



MARKETING STRATEGIES AND USER SATISFACTION IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The study examined marketing strategies and user satisfaction in university libraries, recognizing the evolving role of libraries in meeting academic demands and maintaining relevance. As user needs diversify and digital options expand, libraries increasingly adopt strategic marketing approaches to enhance visibility, promote services, and ensure user engagement. This paper explored various marketing strategies including traditional tools, digital platforms, outreach services, and feedback systems and assessed their effects on user satisfaction. Findings indicate that effective marketing increases awareness, encourages resource usage, and enhances user perception, ultimately boosting satisfaction. Marketing helps align library services with user expectations, facilitates the discovery of digital resources, and creates a responsive image of the library. However, challenges such as limited budgets, lack of marketing expertise among staff, weak ICT infrastructure, and user apathy hinder optimal marketing performance. Despite these constraints, the study concludes that marketing is not optional but essential for sustaining library relevance and promoting institutional visibility. It recommends capacity building for staff; collaborative marketing efforts; and data-driven campaigns informed by user feedback. By embracing marketing as a strategic tool, university libraries can significantly improve user satisfaction and service utilization.

Keywords: marketing strategies, user satisfaction, university libraries, library services

Introduction

University libraries play a pivotal role in the academic success and intellectual development of students and researchers, serving as vital hubs for knowledge acquisition, information dissemination, and lifelong learning. As academic needs continue to evolve and digital technologies transform how information is accessed and consumed, the pressure on university libraries to maintain their relevance and responsiveness to user demands has grown significantly. In response to these changes, many academic libraries have adopted strategic marketing approaches aimed at enhancing their visibility, improving service accessibility, and fostering deeper user engagement within the academic community (Aderibigbe & Farouk, 2022). In today's knowledge-driven society, marketing is no longer viewed merely as a commercial tactic but as a necessary and dynamic tool that empowers academic libraries to promote their value, align with institutional goals, and remain central to educational advancement.



In the context of university libraries, marketing refers to the deliberate and systematic promotion of services, resources, and programs to both existing and potential users, with the aim of increasing awareness, utilization, and value perception. This proactive approach ensures that users are informed about the diverse offerings of the library and how these offerings can support their academic and research goals. User satisfaction, on the other hand, indicates the extent to which library services meet or surpass the expectations of patrons, encompassing factors such as service quality, resource availability, user experience, and staff responsiveness (Eze & Uzoigwe, 2021). This paper reflects on the importance of marketing strategies in university libraries and how these strategies significantly influence user satisfaction by bridging the gap between library services and user needs.

Conceptual Clarification

Marketing strategies in academic libraries involve planned and coordinated efforts designed to inform users about the wide range of resources and services available while actively encouraging their utilization. These strategies can encompass a variety of tactics, including advertising campaigns, promotions, user education programs, and the strategic branding of services to enhance the library's visibility and reputation. In an era increasingly dominated by digital technology and where users' attention is often divided among numerous online platforms and distractions, such marketing efforts become even more critical. Libraries must adapt to the evolving landscape of information consumption by leveraging digital media and interactive channels to effectively communicate their value to users, ensuring they are aware of the library's offerings and understand how these resources can support their academic and research pursuits (Gupta & Savard, 2022). The adoption of innovative and targeted marketing strategies is essential for academic libraries to remain relevant, meet user expectations, and foster higher levels of resource utilization in a competitive and technology-driven environment.

User satisfaction refers to the positive perception and fulfillment that users derive from their library experiences, reflecting how well a library meets or exceeds their expectations (Oyewusi & Oyeboade, 2019). It encompasses several key factors, including the quality of service provided, the availability and relevance of resources, the attitude of library staff, and the ease with which users can access library materials and services. Marketing plays a crucial role in shaping these experiences by ensuring that library services are aligned with user needs and preferences. By effectively communicating the availability of resources, offering personalized user experiences, and promoting services in a way that resonates with users, libraries can



significantly enhance satisfaction levels. Marketing strategies such as user education, targeted outreach programs, and feedback-driven improvements help libraries stay attuned to the evolving needs of their patrons, leading to better engagement, greater utilization of resources, and improved overall library experiences (Oyewusi & Oyeboade, 2019).

