

## **Library Marketing Indicators on Students' Patronage of Information Services in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study was conducted to investigate the effect of library marketing indicators on students' patronage of information services in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. The population of the study was all the 31273 registered undergraduate library users in federal universities library in the 2021/2022 academic session. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 790 students for the study. A researcher developed questionnaire named "Library Marketing Indicators and Students' Patronage of Information Services Questionnaire" was used in collecting data for the study. The instrument was face validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient of .82 was obtained. Mean was used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings of the study indicated that there is significant influence of library marketing indicators on students' patronage of information services in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. It was recommended among others that librarians need to acquire marketing skills that will enable them effectively brand their libraries and the information services the library offers as this marketing strategy influences students' patronage of information services.*

**KEYWORDS:** library marketing indicators, students' patronage, information services, federal universities, South-South, Nigeria

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Academic libraries have been depending on their parent institutions for a number of things ranging from funding to the publicity of their services. This has not been working very well for the libraries as Madhusudhan (2008) reported that librarians and information specialists have debated the idea of marketing for the information sector. Several things like the emergence of other information service providing companies and electronic resources which these information providing companies render to information users and students have compelled librarians to learn about marketing and begin doing it especially now that the whole world has turned into a global arena where time, space, geographical location/distance is no longer a barrier to information access. The library today is a busy information centre, where information is packaged in various formats to the advantage of the users.

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The value of the library collection depends not only on the quantity of information sources but on the effective ways and means of providing and interpreting them to users. It is obvious that academic libraries are experiencing rapid change in the use and mode of access to their resources and services. This can be attributed to emerging information technology which led to the creation of a new gateway for delivering information services to library clientele. Information products and services in a multiplicity of formats have made libraries and information centers to publicize the arrival and existence of some of their resources to clientele. According to Olajide and Adio (2017), the major aim of any university library is to support teaching, learning and research activities of its parent institution. The library today is a busy information centre, where information is packaged in various formats, not only on the quantity of information sources but on the effective ways and means of providing and interpreting them to users. Few students visit libraries regularly except during examination periods when they need to read their personal notes for the benefit of passing their examinations. Considering the role of academic libraries as libraries attached to higher institutions of learning above the secondary level, which is responsible for providing information resources and services to support teaching, learning and research needs of students, staff and other clientele of their institutions. Academic libraries serve complementary purposes including supporting the research of the university, faculties and students. The support of teaching requires materials for learning and research and of what use are the library resources if their clienteles do not effectively utilize them.

University library clientele are diverse with varying information needs', these library clienteles include undergraduate and postgraduate students, visiting researchers, academic staff and other staff of the university. To a large extent, the library is often regarded as the heart of the intellectual system of the university or better still the nerve center of the university. Aguolu (2002) posited that university libraries are integral part of the university system. The author added that, they should not exist as inertia of knowledge, but as dynamic instruments of education to enable their institutions to achieve their goals.

Information technologies change rapidly and information products and services are in a multiplicity of formats in libraries. For libraries and information services to stay viable in the current climate, it is important that they adopt marketing strategies to help meet organizational mission, goals and objectives. Marketing has long been associated with the selling of a product in order to make a profit, but was extended to the non-profit sector including libraries (Enache, 2008). Rowley (2003) opines that services are the intangible products that libraries now have to promote in order to compete with external competitors. Libraries are therefore faced with numerous challenges such as restricted funding and increasing user expectations, as they identify, develop, deliver and monitor information service rendered that are superior to their emerging competitors.

However, these challenges offer opportunities to provide better services for users by redefining customer relationships through the use of marketing strategies to build and strengthen ongoing relationships with customers. Relationship marketing is relevant to services marketing and creates much value because it builds a viable and long-term relationship with the clientele that seek to use resources and services so that the customers are retained. For libraries, marketing is about a set of activities including awareness creation, branding, understanding client needs, selective dissemination of information, exhibition, advocacy, conducive environment,

identifying products and services and building client relationships for increased student patronage of information services (Welch, 2006).

