

Assessment of Strategies Used for Marketing Library Services: Case Study of KMTC and KNLS in Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Academic libraries support teaching, learning and research functions of their institutions. Such libraries are found in universities and middle-level colleges including Kenya Medical Training Colleges (KMTC). Public libraries like Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) also support such functions in addition to their core functions like Preservation and conservation of national imprint, enhancement of reading and information seeking habits of the public. This study aimed at comparing strategies used for marketing library services in KMTC and KNLS for information utilization. A descriptive survey research study design was conducted at KMTC and KNLS in Kakamega County. Study participants were recruited using stratified sampling technique. 563 out of a population of 1738 from KMTC and KNLS was sampled using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination. A pre-tested questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. Comparison of the marketing strategies; Exhibitions and displays, User Periodic Orientation, Suggestion Box, Library extension services, Through Friends and Tutors were significantly different between KMTC and KNLS $P < 0.001$. Majority of those who accepted that the strategies above were used were from KNLS. However, majority of the participants disagreed about the use of library extension services. The User Periodic Orientation (OR, 2.00; 95% CI, 1.34, 2.98; $p < .001$), Suggestion Box (OR, 0.35; 95% CI, 0.24, 0.51; $p < .001$), Library extension services (OR, 3.05; 95% CI, 1.95, 4.78; $p < .001$), Through Friends (OR, 9.00; 95% CI, 10.04, 35.95; $p < .001$), Through tutors (OR, 7.00; 95% CI, 4.43, 12.25; $p < .001$) were associated with better marketing strategy. Conclusively, librarians in both libraries were knowledgeable in marketing library services. However, the study established that KMTC librarians needed to be proactive in marketing in order to serve clients appropriately. The study recommended that managers of the two libraries review their policies to make marketing a mandatory exercise and train librarians in marketing for satisfactory service delivery.

Keywords: public libraries, communication technologies, marketing strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries collect, organize and disseminate information resources to all clients regardless of their gender, profession and benefits. There are various types of libraries such as academic libraries, public libraries, special libraries, school libraries, and private libraries. (Edwin *et al.*, 2015) stated that, libraries that are set up and sustained by institutes of higher learning such as; universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and institutes of petroleum training, schools of nursing, and schools of health technology are classified as academic libraries. They further note that the main purpose of an academic library is to support the objectives or programs of the institution in learning, training and research services while the main function of a public

library is to make available information that satisfies informative, educative and recreational needs to the general public. This means therefore that library services have to be made known to users through marketing. Library services that can be marketed include reference, referral, lending services, inter-library lending, selective dissemination of information (SDI), bibliographic information, abstracting and indexing, customized research and development, current awareness, readers' advisory, and information literacy services.

Marketing library services is a recognized subset of management practices which identifies customer requirements and satisfies them within the resources of

the institution (Ifla *et al.*, 2006). They further state that marketing forms corporation with the user who becomes the dominant portion of the whole provision efforts. (Ravichandran & Babu, 2008) suggested that marketing of library services is a process of planning, pricing, promoting and distributing library products to create a relationship between exchanges that satisfy the library and the clientele. Library marketing is done to increase the utilization of services and improve the professed worth of these services in order to attain high level of client contentment. However, according to (Arya & Das Talukdar, 2010) most librarians lack training in marketing and have poor knowledge of marketing strategies and hence do not effectively promote library resources and services. Additionally, Librarians have to therefore take this as one of the activities they should plan for and do to ensure their survival.

According to (Xia, 2009), librarians can attract more clientele to make use of its information services by improving its visibility and out look through marketing strategies.(Sharma & Bhardwaj, 2009) define marketing strategies as tools and procedures through which users get fresh and processed information. Librarians have to therefore show what value they bring to their organizations to ensure their role as prime providers of information. They need to arm themselves with adequate skills in marketing and appreciate the relevance marketing brings to librarianship, (Osinulu *et al.*, 2017).

In Africa, studies show that library services are also being marketed by librarians to cope with the changing trend of information seekers and the increased demand. Studies done in Nigerian public university libraries as well as medical training institutions have identified diverse approaches used in marketing library resources and services to staff and students which include library publications, campus radio programmes, university and college intranets and e-mail alerts and orientation talks among others (Abiola, 2015); (Okeke *et al.*, 2017) ; (Salami, 2014). Also in Ghana, Libraries have applied several strategies to create awareness of available library services to clientele which include; displaying book jackets of newly acquired books, exhibitions, library guides, flyers, library week celebrations and newspapers. These activities are among the traditional strategies of marketing library services (Agyen-Gyasi *et al.*, 2010).

