various services they can render to them.
2. **Instant Messaging system:** This can be used to answer reference queries over chat, and further attend to users even after the library closes ho all the user needs is to check the librarian's status (available, busy, online).

Event posting and photographs: libraries can organize an online eve that will enable them to get the opinions of their users, also post photographs relating to the events, with these their users can freely make their contributions.

News update: via this platform, libraries can provide their users with to-date and relevant news that will be useful for their day-to-day activities.

Sending Virtual Gifts: one of the unique features of Facebook includes alerts of birthdays, special occasions, etc., the libraries can take advantage of this medium to send virtual gifts to the users, by doing this it makes the users feel a sense of belonging to the library family.

TWITTER (<https://twitter.com>)

Twitter is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. To tweet means sending short messages to anyone who follows you on Twitter, this is done when your messages are useful and interesting to them, twitter can also be used to discover and follow people and organizations of interest. Twitter uses a message size restriction maximum of 280 characters.

Twitter as a social media tool enables libraries to build conversations with the users, by so doing they will know their customers' concerns and what they can think about them which will now enable them to serve them better. Bell (2012), "Twitter is a golden opportunity for libraries to connect with members of the library community", with this libraries can build a

community online. Using Twitter, libraries can tweet about new books, Library events and programs, pictures of the library, reply to users' comments, etc.

WHATSAPP (<https://watsApp.com>)

WhatsApp is an application that uses the internet to send messages, images, audio and videos. It was developed in 2009 by Brian Action and Jan Koum. The requirements for the use of this application are a smartphone/tablet with a SIM card (phone number), internet connectivity for operation. Now there are WhatsApp applications for laptops and desktops.

For library service promotion, WhatsApp facilitates collaborations among library staff and their users, enhances users' feedback, delivers information quickly, its financial implication is very minimal and requires minimum training.

Challenges of Social Media Tools in Library Services

Because social media tools are essential for library marketing, there are still some challenges that militate against their effective usage in libraries. Listed below are some of the challenges:

1. **Internet connectivity:** Social media tools need good Internet connectivity to function effectively, and most libraries, especially in developing countries do not have good Internet connectivity utilization tools.
2. **Privacy issues:** Because of the vital information like name, date of birth, contact details, etc. is enough for criminals to hack into people's financial details and some other private accounts.
3. **Lack of Awareness:** Most libraries are still not aware of the importance of social media tools in library marketing.
4. **Lack of Adequate Training:** Lack of adequate training on the part of the librarian in using these tools will affect their usage in marketing library products and services.
5. **Inadequate Funding:** Marketing in libraries is not for profit making, but for maximum satisfaction of their users' needs, so the need for them to be adequately funded by their parent institution is very paramount

Recommendations

The use of social media tools in marketing libraries and information services cannot be overemphasized. The following recommendations were given:

1. There should be adequate training and retraining of the library staff on the application of social media in library routines and services
2. Creation of awareness on the importance of utilization of social media tools in library marketing
3. Libraries should create an avenue of generating revenue (IGR) instead of relying on government funding 100% rather than be engaged in fee-based services such as bindery services, photocopying services, indexing services seeking donations or help from NGOs and philanthropies, etc. This would provide additional financial support to libraries.
4. Recruitment of librarian with relevant ICT skills, to manage the social media services among others.

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