Unlike traditional marketing that is organization-focused and for a specific product, libraries and information agencies are client-focused organizations focusing on clients and meeting their needs, and need to adopt services marketing. In this digital age, academic libraries are facing a variety of challenges such as ongoing budget cuts, application of new information technologies, changing internal and external environments, and changing demands of research and teaching. A managerial tool assisting libraries to face challenges now and in the future is effective promotion and marketing. Today, academic libraries are no longer the only choice for students, faculty, staff and other clients to go to for information.

To attract clients, generate non-user awareness, and raise awareness of available services and resources, libraries need to find ways to promote services and resources to clients as effectively as possible. As such, marketing indicators are used to convey the availability and value of services and resources to target markets and should be designed to cause library users and non-users to act (Helinsky, 2008). The indicators must be developed in such a way that they gain user attention, providing a reason for the library's services and resources to be selected over those of competing services (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009). According to Fisher and Pride (2006), the promotional techniques that can be used by academic libraries to market their services and resources include: digital media, such as the library's Website, e-mail lists, blogs and podcasts; print materials such as posters, handouts and giveaways; events such as orientation tours and workshops; and other tools such as library publications, contests, brochures, direct mail, Web 2.0 applications and displays.

Library services can be marketed effectively through awareness creation. Awareness creation is a technique which involves using several communication activities that attempt to provide added value to a service rendered that will stimulate students' patronage. Awareness creation arouses interest, creates a reading desire; sparks an immediate reaction from customers, students and researchers, for example, book exhibition. The purpose of this awareness creation is to attract more users of library product thereby increasing the number of clientele. To successfully create awareness, it is important that the product be branded for future reference. Narayan (1991) asserts that branding a library makes it relevant and enhances patronage from students'. A brand is made up of the logo, the brand's colors, the typeface used when spelling out the brand name, the brand tagline, signage inside and outside the library premises; name tags that library staff wears and library cards. A brand is also made up of any experience that an individual might have with the organization. Branding a library is a way of exhibiting the available resources and it will definitely increase more patronage from clientele.

This study was based on the hierarchy of effect theory by Russell Colley. Colley (1961) developed his awareness, comprehension, conviction, and action hierarchy of effects theory in his well-known work referred to as DAGMAR—Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results.

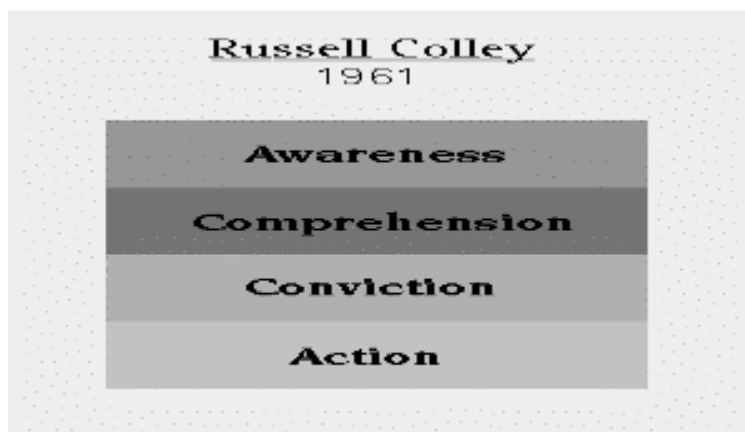


Figure 2.1: Russell Colley DAGMAR hierarchy of effects theory  
Source: Mackay, A. (2005).

This theory depicts a scenario that helps to determine the flow of information from the point of awareness creation, comprehension in relation to the quality of information branding, advocacy, exhibition of information resources, demand and utilization, selective dissemination of information resources to the beneficial effects conviction, which in turn results in action that is, increased user patronage of information service. Librarians must ensure that;

- i. The library patrons must first be aware of the existence of a brand (Information science) or organization (Library)
- ii. The library patron must have a comprehension of the various information service the library renders and the benefits he/she stands to gain if he/she patronizes the library
- iii. The Library patron must arrive at a mental suspicion or conviction to patronize the information service
- iv. Finally, he/she must be stirred to action. That is, students' patronage of information services.

