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Marketing Public Library Resources and Services through Social Media: Challenges and Way Forward

Abstract

The public library is regarded as the school for the masses, a place where the literate and illiterate can have access to resources that will satisfy their information need and thereby give them the opportunity to improve themselves and their society. However, public library has been relegated to the background in the society and even among the other types of libraries. To revive the situation, the paper established the need for marketing the resources and services rendered by public library. Authors identified the common Social Media tools used in library to include: Facebook, Wiki, Blogs, Twitter, Instant Messaging, Podcast, Library Website, Social Book Marking, Remote Login Access, Quick Response Code. Also challenges to proper utilization of these social media sites were identified as epileptic power supply, lack of awareness, low level of access to technology, network problems.

Keywords: Library services, Marketing, Social media tools

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Conventionally, Libraries have been the main avenue of information provision; this is why they are regarded as the life wire and intellectual heart of the communities where they are situated. Libraries are considered as treasure store houses of knowledge because of its resources and services. Library resources are the raw materials that provide vital services in the teaching and learning process. In view of this, Islam, (2004) pointed out that libraries are considered as learned institutions, equipped with treasures of knowledge which are maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate children, men and women continuously and to assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of the

information embodied in the resources. Similarly, the librarian is a link between the library resources and library user, bringing both together and ensuring that library resources meet the information needs of patrons in the most effective and efficient way.

Public libraries in particular facilitate access to information by all, serving people from all walks of life no matter who they are, and young adults are one of their most important patrons. Conversely, IFLA, (2003) gave the view that public library serve as conduits of timely information, equipping young adults with lifelong learning and literacy skills such that they are empowered to positively shape the future of their societies.

Public library as a knowledge organization must be vibrant and be quick in response to

change in order to meet up with the growing and changing society for it to remain relevant to the development of its community. There is now a shift from service orientation to customer orientation. To achieve this, the public libraries have a great role to play, It needs to present itself as an indispensable factor for the acquisition of knowledge and information to accomplish the main objectives of libraries which are to obtain self sufficiency in their resources and to provide an optimum level of services to reach more potential users and encourage the use of library resources. To make these attainable, librarians and their libraries could develop well designed marketing strategies that will attract users to utilize the library resources to their advantage. It is in this regard that there is need for marketing of library resources through the social media in order to provide a platform for effective utilization of library resources.

Marketing through the social media aims to achieve the vision of the library which is to take library resources and services to users and not necessarily that users should be present in the library. This can be achieved by knowing the users need and satisfy the needs, wants, and demands by designing and delivering suitable resources and services.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.2 Resources and Services of Public Libraries

Public libraries are a world-wide trend, this is why IFLA, (2003) defines public library as an organization established and sustained by the community, either through local, district or national government or with the aid given by some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally, available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and

employment status and educational attainment. The provision of resources and services in diverse formats to meet the needs of different users for information, education, recreation, leisure, personal development are the goals or roles of public libraries. Inclusively, Oyewo, (2015) gave the view that public library make information available in range of ideas, opinions and knowledge to the people both in local content and in order ways.

Since the users or audience of the public libraries cut across ages, gender, social status, religions and educational class, so also the resources of the library with which they provide the service mentioned above must cut across various human endeavours. In view of this, *Unesco*(1994) postulated that the public library aim is to provide resources and services with equal opportunities for everyone. The resources consists of prints, non-print resources, local materials, works of arts, music, handworks, war resources, audio-visual resources, traditional materials etc. All these are provided to meet the needs of all their numerous users irrespective of their class and social status. In order to fulfill their goals/objectives, the public libraries carry out some services through which they can meet the needs of their patrons. Also, special services and resources should be provided for those who cannot use the usual service and resources, for example, people whose language are not captured in writing for the general public, people with disabilities, prison inmates, hospital patients etc.

Moreover, collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technology as well as traditional materials. Relatively, IFLA (2003) noted that resources must reflect current trends and the evaluation of society, as well as the memory of human endeavours and imagination hence, collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political and religion censorship, nor commercial pressures. Hence, the organization outlined

public services to include|: Presenting books and activities re-view on radio and television, Working with adults and children's literature and cultural groups, Supporting literacy organizations and campaigns, participating in the activities of local organizations, Participating in local history and genealogy societies, visiting local organization to promote the library services, among others. With the provision of resources and services in public libraries, it is depressing to know that public libraries are being neglected by both the government and the people, this is why there is need to bring in new trend into the dissemination of services in library.