Although comparative studies in marketing library services may have been done elsewhere, there is paucity information in Kakamega County about studies carried out to compare marketing strategies of library services for information utilization in KMTC and KNLS in Kakamega County. In addition, the few studies that have been done in Kenya, the main focus was largely on public university libraries. It is therefore very necessary to identify marketing strategies used to

market library services in order to improve utilization of library services. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to establish and compare marketing strategies used to market library services in KMTC and KNLS in Kakamega County.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It guided the researcher in collecting, analyzing and interpreting facts from tutors, librarians and students. In addition, KNLS librarians assisted the researcher to collect data from identified users who patronize the library. The study was conducted at KMTC and KNLS which are located within Kakamega town (Municipality) in Kakamega County, Western Kenya. This study had a target population of 1,738 who comprised of; 700 students from KMTC Kakamega and 25 tutors. For KNLS, the target population was 1000 users.

Stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 274 respondents (248students, 24 tutors, and 2 library staff) from KMTC Kakamega, while at KNLS Kakamega it was 289 (278 identified users and 11 library staff).

Two sets of structured and unstructured questionnaires based on the objectives of the study were prepared to collect data from students and identified users of the library services. Interview schedules were designed to enrich data collected through questionnaires so as to explain some pertinent matters that were not captured by the questionnaire. They were used to collect data from head librarians and tutors who were key informants from the two institutions for they play a key role in marketing library services. Piloting was used to test the reliability and validity of questionnaires and interview schedules, assess the viability of the full study and test the sampling and selection strategies. Quantitative data collected from the field was cleaned and coded based on the study variables and organized into categories of subgroups. Quantitative summaries were done using SPSS so as to generate meaningful and relevant information for ease of presentation and interpretation of the findings. The quantitative data was then presented in form of tables and percentages while qualitative data was analyzed as per thematic areas derived from the study objectives.

Strategies Used for Marketing Library Services at KMTC and KNLS

The researcher sought to establish and compare strategies used to market library services in the two libraries. To achieve this, the respondents were asked to tick among strategies listed which ones they were aware of as being used in the library they were patronizing. For KMTC, most respondents reported that tutors (n=198, 90%), notice boards (n=160, 73%) and library website (n=150, 68%) were highly used to

market library services while at KNLS most respondents reported exhibitions and displays (n=200, 83%), user periodic orientation (n=180, 75%), library website (n= 182, 76%), suggestion box (n=168, 70%) as the most commonly used strategies. These findings are corroborated by (Adegoke, 2015) who revealed that marketing of the services can be through exhibition and display, notice boards, grievance/suggestion boxes and user education course among others. The use of friends at KNLS and tutors at KMTC libraries as strategies of marketing library services is strongly supported by (Bhattacharya & Bolton, 2000) who stated that the most powerful tool of marketing is word of mouth. Library extension services were less used in the two libraries with KMTC at (n=77, 35%) while KNLS was at (n =36, 15%). Frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 1. A Chi-square Test of Independence was

conducted to examine whether marketing strategies in various libraries were different. The following strategies results of the Chi-square test were significant based on an alpha value of 0.05 suggesting that these strategies were significantly different in the two libraries; exhibitions and displays $\chi^2(1) = 100.89, p < .001$, user periodic orientation $\chi^2(1) = 11.83, p < .001$, Suggestion box $\chi^2(1) = 29.46, p < .001$, Library extension services $\chi^2(1) = 24.78, p < .001$, through friends $\chi^2(1) = 119.27, p < .001$ and through tutors $\chi^2(1) = 69.35, p < .001$. Only library website $\chi^2(1) = 1.15, p = .283$ and bulletins/posters/notice boards $\chi^2(1) = 1.15, p = .283$ were not statistically significant. This means there was no noticeable differences in response between respondents from KMTC and KNLS. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Strategies used to market library services in the library they use