Colley reasoned that most advertising objectives were too vague and not easily measured. He suggested that a hierarchy of communication objectives existed that led to ultimate purchase, these communication objectives could be more easily measured, compared to direct sales results, to determine whether the impact of advertising on an audience was effective or not. The interest in the hierarchy notion was further fueled by the Advertising Research Foundation's (1961) hierarchy model of exposure, perception, communication (knowledge), communication (attitude), and action. This theory is known as a "hierarchy" because the number of consumers moving from one stage to the next reduces, as you move through the model. There may be a lot of consumers that see the product advert but not everyone will make a purchase. It takes a lot of work to take a consumer from awareness to the final stage of purchase, so businesses need to ensure that they try their utmost to get customers from conviction to complete the final stage of purchase.

The relevance of the theory to this work is on the grounds of marketing of library resources and services to clientele signifying efforts to maximize patronage from the public. When libraries implement strategies in marketing such as awareness creation and branding, they are bound to have a threshold of purchase and patronage from clientele. Besides, it also

emphasizes on immediate patronage being a product of marketing effectiveness which has long term effects.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed by the researcher that marketing of library and information service is not practiced as expected in most university libraries. As information technology evolves, the library is no longer the only source of providing information to users. The researcher through personal interactions with the library users discovered that library users now tend to patronize other sources of information providing companies or organizations, for example the cyber cafes, the Internet, blogs and other social media platforms to satisfy their information needs, making the library to seem to lose its relevance and pride of place in the academic environment. This is perceived by the researcher as being responsible for the low patronage and underutilization of information resources and services by library patrons. This statement is in line with the report of Kaur and Rani (2007) that library resources are so expensive, but often remain underutilized resulting in wastage of money, time, energy and space. The authors opined that “university libraries invest huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources” and to ensure maximum utilization of these resources, there is the need for librarians to embark on marketing or sensitization of clientele so as to promote the use of their information services.

Although there are researches on marketing of library services in different parts of the world and in Africa such as in Nigeria, there is hardly an empirical research on marketing indicators of awareness creation, branding, exhibition, selective dissemination of information, advocacy, conducive environment and students’ patronage of information services in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria in a combined study. Therefore, there is an unexplained influence between the library marketing indicators and students’ patronage of information services. Thus, any issue on this with regards to South-South university libraries in Nigeria is speculative.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to determine the influence of library marketing indicators on students’ patronage of information services. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1) determine the influence of awareness creation on students’ patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.
- 2) determine the influence of branding on students’ patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study would be a significant contribution to the following groups of people and organizations: Library, Librarians/Information Scientists, Library users and Library school administrators.

The library will find this research useful as it will help them realize the importance of librarianship as a profession by becoming aware of how the library marketing indicators influence students’ patronage of information service in university libraries. It will also help them acquire knowledge on librarianship needs and how to effectively market information service which results in users’ satisfaction, leading to increased students’ patronage. To bring

information resources to the door steps of students' and scholars' together under conditions which encourage reading for pleasure, self-discovery, personal growth and sharpening of intellectual curiosity.

Since we are in a technologically driven environment, librarians will need to constantly acquire and update their knowledge and skills so as to render effective information service if they want to remain relevant in the system. As such, Library promotional strategies for effective students' patronage would be of high importance. Library users' through the marketing strategies and programs organized in the libraries would be abreast with the information services the library renders, a high level of confidence would be instilled in them with the knowledge that the library is technologically equipped with current information resources to meet their information needs will be created which in turn will bring about an increase in students' patronage of information services.

