



APPLICATION OF ICT IN MARKETING ACADEMIC LIBRARY INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the application of Information and Communication Technology in marketing the academic library information resources and services in Tanzania. It identifies the librarians' awareness, approaches and the factors that influence marketing process. The study conducted a documentary review of the studies on marketing of academic library information resources and services. The academic library web pages of randomly selected institutions were surveyed to examine the operational links and tools for scholarly communication. The reviewed literature and surveyed web pages revealed that academic libraries in Tanzania have significantly adopted the advanced technology in information system. However, the rate of adoption is not correlated to the initiatives of training workers in new technology skills within the library. Thus, most librarians are unaware of the application of Information and Communication Technology in marketing library information resources and services. The critical factors that influence marketing of library services include lack of exposure to sufficient marketing programmes in library and information curriculum, low level of use of Web 2.0 technologies, poor marketing strategies, lack of marketing policy and funds. Lastly, it was recommended among others that it is critical to run professional development training programme to librarians in order to enhance the adoption of the advanced technological changes in information.

Keywords: *Academic Library, Marketing, Information and Communication Technology, Web 2.0 Technologies, Scholarly Communication.*

Introduction

In this era, marketing of library information resources and services has been considered as an essential component of the academic libraries. It has therefore attracted interest of most of the information professionals all over the universe. Marketing is part of the management practice which recognises, anticipates and provides clients' desires efficiently and it is cost-effective (Helen & Jian, 2006). Hence, it is regarded as a phenomenon of recognising clients' requirements and establishing approaches and services to meet their demands and satisfy their needs. Marketing is a long term inventive practice which is entrepreneurially determined. Previously, marketing in libraries received a close attention with the invention of the marketing notion in non-profit organisation by Philip Kotler in 1970 (Andreasen & Kotler, 2007). Most library information resources and services were not introduced and executed from a marketing perception. This phenomenon existed for some times, until the first paper titled *Marketing of Library and Information Services: how it all began* was presented by a Swedish author, Greto Renborg at the 63rd conference organised by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (Gupta et al., 2013). Since then, there has been a gradual development in the literature of marketing library information resources and services; emphasizing on marketing processes and initiatives in academic libraries from all over the world. In the modern environment, academic libraries experience a fast changing information atmosphere. In this setting, skills for access, scholarly communication and usage of information resources are being advanced at a point that academic libraries need to be more dynamic and flexible than it was in the traditional world (Suzzane & Mary, 2012).

Background to ICT and Marketing Practices in Academic Libraries in Tanzania

Earlier in 1980s, in Tanzania, like in most of the African universities, the application of modern technologies in managing library information resources and services was not as promising. However, the situation began to change in late 1990s where most of the academic libraries adopted and applied ICT skills and knowledge in delivering library information resources and services (Muneja, 2013 and Edewor et al., 2016). ICT has helped to improve academic libraries practices and services and has resulted in various terms related to the service being offered. Among others it includes library repository, information resources automation, digitization, online catalogue, subscription, electronic references and digital or electronic information resources. It also incorporates electronic library, digital library and virtual library; these terms are used interchangeably because they mean the same.

Many academic libraries in Tanzania are employing modern technologies in providing library information resources and services to their academic community. These services include procurements, subscription, circulation of reserved and acquired information resources, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and updating on arrivals (scholarly communication). Also, establishment of indigenous content data sources, development of institutional repositories and show

casing electronic-based information resources (Muneja, 2013). In virtue of this fact, academic libraries in Tanzania have significantly adopted these technologies and enormously rehabilitated many of the academic library practices leading into a major technological shift of paradigms which in the past were merely challenging the parent institution, libraries and library staff (Elizabeth, 2004). However, despite the benefits of modern technologies influenced by the invention of ICT in improving academic libraries in Tanzania, there are some aspects related to marketing of information resources and services which are insufficiently addressed by the academic libraries. Similarly, the rate of ICT adoption in academic libraries is significantly higher as compared to the librarians' adoption of the skills on ICT.

The usual information resources and services to be marketed in academic library include paper and electronic-based information resources, circulation, inter-library loans and Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI). Also, bibliographic, abstract and indexing information, modified research and development, Current Awareness Services (CAS), readers' advisory and information literacy services (Edewor et al., 2016). While services are the intangible aspects that academic library considers for promoting them for the purpose of competing with other libraries operating under similar environment (Zhixian, 2016).