2.3 New Trends in Libraries Services

The rationale behind the establishment of library has become diverse. Its transformation over times has made it defy its earlier definition of being a warehouse of materials. In contrary, libraries are driving force that fosters positive change in educational, social, economic and political situations in the community. In his own view, Leheman (2011), opines that the future of library will be as a knowledge center that is dynamic, where not only the librarian, and the users engage in an interchange of ideas — but the library architecture acts as not only a surrounding framework, but also as a healthy “space” where ideas can flourish, live, grow and even be protected. As regards to this, the library has become a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear. . In addition to providing materials, libraries also provide the services of librarians who are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs. The excellence of the library, it should be remembered, is dependent on the quality of its resources and the services of the librarians. Gupta & Savard, (2010) posited that image and visibility challenges have been

encountered by libraries and archives for a very long time, this therefore necessitate the need for marketing of library resources and services Library and information services are resources should satisfy the need of library users. Resources and services of public libraries as well as new trends in library services.

However, the extent to which resources and services satisfy the needs of users will be determined by the extent the users are aware of such resources and services. A potent means in which librarians and libraries can optimize for their work and services as well as maintain their relevance is through a medium like social media.

2.4 Social Media Sites for Marketing Library Resources and Services

Increasing use of social media by the Internet users is offering new challenges for libraries to keep their image alive into the minds of community that work in virtual environment. With the use of Social media, there are more prospects of getting in touch with the library community and users so as to give them a chance to interact with the library. This is why Marketing of library resources and services is made more possible through the emergence and increase in prominence and use of social media. Relating to this, Khan & Bhatti (2012) purported that the whole business of libraries is about connecting people with information and this is what social media is really all about. Comparatively, Mahmood and Richardson, (2011) opined that the use of social media in libraries is growing fast as these tools offer a wealth of opportunities for the design and delivery of a variety of new resources and services in the academic library.

Social media helps in interacting with the people in our communities and make information available to them in a very accessible way. Likewise, Lawson (2013) put it this way that our customers expect us to find

them online, tailor our messages to their preferences and be able to engage in dialogue. Rogers (2012)'s study on Web 2.0 application used by libraries to promote and market services, the librarians response showed that 70.7% use Blog, 66.7% use Social Networking sites, and Instant Messaging was 50.7% as the most commonly used ones. Accordingly, Tailor and Francis (2014) reported that libraries use Social Media (SM) to fulfill a range of objectives with most focused on promotion, (visibility for and usage of library services and resources). The common Social Media tools used in library are:

Facebook: This can be used to support outreach programs of the library. It is used to market the library, advertise hours, location and website. Farkas (2007) purported that by linking Facebook to the library's webpage all the available resources at the library can be marketed. In addition, Farkas gave the view that libraries can insert subject guides within Facebook pages so as to provide reference services such as "ask a librarian", 'chat' and instant messaging. Users can have access to all available services on library web through Facebook. Also, librarians are able to have cordial relationship with users in order to know their information needs and help them meet the needs. In line with this, Hendrix et al (2009) stated that libraries are using Facebook mainly to market the library, push out announcement to library users, post photos, provide chat reference and have a presence in the social network.

Wiki: a web site that helps in both creating and editing of web pages. Chua and Goh, (2010) opined that Wiki can be used to share knowledge, provide lists of resources, collect user feedback, etc. Internal wikis can also be created by libraries to communicate among library staff. Wiki are used in libraries *inter alia* to develop subject guides and archive past

reference questions or queries on library services. Wikis, according to Mahmood and Richardson (2011) are also used for promoting and managing internally produced resources such as committee minutes, procedures, rules, policies and so forth.