### **Research Question**

This research is based on the following research questions;

- 1) What is the influence of awareness creation on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
- 2) Is there any influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses stated in the null form were formulated for testing;

1. Awareness creation has no significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.
2. There is no significant influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The ex-post facto design was used for this study. It involves collection of standardized information from a sample of the population. The researcher finds the ex-post facto design more applicable here than other research designs because the events to be measured has already occurred and the researcher only has to make inference about the influence of library marketing indicators and students' patronage of information services based on facts already on ground. The study was conducted in Federal Universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population of this study comprised 31,273 registered undergraduate library users in the federal university libraries under study in 2021/2022 academic year. The sample of the study was 790 registered undergraduate library users being 5.5% of the registered undergraduate library users in the sampled universities. Multistage sampling procedure was employed in the study. Stage one: three federal universities out of the six federal universities in South-South Nigeria were randomly selected using cap and draw method to ensure that all universities had equal opportunity of being selected. Stage two: 5.5% of the registered undergraduate library users were randomly selected which resulted in 790 registered undergraduate library users. A researcher-developed questionnaire named "Library Marketing Indicators and Students' Patronage of Information Services Questionnaire" (LMISPISQ) was used in collecting relevant data. LMISPISQ is a 2-part questionnaire for undergraduate library

users. Part A seeks for demographic information of the respondents; and part B consists of 40 items with a 4-point scale responses that solicit data on library marketing indicators and students' patronage of information services. The options in the four-point scale were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) which will be scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was subjected to face validity by three lecturers in the faculty of Education, University of Uyo. Two from the Department of Educational Technology and Library Science and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counseling all from the University of Uyo. Three items were amended in the questionnaire based on the views and observations of the supervisor and the other two lecturers. The researcher ensured that the items in the instrument covered all the variables involved in the study.

Internal consistency reliability was conducted for the instrument. To obtain this, the instrument was administered to 30 respondents who were selected from the population of the study but were not included in the study sample. The scores obtained from the respondents were subjected to Cronbach Alpha statistics. The reliability coefficient obtained for the instrument was .82. The instrument was therefore regarded as reliable and good for the study since the coefficient was high. Mean was used to answer the research questions and independent t-test statistics was used in testing null hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level for test of significant difference. If the calculated t-test is greater than the critical t-test value at .05 significant level, the null hypotheses will be rejected but otherwise accepted. Score of 12.5 and above was regarded as agreeing to each variable in the questionnaire but less than 12.5 was regarded as disagreeing. This was used to arrange the scores of the dependent variables corresponding to respondent who agreed to the items from those who did not. This was used as a measure of influence.

## RESULT

### Research Question 1

What is the influence of awareness creation on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria? Mean was used in answering the research questions, summary data shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Awareness Creation on Students' Patronage of Information Services**

Items	N	Mean	S D
I receive bonus from the library regularly	783	1.93	.93
I receive sample product from the library	783	2.33	.87
The library sponsors educative programs to encourage me	783	3.33	.79
The library does exhibitions of their books before us the clientele regularly	783	3.40	.61
We actively use our social media platform to receive information from the library	783	2.20	.91
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.64</b>	

The result in Table 1 indicated the mean of awareness creation on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. As indicated in

the Table, the grand mean of 2.64 indicated that there is influence of awareness creation on students' patronage of information services in the federal universities in South-South Nigeria since it was more than 2.5. However the items "I receive bonus from the library regularly" and "We actively use our social media platform to receive information from the library" with mean of 1.93 and 2.20 respectively had no influence on patronage of information resources among students in university libraries while the items "The library does exhibitions of their books before us the clienteles regularly" and "The library sponsors educative programs to encourage me" with mean of 3.40 and 3.33 respectively had influence on patronage of information resources among students in university libraries.