Despite the efforts done by the academic libraries in Tanzania in adopting the rapid technological development in information and service delivery, there have been various problems associated with academic community and infrastructures. For example, there have been complaints on poor scholarly communication for Current Awareness Services (CAS). Also, there have been poor accesses to current library resources and difficulties for subscription to online scholarly content, which negatively affects the teaching and learning processes, research and consultation services (Dulle, 2010 and Msonge, 2013). In addition, Agaba et al. (2004) argued that, although the developing countries universities have a variety of information resources and services, the entire academic community is not well informed of the existing and the importance of the available information resources and services offered. This trend has significantly affected the community membership and attendance to the library.

It is alongside this context that this paper endeavors to examine the extent to which academic libraries utilise ICT in marketing their information resources and services. Also, the paper intends to enrich the literature on this area and enhance its usefulness. The results of this study are expected to assist both librarians at work and future information professionals to comprehend knowledge on ICT towards marketing of academic library information resources and services at their locality, nationally and internationally. Specifically, this paper sought to examine librarians' awareness on marketing processes and identify approaches in marketing library information resources. Also, the paper seeks to identify factors which influence marketing of library information resources and services in Tanzania.

Reviewed Literature

Principles of Marketing in Academic Libraries

The strategies and principles of marketing are not only applied in the profit making enterprise, but also in the non-profit or service sectors, such as libraries, hospitals and postal services. However, some amendments to the strategies and principles are recommended to suit for the non-profit or service sector. In the academic library arena, the aim of the service should be the accomplishment of mission and goals rather than making monetary revenue. Marketing in the library service sector is based on the functions of planning, organising, dissemination and controlling of information resources and services on a proactive and customer oriented manner. These functions ensure satisfaction of customers' desire while attaining the objectives of the parent institution and development of the library and its practices (Arachchige, 2010). Therefore, the idea of marketing can also be practical in marketing of academic library information resources and services. It consists of the four P's, namely product, price, place and promotion.

Zhixian (2016) argued that for libraries, marketing is about a set of activities involving recognising library users' desire, defining market places, categorising information resources and services, developing academic community's relationships and establishing marketing mix. Products in librarianship refer to overall services and collection, repositories, archives, data sources and CD-ROMs for storage of electronic library information. Also, products incorporate the information, reference and complementary services that are crucial to the academic library services such as individual assistance, reference services and electronic data source searches, document distribution and inter-library loan. Pricing in the library is usually that of time and initiatives the library client devotes in travelling to the library and searches for, evaluate and use the library information resources and cost of a forgone alternative to the resources accessed.

Price is imperative in marketing in the world of information as it is elsewhere; it can be articulated in cash. In the academic library, price implies the value of information services, such as costs for acquisition of information resources, CD-ROM, a

fee or fine on a service, including fines charged on overdue information resources like books. Similarly, price is reflected on the charges related to subscription fees, space allocation and stationary services which involves printing, binding, photocopying and scanning services. Place involve coverage, delivery stations, inventory, locations, and transportation. Promotion is conducted through advertisement, personal selling, and public relations (Adegoke, 2015).

Marketing in academic library is not just about information resources and promoting new services and resources but also about enhancing awareness and participation of the academic community on the existing services, practices, products and determining their usefulness (Zhixian, 2016). When the library is marketing its information resources, in particular, the accessibility of new procured like the subscribed information resources or a set of online periodicals must be communicated to the academic community in demand. Therefore, communication coupled with ICT skills is the crucial strategy to effective marketing of information resources and services. Library users who are well informed have higher chances of having their desires fulfilled by the academic library collection. The communication strategies on collection and Current Awareness Services (CAS) must be open and appropriate to assist in establishing association with library customers.

ICT and Marketing of Academic Libraries' Information Resources

The concept of ICT has been in place in developing countries since 1960s. ICT has a vital role to play in academic libraries and particularly in information resource development and marketing practices (Roberts & Corral, 2010). The origin of internet and development of websites transformed the ICT. Therefore, the application of ICT in academic libraries has become an important element adopted to easily enhance provision of information resources, facilities and services to the academic community (Shahnaz, 2012). ICT is defined in academic library as a tool and as well as a means through which librarians can use for library information resources development and marketing. Also, librarians apply ICT skills to search, communicate, select and/or subscribe, pay, acquire, organise, classify and catalogue, store, transmit, disseminate, manage and monitor the information resources (Obadare, 2010).