Strategies	Libraries		χ^2	df	P
	KMTC	KNLS			
Exhibitions and displays					
Yes	77 (35%)	200 (83%)	100.89	1	< .001
No	143 (65%)	40 (17%)			
User Periodic Orientation					
Yes	88 (40%)	180 (75%)	11.83	1	< .001
No	132 (60%)	60 (25%)			
Library Website					
Yes	150 (68%)	182 (76%)	1.15	1	.283
No	70 (32%)	58 (24%)			
Suggestion Box					
Yes	99 (45%)	168 (70%)	29.46	1	< .001
No	121 (55%)	72 (30%)			
Library extension services					
Yes	77 (35%)	36 (15%)	24.78	1	< .001
No	143 (65%)	204 (85%)			
Through Friends					
Yes	110 (50%)	228 (95%)	119.27	1	< .001
No	110 (50%)	12 (5%)			
Through Tutors					
Yes	198 (90%)	32 (13%)	69.35	1	< .001
No	22 (10%)	208 (87%)			
Bulletins/Posters/Notice boards					
Yes	160 (73%)	82 (34%)	1.15	1	.283
No	60 (27%)	158 (66%)			

The qualitative findings revealed that library website and tutors were the highest used strategies. Thus, when asked about what strategies they were aware of, one of the tutors responded:

"The library website has a vast number of e- journals advertised on the website and most of them can be easily accessed within the institution because of free internet available provided by the college."

This was supported by the head librarian who said:

"The use of free internet by students and tutors to access and use library services is the highest strength."

This shows that if library services are advertised on the KMTC website, it can reach a big number of readerships and thereby increase the accessibility and usability of the resources and services.

The personal interview with tutors revealed that they supported marketing of library services by providing references to the students. One of them asserted:

"I have given a reading list for core texts and relevant journals for my unit to the students to help them find the"

information required, though the students are not able to access them in our library.”

This therefore implies that tutors support marketing of library services through referring students to sources in the library. By referring students to sources, they are actually marketing those sources to students and it is the duty of the library staff to avail them.

Through the interview, the head librarian revealed, *“Our weakness lies in the inadequacy of library space to accommodate the student population, inadequate staff to support library marketing, inadequate funds to support strategies such as exhibitions and inadequate information resources.”*

The library is known to be a quiet place to read from and inadequate reading space makes users shy away from visiting the library. Inadequate funds could lead to less marketing of library services.

The head librarian also reported that management relied mostly on teaching staff who did not understand the part marketing could play on the use of library services. This worked negatively on the library because the teaching staffs may not fully appreciate the importance of marketing library services. It was also revealed that no specific staff was assigned the task of marketing library services. This meant policy makers do not take librarians as professionals who appreciate their work at the institution. This is why librarians should be pro-active and act like business people as corroborated by (Koontz & Rockwood, 2001) who noted that librarians have to understand the changing needs of their customers and know how to cater for them. It is therefore time librarians become pro-active and lobby for their space. They have to show management that they can go out of their way and make the libraries visible for their importance to the institution to be felt. They need to be knowledgeable in all aspects of library skill such as information and communication technologies.

According to the interview with the tutor in charge of academics, he was of the opinion that the librarians had not embraced the use of social media in reaching out to users which he pointed out as a weakness. He had this to say:

“The librarians are not exploring the use of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter and TikTok to promote the products and services yet the institution provides free internet services.”

This finding agreed with the results of (Osinulu *et al.*, 2017) that acknowledged phone services and social media tools as being in the uppermost rank of strategies used by librarians in the information age.

At KNLS, the findings from the interview with the head librarian revealed that their strengths are in marketing strategies such as displays, use of friends and library orientation/user education. However, the response on the use of extension services by the head librarian contradicted the quantitative results from users who only 15% knew of it as a strategy. Thus, whereas in the personal interview with the head librarian extension services was mentioned as one of the mostly used marketing strategy, the quantitative results revealed that only 15% of the identified users marked it as a strategy they knew of as being used at the library. Further probing, one librarian had this to say:

“We voluntarily visit Primary schools within Kakamega town to market our library and encourage them to come and use our services and as a result, the children’s section is usually full during school holidays. Initially, we had mobile services that helped us carry books to schools but our van broke down close to four years ago hindering this service.”

They therefore only reached to schools within Kakamega town and this could be the reason why majority of users identified did not mark it as one of the strategies used.

The findings from the interview also revealed that KNLS had an advantage of interacting closely with users. Following a personal conversation with the researcher, the KNLS head librarian said:

“We find strength in the use our information desk which plays the role of improving the relationships with users. We have also segmented our library into junior, adult and cyber sections making it easier to serve our customers.”