### Research Question 2

Is there any influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria? Mean was used in answering the research questions, summary data shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Branding on Students' Patronage of Information Services**

Items	N	Mean	S D
Our library has a logo	783	2.67	1.19
We have a compelling story essential to our library	783	2.99	1.03
I identify our library visual representation making our library unique	783	3.26	.78
Pictures of the library building are enlisted in the library webpage	783	3.33	.87
Name tags that support the library's services rendered are worn by the library staff	783	2.53	1.15
<b>Gran Mean</b>		<b>2.96</b>	

The result in Table 2 indicated the mean of branding on students' patronage of information service on the federal university in South-South Nigeria. As indicated in the Table, the grand mean of 2.96 indicated that there is influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. However, the items "Name tags that support the library's services rendered are worn by the library staff" and "Our library has a logo" with mean of 2.53 and 2.67 respectively had no influence on patronage of information resources among students in university libraries while the items "I identify our library visual representation making our library unique" and "We have a compelling story essential to our library" with mean of 3.26 and 2.99 respectively had influence on patronage of information resources among students in university libraries.

### Hypothesis 1

Awareness creation has no significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis, summary data shown in Table 3.



**Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis of Awareness Creation on Students' Patronage of Information Services in Federal University Libraries**

Awareness Creation	N	Mean	S D	t	df	Sig.
Utilized	328	34.95	1.95	29.93	781	.000
Not Utilized	455	28.71	3.39			

The result in Table 3 indicated that the calculated t-value of 29.93,  $p = .000$  involving the influence of awareness creation on patronage of information services in federal university libraries is significant at 781 degrees of freedom and .05 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that awareness creation has no significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria is rejected. Hence, awareness creation has significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis, summary data shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis of Branding on Students' Patronage of Information Services in Federal University Libraries**

Branding	N	Mean	S D	t	df	Sig.
Utilized	317	35.08	1.84	30.34	781	.000
Not Utilized	466	28.77	3.38			

The result in Table 4 indicated that the calculated t-value of 30.34,  $p = .000$  involving the influence of branding on patronage of information services in federal university libraries is significant at 781 degrees of freedom and .05 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria is rejected. Hence, there is significant influence of branding on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION

The result of testing hypothesis 1 indicated that there is a significant influence of awareness creation on students' patronage of information services in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The reason for this result could be that the library from time to time have been advertising their product and letting students be aware of what they have to offer the students. It could also be that the library has been holding book fair and exhibition to make students aware of the vast amount of information available in the library. Aside from holding book fair and exhibition, the library might have been making use of social media to create awareness of the library product. Ezeani (2011) assert that librarians desiring to connect constantly with their clients with an eye to increasing users' satisfaction through promotion must make a social presence using social media like Facebook, mySpace, microblogging sites like Twitter, blog, etc. Wan (2011) adds that university libraries can use Facebook to provide updates on library

services such as new reference services, document delivery, research supports etc. Some libraries can also put up post related to library collections such as updates or promotions of electronic and print collections, database trials and other research resources. Libraries also create event invitations for programs as an additional forum to promote library activities (Chu and Meulemans, 2008).

### **Branding and Students' Patronage of Information Services**

The result of testing null hypothesis 2 indicated that branding has significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The reason for this result could be that the library through branding has identified and presented its role to the students in such a way that the students believed no other place can perform that function. The branding can be about the details of the library (great customer service, a large collection, a beautiful building), or it can be about the needs that the library could fill in the lives of students. The branding might present the library as a place where a community connects and comes together. It might be the intellectual centre of a small town. It could be the tool that parents use to give their kids a head start in life. It could be the centre of campus life for a college or a place where a student can feel part of a community at a large university. Any one of these stories would be compelling to people thinking of using the library. As indicated by Luck (2002), the library might have done a thorough work in order to understand the students' needs and channel their branding to the need of the students.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it was concluded that library marketing indicators of awareness creation and branding have the potential of influencing students' patronage of information services in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- i. Federal university libraries should conduct different marketing activities like book fairs, exhibitions and library advocacy to enlighten the students on the information services the library renders in order to stimulate and develop their reading culture and satisfy their information needs; as well as to increase their patronage of the library and its information services.
- ii. Librarians need to acquire marketing skills that will enable them effectively brand their libraries and the information services the library offers as this marketing strategy influences students' patronage of information services.

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