Importance of Marketing in University Libraries

One of the core purposes of marketing in libraries is to raise awareness among users about the full range of resources and services available. Many students and faculty members are often unaware of the extensive services that libraries provide, such as access to specialized databases, research assistance, workshops, and digital resources. Effective marketing helps bridge this awareness gap by actively showcasing these offerings, making users more informed about the library's capabilities and how they can benefit from them. Through targeted communication, promotional campaigns, and user education, libraries can ensure that their users fully understand and utilize the resources at their disposal. This awareness not only enhances the overall user experience but also encourages greater engagement with library services, contributing to the academic success of students and faculty alike (Rowley, 2023).

Another important aspect of marketing in academic libraries is the enhancement of service usage, which is central to ensuring that library resources and services are fully utilized. Marketing plays a vital role in raising awareness among users about the full spectrum of services available, such as access to digital databases, research support, and reference services. These resources are often underutilized simply because users are unaware of them or may not understand how to access them. Through effective marketing efforts, libraries can bridge this knowledge gap by informing students, faculty, and researchers about the availability and benefits of these services. As a result, marketing not only encourages greater usage of library resources but also helps in fostering a deeper connection between users and the library's offerings. This strategic promotion of services makes certain that library resources are being leveraged to their fullest potential, ultimately contributing to enhanced academic success and research output. In an era where information overload is common, effective marketing ensures that users can easily navigate the vast array of resources available, thereby increasing library engagement and making the library an indispensable academic tool (Singh, 2019).

Marketing strategies are crucial for helping libraries remain competitive in an increasingly digital and information-rich environment. With the rise of online platforms like Google and



YouTube, users have easy access to a wide array of information, often bypassing traditional library resources. As a result, academic libraries must employ effective marketing strategies to highlight their unique value propositions, which may include specialized research assistance, access to peer-reviewed journals, and a wealth of curated academic resources not readily available through general search engines (Afolabi, 2019). By showcasing these distinctive offerings, libraries can attract users and demonstrate their essential role in the academic and research process. Furthermore, a well-implemented marketing strategy contributes to sustaining user loyalty by continuously engaging with patrons and addressing their evolving needs. This competitiveness ensures that libraries remain academically relevant in an age where information is abundant but trustworthiness and quality are paramount.

Forms of Marketing Strategies in Academic Libraries

While libraries increasingly embrace digital marketing strategies, they continue to rely on traditional marketing tools such as posters, orientation programs, and handbills. These methods remain popular because they are cost-effective and provide a direct means of reaching students, especially during physical visits to the library. Traditional marketing approaches offer tangible and immediate interaction with library resources, which can be particularly effective in engaging students who may not actively seek out information online. These tools also cater to the diverse needs of library users, allowing them to access information in a way that aligns with their preferences. Additionally, orientation programs serve as an excellent platform for introducing students to the library's services, fostering familiarity and promoting active engagement (Mbatha, 2020). Despite the rise of digital marketing, these traditional strategies still play a critical role in ensuring library visibility and user interaction.

Digital marketing has gained significant traction in academic libraries as a means of reaching users remotely and effectively. With the growing reliance on technology, libraries are increasingly utilizing email campaigns, websites, social media platforms, and virtual tours to engage users in ways that were not possible through traditional methods. These tools help bridge the gap between the library and its users, particularly benefiting distance learners and part-time students who may not have regular access to the physical library. Through digital marketing, libraries can provide users with timely updates on new resources, services, and events, ensuring that they remain informed and engaged. Social media, in particular, offers a dynamic and interactive platform for users to engage with the library, share experiences, and ask questions, enhancing the overall user experience. Additionally, virtual tours offer an



innovative way to familiarize users with the library's layout and resources without requiring a physical visit (Kaur & Rani, 2022). These digital strategies not only expand the library's reach but also improve access to services, thereby supporting academic success for all students, regardless of their physical location.

Some academic libraries enhance their visibility and relevance by adopting outreach services, which often involve collaborating with faculties, student unions, and academic departments. These partnerships serve as a strategic way to ensure that library services are tailored to the specific academic needs of students and faculty members, thereby fostering a more personalized and effective library experience. By working closely with various university entities, libraries can better understand the requirements of different user groups and provide targeted resources, programs, and services that directly address these needs. Furthermore, such collaborations promote shared goals, such as improving student learning outcomes and enhancing research productivity. These outreach initiatives also help in raising awareness of the library's offerings, ensuring that the services available align with the academic missions of the university. By engaging in these partnerships, libraries also encourage broader involvement from students and faculty, ultimately contributing to greater utilization of library resources (Babalola & Haliso, 2021).