Blogs: are among the most often employed applications use for scholarly information. Many blogs contain current scholarly opinions and are becoming a valid source of information used by researchers to get the latest information on diverse areas of interest. Libraries can therefore create blogs for specific subjects to keep users updated on their areas of interest and also provide information on new Internet sources. Chua and Goh, (2010) pointed out that blogs are also used to disseminate library news, informing the clients of library activities, and even publishing the library newsletter; Academic libraries also use blogs to promote and market their services (Mahmood and Richardson, 2011). Libraries can create blogs to promote new books, provide subject guides and update information, to communicate with users, to list new acquisitions, etc. This is an excellent tool for obtaining information on a regular basis from news services, blogs and relevant content from databases. Some of its most common uses among libraries are to include the dissemination of library news, for library announcements, the exhibition of new and already existing acquisitions, as well as for reference services (Chua and Goh, 2010;

Twitter: This can be used for a variety of communication purposes in library through posting and sharing of information to users. In view of this, Marion and Omotayo (2010) explained that librarians use Twitter accounts to notify users of new relevant items from collection and events. Some libraries use it to listen to what their customers are saying about the library. Also, Bell, (2012) said that twitter

offer a golden opportunity to connect with members of the library community. Some libraries use Twitter to make connections to people and organizations within their communities to build community online. (Gunton & Davis, 2012) Some libraries use Twitter to promote programs and services, including those of the library, but also those of other organizations. Twitter can be an outstanding approach to learn your customers by building conversations with your users, address their concerns, and to advocate for your programs and services. In this way public librarians in Nigeria can use this platform to give firsthand information about their resources and services to the users. Users on the other hand can send instant messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using twitter.

Instant Messaging: is an application that permits for actual communication and also an excellent tool for obtaining information on a regular basis from news services, blogs and relevant content from databases. Some of its most common uses are to include the dissemination of library news, for library announcements, the exhibition of new and already existing acquisitions, as well as for reference services (Chua and Goh, 2010). Many libraries use IM to enhance their reference service delivery processes because they allow them to respond instantly to enquiries from their clients

Podcast: are applications that can enhance information dissemination. They can be used to convey information on library services and to give have discussion with clients on the use of library resources. Harinarayana and Raju, (2010) postulated that the library can use podcast to share audio programs such as broad cast speeches and interviews, audio streams of lectures and book reading, offering tips for accessing resources, etc. for visually

challenged users

Vodcast: The library can use vodcast to share video programs in order to give about the procedures of library activities such as user education, that is teaching users about the use of library, library catalogue, guidance for accessing library resources, demonstrating plagiarism checking, etc.

Library Website: It helps to provide information about the library overview, library services, suitable links and online services, etc. It is also the best marketing tool in helping to increase usage of electronic information collections.

Social Book Marking: This is a tool that can be used to connect patrons to free bookmarking sites online and also offer much prospects for networking with other people or scholars with similar interests. Libraries can make use of this facility to connect their users to online bookmarking sites, which have exact relate to their subject areas. These sites also allow clients to create their own tags (keywords) for content that they like, as well as sharing items they find useful in the library's online catalogue (Harinarayana and Raju, 2010; Mahmood and Richardson, 2011).The users can identify and label the more frequently used web pages using social book marking. This tool is use to organize and classify library web pages for users to have easy access, and also to sharing resources.

Remote Login Access: The public library can use remote login access to promote and market subscribed e-resources. It provides vital information resources support to library users who are away from attending workshop/conference or any research related activities.

Quick Response Code: QR code that provides information to mobile phone users

about the library can be used by the library to disseminate information such as links to library schedules, digital versions of the guide and catalogue guides, etc. QR code is the best tool in providing the position of bookshelves thus helps the users to easily trace for books needed.

Challenges

Inasmuch as social media presents itself as potential tools for marketing library resources and services, it still has some factors that prevent its effectiveness. These include:

Epileptic Power Supply: The situation of power supply in this country is distressing, with all the promises and claims power supply is still in the erratic stage. This invariably is affecting the use of social media, as practically all social media applications are powered by electricity which is nothing to write home about. In Support of this, Adomi (2007) state that power outages is a problem militating against information/internet provision and use in African countries. In a similar view, Ossai-Ugbah (2012) gave the notion that the power outages increases the general overhead and running cost thus having a negative impact on the use of social media for marketing library and information services in Nigerian libraries. In view of this, the effective use of social media in marketing library resources and services is hampered. The type of electric voltage being supply is yet another source of concern this means that even when the electricity is available, the current is either too high or too low. It was in this light that Akonu (2005) pointed out that erratic power supply in Nigeria has resulted in the burning of some components which could not be easily replaced. Besides, the unstable and epileptic power supply in Nigeria discourages librarians and users from participating in the online forum.