Librarians Awareness on Marketing of Information Resources and Services

Library information resources are usually marketed (scholarly communicated) to library customers by using display screens, posters, Web 2.0 tools (blogs, social networks and smartphones), noticeboards, exhibits, bulletins, newspapers, academic meetings, promotional materials and events. Also, it can be marketed through information literacy programme, orientation programme, library web pages, telephones, emails and parent institutional social networks (Rowley & Vasileiou, 2010). In his study on marketing library collection with academic and special libraries in Sri Lanka, Arachchige (2010) observed that, librarians were not marketing their collections and services due to poor experience on the practice, lack of skills and awareness, of what exactly has to be marketed or promoted. Currently, library personnel lack knowledge in this technology. However, there has been a trend of library resources under-utilisation by library users, which affects the library information resources development and usage. The reasons for this under-utilisation include poor marketing of library collection and inadequate library resources advertising through user education, Current Awareness Services (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and promotion. Also, there is less attention of librarians on appropriate approaches to customer care, establishing personal relationship and publicity.

The academic libraries in developing countries do not incorporate the element of marketing programme in its library information resources and services; this leads to lack of awareness among most librarians. Library web pages are not entirely employed as marketing facilities and strategies to meet the desire of the academic community for the existing services and resources. It becomes helpless if the procured library information resources are not communicated to the clients (Kiran, 2009).

Approaches Applied in Marketing of Library Information Resources and Services

The most common and traditionally used marketing approaches by librarians in developing countries' academic libraries are through shelf display of new books, issuance of library guides, noticeboards, exhibitions, memos, bulletins, newsletters and user orientation programmes. However, these libraries experience a low level usage of ICT coupled practices related to the application of Web 2.0 tools (Blogs, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, Wiki, Google forms and Twitter), library websites, screen displays, email and online academic community forums in marketing of information resources and services (Elizabeth, 2004; Muneja, 2013 and Edewor et al., 2016). For instance, Facebook is frequently used by most of the academic communities and thus most academic libraries over the universe have developed an institutional page on Facebook to interact with their users.

In Tanzania, few institutions like Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) library uses a Google form which is a platform that helps library staff to identify problems that face users in obtaining various services offered by the

library hence attend them within a short time. Also, the University uses a library blog which has a link to latest electronic resources. MUHAS library Facebook and Twitter platforms are available but have not been frequently used for marketing of information resources and services although they are used for normal social interaction and advertisements. Moreover, MUHAS library has a Wiki platform which is mainly used for teaching and learning process (MUHAS, 2016). The University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) library Google form also provides room for library users to request for support from the librarians regarding various services offered by the library. The librarians respond to the users' queries in a shortest time possible. The library has a library Facebook which also shows usual interactive posts and it shows the last cover photo that can be updated; the current cover photo was updated on September 24, 2012 (UDSM, 2017). Also, Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) uses Facebook to interact with users. On February 11, 2017, I posted a request on both MUHAS and UDSM library Facebooks - reference service section requesting for updates of new arrivals on paper-based information resources related to marketing and management of library information resources. Yet, to the time this paper is sent for publication, I have not received any response. Similarly, the Aga Khan University uses both Facebook and a Blog in communicating with its users.

Generally, it seems that academic communities of these institutions are supposed to request for the Current Awareness Services (CAS) instead of getting such services from the librarians. Despite the available facilities and forums for scholarly communication, librarians are not aware of the functionality of these platforms for marketing and promoting their information resources and services. Moreover, library users' webmail and instant messenger are considered important platforms for scholarly communication, but these academic libraries have managed to develop staff webmail which are not well communicated to their users.

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has a large number of registered students all over the country and it provides education through distance learning. The university website has a Web 2.0 tools that includes Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google forms for facilitating the process of teaching and learning. However, these tools have not been used for marketing and promoting library information resources and services. Paradoxically, the library website shows a link for Current Awareness Services (CAS) which is not operating (*coming soon....*) and an instant messenger for instant chat between users and library staff (OUT, 2015). Similarly, Saint Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) website is connected to Facebook, YouTube and Twitter which are used for social interaction and in teaching and learning process but the library website has no links for Current Awareness Services (CAS), students and staff webmail for marketing and promoting library information and services (SAUT, 2015).