User-centered approaches, such as feedback systems, suggestion boxes, and periodic surveys, are effective marketing tools in academic libraries, as they provide direct insights into the preferences and expectations of library users. These approaches allow libraries to engage their users in a meaningful way, offering them the opportunity to voice their opinions on various aspects of library services. By collecting and analyzing this feedback, libraries can identify areas that require improvement and tailor their services to better meet user needs. This not only enhances user satisfaction but also promotes a sense of ownership and involvement among users, as they see that their opinions are valued and acted upon. Furthermore, feedback-driven improvements can help libraries maintain a high level of service quality, ensuring that they remain relevant and responsive to changing user demands. The continuous cycle of collecting feedback and making adjustments helps libraries create an environment where users feel heard, fostering loyalty and encouraging greater utilization of library resources (Ezeala & Yusuff, 2024).



Effects of Marketing Strategies on User Satisfaction

Effective marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing users' awareness of the library's offerings, which directly influences their engagement and satisfaction. In an environment where students and researchers often face an overwhelming amount of information, it is essential for libraries to effectively communicate the services, resources, and support they provide. By using targeted marketing strategies, such as email campaigns, social media, and outreach programs, libraries ensure that users are informed about the available resources and how they can benefit from them. This was also noted by Obi and Nsirim (2022) when they noted that marketing strategies such as the use of email, social media, digital marketing and library orientation are crucial to informing the users about library and information services. This encourages users to actively engage with the library's services, whether it's accessing research databases, attending workshops, or using study spaces. As users become more familiar with the offerings, they are more likely to view the library as a valuable resource, which leads to greater satisfaction. The more users perceive the library as meeting their needs and providing relevant services, the more likely they are to return and recommend it to others, creating a positive cycle of engagement and loyalty (Iwhiwhu & Okorodudu, 2024).

Marketing plays a crucial role in helping users make better use of digital resources available in academic libraries. By effectively promoting digital tools such as e-databases, institutional repositories, and online catalogs, libraries ensure that students and researchers are aware of these valuable resources. Through various marketing channels, such as email newsletters, social media, and user training sessions, libraries can familiarize users with these digital platforms, showing them how to access and navigate these tools. When students and researchers understand the full scope of digital resources at their disposal, they are more likely to utilize them in their academic work. This increased familiarity leads to more efficient research processes, higher-quality outputs, and a greater sense of satisfaction with the library's services. In essence, marketing serves as a bridge between users and the digital resources that can significantly enhance their academic experience and productivity (Anunobi & Ogbonna, 2022).

Marketing campaigns play a pivotal role in fostering a positive image of the library. When libraries actively engage with their users through regular communication, updates, and promotional efforts, they create a perception of being responsive and innovative. These campaigns highlight the library's commitment to meeting user needs and staying current with



technological advancements. A library that is seen as proactive in promoting its services not only gains the trust of its existing users but also attracts potential ones by showcasing its relevance in an increasingly digital world. Such perceptions significantly contribute to user satisfaction, as individuals are more likely to appreciate a library that is accessible, communicative, and adaptable to evolving academic and technological demands. As a result, libraries that invest in consistent marketing campaigns are more likely to maintain positive relationships with their users, further enhancing their overall experience and engagement with library resources (Woodward, 2023).

When services are marketed effectively, users feel included and valued, which enhances their overall experience. This sense of involvement fosters a stronger emotional connection between users and the library, making them more likely to return and engage with library services regularly (Garoufallou et al., 2023). When users perceive that the library is attuned to their needs and preferences, they are not only more likely to take advantage of the available resources, but also to recommend the library to others. This cycle of positive engagement strengthens user loyalty and contributes to the long-term success of the library in serving its academic community. In addition, effective marketing can help create a sense of community and belonging, which is vital for user retention and satisfaction. Therefore, when libraries prioritize marketing strategies that make users feel recognized and supported, they cultivate an environment that encourages continued usage and satisfaction.