Lack of Awareness: Most librarians in the

developing nations are not aware of social media services, this is possibly worse off in public library because of its neglect. The few librarians that are aware still find it difficult to creatively use these sites for library services. In line with this, Bullas, (2014) reiterated that getting librarians and other social media users to move beyond the social aspect of social media and use it for more serious and productive outcome such as forming an invisible college which will enhance professional communication is often a challenge in Nigeria. It is important for librarians to initiate contact with clients and experiment with developing a public self. Getting student and Facebook users (Librarian inclusive) to move beyond the social aspect of Facebook to use it for more serious and productive outcome is a challenge in Nigeria. Wagner (2008) further noted that aside from lack of awareness which hamper librarians' use of communication and information technology, phobia for the use of the different internet technologies is what drives many librarians to claim ignorance of the existence of such technologies with such functionalities. Olajide and Oyenira's (2014) study revealed that Nigerian librarians were knowledgeable in the use of social media but that most of them used social media for personal instead of library services. This shows that Facebook is usually seen as a vehicle for unserious communication (Ezeani and Igwezi, 2012). Inclusively, some librarians do not see the need to promote library and information services.

There are increasingly online security risks associated with social media, this can also affect library users' by using their personal information on social media for financial fraud. To buttress this, Hutton, (2008) pointed out that privacy concern need to exist at the helm of potential risk to any user participating in online social networking. This according to the author should be because a

significant number of individuals experience mental or physical harm because of the abuse of personal information in online social media. Explaining this, Sund (2007) argues that just a name, address and birth date supply more than enough information for criminals to hack into financial records and compromise a user's personal information. In another vein, series of advert messages on online social networks sometimes irritates some users. Having this in mind, librarians are faced with a challenge of most stalking library users with constant advertisements or promoting messages on online social media. Also, social media can also expose the plans of the library and aid competition. Morale and Peterson (2010) comments in this regard that "in today's digital environment more and more of our personal information exist online, available and vulnerable to anyone with prying eyes and access to a computer. They make individual control over a library's personal information a vital privacy concern.

Low level of Access to Technology: There is shortfall in the level in which people have access to technology in the nation. This is evident in the public libraries, the masses do not have access to technology infrastructures and network service in their homes, and still find it difficult to access it in the public library which is being referred to as the school of the masses. This can be attributed to government negligence. Nigeria look forward to a time when each home and every office would be connected to the internet at little or no charge as it is in developed nations. Sadly, internet connection in the country is most times available only to the rich. Emenari (2004) writes while citing the Guardian report that currently out of the world's 6.3 billion population, only 6.5 million have access to the internet, even though there would be an increase in the number of people with internet access presently, Nigeria still lags behind. It is sad to know also that very few online desktop

computers are seen in university library offices in Nigeria.

Network Problems

Online network problem is a strong factor that hinders the uses of social media for marketing of library resources and services. This impedes the users and librarians in making efficient and productive use of social media. This occurs with cable network problem. That is when cables that connect different parts of a network are cut or shorted or a connectivity problem that is when there is a malfunction of a connectivity component like a hub, a router or a switch. Other network problems that can arise are excessive network collusions, software problems and use of the same IP address. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) add bandwidth problems to this, noting that most institutions have limited bandwidth to support this practice. Poor connectivity can frustrate effective online participation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of social media in the library and information services delivery cannot be overemphasized. Types of social media options have been discussed. However, challenges militating against the use of these social media have been identified. Other problems encountered in the use of social media for promoting library and information product and services are lack of technical knowledge and expertise, high cost of ICTs, corruption and negligence, little government intervention, resistance to change and a host of others.

Through the use of social media libraries can promote their users, services, resources, events and communication. Therefore the followings are recommended for the public libraries:

- Adequate technology and internet facilities should be made readily

available to develop their web pages and social media pages in all the public libraries, also internet bandwidth should be increased to give many people access to the internet.

- The library management can liaise with philanthropic bodies and community at large for the purchase of modern computers and internet subscription in their libraries.
- There should be provision of functional standby generator in the public library to enhance power supply.
- There should be creation of awareness both of social media and social media as a marketing platform through publicities, workshops and conferences.
- In order to grow social media usage trend in libraries, librarians should be trained and educated regarding social media use for marketing library resources and services and all the problems that hinder in social media usage in libraries should be resolved.
- Finance should be adequate and promptly provided by the parent institution to further enhance the use of social media to promote library and information resources and services in public libraries.

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