This finding supports (Chandra, 2011) who identified good and closer relations with clients in library as a major impact of staff ability to marketing library services. The information desk is strategically placed at KNLS where any user can access for enquiries. This influences the relationship between the librarian and the user and in the long run the users find excitement in visiting the library regularly. Segmentation also made them be close to their users.

Further, the head librarian asserted;

“We have fairly adequate reading space which extends to the space around the library. We are able to put chairs under trees around the library for our users and they love it.”

This is supported by (Adegoke, 2015) who said adequate reading space and good ventilation are also approaches that can attract users to the library. This is important to any library as libraries are known to be quiet places where one reads and researches maximally.

When asked what support they got from institution's management with regard to marketing library services, KNLS head librarian said;

"This library gets funding for both information materials and human resources. We are also sponsored to attend trainings and workshops that include marketing library services."

This meant the librarians at KNLS are able to showcase their skills in marketing library services and therefore attract many users to utilize their services. However, the head librarian revealed that the library had no specific librarian assigned to carry out the marketing exercise. The staff at the information desk on a specific day would act as a marketing librarian.

The findings also revealed that KNLS had segmented their library into adult, children and internet sections. This is a strategy that is supported by (Bhatt & Gupta, 2018) who emphasized that segmenting library users is a marketing strategy that can successfully create

awareness and enhance utilization of library services. Additionally, the interview at KNLS also revealed a comprehensive collection and experienced and knowledgeable staff as strengths used to support marketing strategies. This is because you can have good strategies but lack experienced and knowledgeable staff to explore and use those strategies.

A binary logistic regression was conducted to examine whether the library used had a significant effect on the odds of various marketing strategies used at KNLS. The model was evaluated based on an alpha of 0.05. The overall model was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 130.71$, $p < .001$, suggesting that the library used had a significant effect on the odds of various marketing strategies used. McFadden's R-squared was calculated to examine the model fit, where values greater than .2 are indicative of models with excellent fit (Louviere *et al.*, 2000) The McFadden R-squared value calculated for this model was 0.31.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Results with library used Predicting marketing strategy

Variable	B	SE	χ^2	P	OR	95% CI
Exhibitions and displays	18.95	694.17	0.00	.978	1.69×10^8	[0, Inf]
User Periodic Orientation	0.69	0.20	11.67	< .001	2.00	[1.34, 2.98]
Library Website	0.20	0.19	1.15	.284	1.22	[0.85, 1.76]
Suggestion Box	-1.05	0.20	28.74	< .001	0.35	[0.24, 0.51]
Library extension services	1.12	0.23	23.63	< .001	3.05	[1.95, 4.78]
Through Friends	2.94	0.33	81.87	< .001	19.00	[10.04, 35.95]
Through tutors	2.00	0.26	59.20	< .001	7.36	[4.43, 12.25]
Bulletins/Posters/Notice boards	-0.20	0.19	1.15	.284	0.82	[0.57, 1.18]

Note. $\chi^2(1) = 130.71$, $p < .001$, McFadden $R^2 = 0.31$.

The regression coefficient for KNLS library was significant, the usage of through friends as a marketing strategy was nineteen times used in KNLS than in KMTC (OR=19.00, 95% CI: 10.04-35.95), and was statistically significant (P 0.001). Equally the regression coefficient for through tutors (OR=7.36, 95 CI: 4.43-12.25), library extension services (OR=3.03, CI: 1.95-4.78), user periodic orientation (OR=2.00, CI: 1.34-2.98) had odds ratio of more than twice used in KNLS than in KMTC which was statistically significant (P=0.001). However, regression coefficient in KNLS respondents on the following strategies did not reach statistical significance from that of KMTC respondents: Exhibition and displays (OR=1.69, CI: 0-inf, P=.978), library website (OR=1.22, CI: 0.85-1.76, P=0.284), bulletins/posters/notice boards (OR=0.82, CI: 0.57-1.18, P=0.284). This study is corroborated by (Olorunfemi & Ipadeola, n.d.), who suggested that, user periodic orientations and by word of mouth through friends are some of the key marketing strategies that can improve the use of library services. Further, the researcher alludes that, exhibitions/displays and

bulletins/posters are also useful strategies for promoting the utilization library services.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings. Firstly, though the two libraries have several services and resources, these have not been effectively marketed to the users leading to underutilization. Secondly, that the library staffs in both KNLS and KMTC have knowledge of marketing strategies but they have not aggressively put them to use.

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