Challenges in Implementing Effective Marketing

Despite its importance, marketing in academic libraries faces challenges that hinder its effectiveness. One major issue is budgetary constraints, as many libraries operate on limited funds and cannot afford extensive promotional campaigns. This limitation often leads to a reliance on low-cost or free marketing strategies, such as word-of-mouth promotion and social media engagement, which may not reach all potential users effectively (Aina, 2024). As a result, libraries may struggle to compete with other information providers like online platforms or commercial search engines that have larger marketing budgets. Additionally, the lack of financial resources can restrict the ability to develop and maintain advanced marketing tools, such as targeted advertising and professional-grade digital campaigns. These financial constraints can ultimately impact the library's ability to fully leverage its resources and services, thereby limiting user awareness and engagement.



There is also the problem of staff capacity, as not all librarians are trained in marketing communication, which limits the effectiveness of promotional activities. This gap in expertise means that many libraries may not utilize marketing strategies to their fullest potential, leading to missed opportunities for user engagement and service promotion. Without the necessary training, librarians might struggle to create compelling campaigns, effectively communicate the library's offerings, or even analyze user feedback to improve services. Consequently, the lack of specialized knowledge in marketing can hinder the library's ability to reach and attract its target audience, affecting overall user satisfaction and library usage (Edoka, 2023). As a result, libraries may not be able to compete effectively with other information providers, leaving them at a disadvantage in the digital age.

Technological barriers can hinder marketing, especially in institutions where ICT infrastructure is poor or inconsistent. This limitation can severely affect the library's online visibility and service delivery, as libraries increasingly rely on digital platforms to communicate with users. Without a stable and robust technological framework, marketing efforts such as email campaigns, social media outreach, and virtual tours may fail to reach their intended audience effectively. In addition, poor infrastructure may result in slow website loading times, unreliable access to e-resources, and difficulties in implementing interactive features that engage users. As a consequence, users may experience frustration, which could ultimately affect their perception of the library's services and decrease their overall satisfaction (Uwaifo, 2022). This highlights the need for institutions to invest in enhancing their ICT infrastructure to support more effective marketing and user engagement strategies.

Users themselves may be apathetic toward library marketing efforts. Some students often ignore messages, avoid training sessions, or underestimate the importance of library services, which can hinder the full impact of marketing strategies (Echezona & Ugwuanyi, 2010). This apathy may stem from a lack of awareness or interest in the resources available, leading to low engagement despite the library's efforts to communicate. For marketing to be effective, libraries need to address this challenge by tailoring their strategies to appeal to students' interests and demonstrating the tangible benefits of using library services. By actively engaging with students and making marketing materials more relatable and accessible, libraries can overcome this barrier and increase participation in their offerings. Understanding and mitigating user indifference is crucial for the success of library marketing campaigns, ensuring that their potential benefits reach the target audience.



Conclusion

Marketing strategies are no longer optional in university libraries, they are essential for their continued relevance and success. These strategies play a pivotal role in ensuring that library services are visible, resources are effectively utilized, and users experience high levels of satisfaction. With the growing prominence of digital media, libraries must leverage platforms such as social media, websites, and email campaigns to engage users, alongside traditional physical outreach efforts. This study discovered that effective marketing increases awareness, encourages resource usage, and enhances user perception, ultimately boosting satisfaction. Furthermore, marketing helps align library services with user expectations, facilitates the discovery of digital resources, and creates a responsive image of the library. However, challenges such as limited budgets, lack of marketing expertise among staff, weak ICT infrastructure, and user apathy hinder optimal marketing performance. Despite these constraints, the study concludes that marketing is not optional but essential for sustaining library relevance and promoting institutional visibility. Thus, by embracing marketing as a strategic tool, university libraries can significantly improve user satisfaction and service utilization.

Recommendations

1. University libraries should invest in training their staff on marketing and communication strategies. A skilled team can creatively promote services without relying solely on large budgets.
2. Libraries should utilize both traditional and digital platforms to maximize user reach. Campaigns should be sustained and data-driven to ensure impact.
3. There is a need for consistent user feedback systems to help shape marketing decisions. Libraries must listen to the voice of the users.
4. Collaborative marketing with academic departments and student organizations should be encouraged. This approach helps integrate library promotions into broader academic activities.

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