Today, librarians can easily communicate with the academic community at a cost-effective manner. Other profit and non-profit organisations and institutions have established a marketing policy for advertising their products and services using these tools. It is incredible that the academic libraries adopts the modern technology in information and services but fail to utilise these tools and policy for marketing and providing Current Awareness Services (CAS) to users. The term current awareness services in academic library involve the notification of users about the services and reference resources available in the library (Edewor et al., 2016).

Factors Influencing Marketing of Library Information Resources and Services

Despite all the benefits of the computerised academic library services, there are factors that influence the marketing practices in the library environment, including the following: Poor funding and dependency on donors in acquiring and subscription to data sources; thus, limiting chances of the academic library to market. Also, lack of fund contributes to poor maintenance and repair of infrastructures and development of ICTs based projects in academic libraries (Julita, 2003). Similarly, most of the academic library services in Sub-Saharan Africa do not customary budget for ICTs infrastructures services and training programmes (Chisenga, 2004). Other influencing factors include information illiteracy for both librarians and the academic community at various levels, unreliable and obsolescence of ICT infrastructures, unreliable electric power supply, resistance in adopting technological changes among the members of the community, technophobia and lack of library IT and marketing librarians.

In addition, Suan and Wen-hao (2011) points out factors related to cultural and personal competencies incorporating technical knowledge which may influence the level of adoption and usage of the modern features in marketing of information resources and services. For instance, Armstrong and Frankilin (2008) argue that, it is not always possible for the parent institutions to allow for modern technological tools like the Web 2.0 to operate on their network systems. This is contributed by poor understanding of the functions which can be executed by these tools. However, poor infrastructure which involves low internet bandwidth, lack of IT expertise and high cost of internet connectivity are the main setbacks toward using modern marketing tools in scholarly communication (Tandi, 2012). Similarly, the ICT policy and/or regulations within a particular

parent institution can negatively impact the adoption of new technologies which could support the marketing of library information resources and services (Wulystan et al., 2013).

Methodology

The study conducted documentary review of the studies on marketing of academic library information resources and services. The academic library web pages of institutions that were randomly selected were also surveyed to examine the operational links and tools for scholarly communication on Current Awareness Services (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), instant messengers, Web 2.0 technologies and webmail for students and librarians' interaction. The main points of the findings were summarised to meet the goal of the paper. Moreover, a surveyed literature and academic library websites had been crucial at providing recommendation and areas for further research studies.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

The modern academic community and new library working environment has developed new practices, as a result, the roles of librarian have also been enriched. Marketing of library information resources and services coupled by ICT have been not efficiently realised in Tanzania academic libraries. This is contributed by various factors such as; infrastructures, skills, marketing policy and financial constraints of which the academic libraries and the parent institutions have to address them and ensure that the academic community is well-informed in respect to its resources, services and well-being.

Recommendations

Academic libraries in Tanzania should take advantage of development in Information Technology (IT) and adopt the marketing activities in order to improve the scholarly communication and minimize customers' complaints. The following recommendations were made based on the findings regarding enhancing marketing of library resources and services in academic libraries of Tanzania.

1. Academic libraries should develop a feasible marketing strategy and policy which will focus on the academic community; this will assist in identifying customers' needs for effective and efficient use of library information resources and services.
2. There should be professional development training programme to librarians in order to boost the adoption of the advanced technological changes in information technology. This will develop skills on marketing and promotion of information resources and services; librarians will also be able to recognise customers' desires and services that need to be acquired and marketed and/or promoted.
3. A course in marketing and management of library information resources and services should be incorporated in the institutional curriculum at undergraduate and post-graduate level to allow for professionals with marketing and management skills.
4. The academic libraries should improve their library websites by developing interactive academic forums, Web 2.0 technologies, emails, phones, display screens and publication through notice boards and posters for sharing and marketing their information resources and services.

Recommendation for Further Study

In order to consolidate efficiency in marketing of library resources and services in academic libraries of Tanzania, further studies can be done in the following areas;

1. Library users' satisfaction on academic library Current Awareness Services (CAS).
2. ICT and marketing proficiency assessment of the academic library staff.

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