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APPLICATION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES BY LIBRARIANS FOR PROMOTING THE UTILIZATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

*This study aims to explore the application of market penetration and product development strategies for promoting the utilization of library existing resources and services.. The design that was adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. The libraries used for the study were drawn from six federal and six state university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 238 librarians and a sample size of 382 registered library users. The instrument for data collection used is questionnaire. The hypothesis was tested at a significant level of 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed that librarians applied market **penetration** and product development strategies to a low extent for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria. It also revealed that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on extent of application of market penetration and product development strategy by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. It was recommended that since librarians are not applying market penetration strategies effectively they should improve communication and visibility of strategies such as consistent awareness through the use of flyers, social media outreach, emails and stronger user engagement activities use of suggestion box, free internet services, library week with awards among others to ensure that students and faculty are fully aware of available resources and services. Also as a result of the low extent of application of product development strategies, it was recommended that Ministry of Education through the governments in South-South, Nigeria should invest in innovation, introduce new digital tools, e-learning platforms, virtual reference services, and user-friendly mobile applications to make libraries more responsive to modern academic and research needs.*

Keywords: Application of Marketing, Librarians, Promoting Utilization, Library Resources, Services

Introduction

Libraries have a long and rich history because they play a vital role in preserving and sharing knowledge and culture. Libraries existence can be traced back to thousands of years. It is an essential part of every society which provides access to information and knowledge, regardless of user's background or financial capacity. Additionally, libraries play a vital role in promoting environmental sustainability. Many libraries offer green initiatives such as effective and efficient lighting, cooling and recycling programmes. University libraries are the heartbeat of universities as they support research processes by collecting, preserving and making available an array of information resources relevant to their research community (Kotso as cited in Nyemezu and Solomon, 2024). They serve as catalyst for research, learning and discovery. They play a pivotal role in advancing knowledge and supporting the academic success of students and faculty. In order to satisfy the information needs of its users a university library needs a collection of resources that will be appreciated by its patrons. For this reason innovation of marketing in libraries to promote the use of library resources and services in this competitive era in modern information and data service delivery is quite imperative.

According to (Komolafe, et al as cited in Otuu and Onegbu 2022) marketing is an important weapon for handling such competition. It is therefore not surprising that increasing number of university libraries are embracing marketing strategies for promoting the utilization of library resources and services (Shettar, 2013). A marketing strategy pursued by an organization is aimed at obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage over competitors. In a marketing perspective, organizations obtain a competitive advantage when they are able to identify, create, and communicate reasons of preference for their customers with respect to their competitors. In the library context, marketing strategy is described as a plan of action designed to achieve stated goals for promoting library product or service to its users. The growth of a university library depends on the extent of utilization of marketing strategy, which focuses on convincing users that the tools and databases are worthwhile.

Statement of problem

It has been observed that many users at the present time focus mainly on the internet for

sourcing information resulting in poor patronage of libraries. This persistent low level of patronage may hinder personal, professional development and loss of social infrastructure which may adversely affect lifelong learning, personal growth and social interaction. A preliminary investigation and visits conducted by the researcher revealed that most libraries do not actively apply marketing strategies to promote the utilization of library resources and services. Therefore, it is imperative that libraries apply marketing strategies to create awareness of its existing resources and services as well as introduce new products because it is the basis of survival and success in all organizations and are the key source of innovation in an organization. This study therefore sets out to determine the extent of application of market penetration and product strategies by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Purpose of Study

Specifically this study will determine the:

1. Extent of **application of market penetration strategy** by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria
2. Extent of **application of product development strategy** by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

Research Questions

This following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent is the market **penetration strategy** applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?
2. To what extent **is the product development strategy** applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance difference;

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on the extent of market penetration strategy is applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on the extent of application of product penetration strategy is applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Methodology

The design that was adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. The survey research design guided the researcher in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data collected. The area scope of this study will cover university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria. The South-South zone is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria; it comprises of six states namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers states. The population of the study comprise of librarians and library users from six federal and six state university libraries in South- South, Nigeria. The universities include University of Uyo Akwa Ibom State; Akwa Ibom State University Ikot Akpaden, Akwa Ibom State; Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State; Niger Delta University Yenegoa, Bayelsa State; University of Calabar, Cross Rivers State; Cross River State University of Technology, Cross Rivers State; Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State; Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State; University of Benin, Edo State; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State; University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State; Rivers State University, Rivers State. The population of the study is 56,356 respondents from university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The population comprised of 238 librarians and 56,118 registered library users as documented in the register of the various libraries used for the study. The researcher used total enumerative sampling techniques for the librarians; Krejcie and Morgan (1970) stratified

random sampling technique to and obtain sample size of 382 registered library users. The instrument for data collection that was used is questionnaire designed. The hypothesis was be tested at a significant level of 0.05 alpha level.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Marketing Mix (MM) Theory

Marketing mix is the set of controllable elements or variables that an organisation uses to influence and meet the needs of its target customers in the most effective and efficient way possible. The conceptual origins of the "mix" are traced to the early work of Culliton (1948), a professor at Harvard University. In his study of marketing costs and efficiencies, Culliton described marketer as someone who combines various elements into a profitable principle. This theory was further explained by Borden in 1964 when he published an article titled "the concepts of the marketing mix." He defined Marketing mix (MM) as the set of variables that an organization can change to meet the demands of their customers.

The MM theory is applicable to the library context, where the primary goal is to satisfy user information needs. Library "products" consist of resources and services such as books, multimedia and digital materials, information services, and educational programs. The theory's emphasis on the target market aligns perfectly with the library's mission to serve its existing and potential users (Odiye, 2011). Adopting this framework enables library activities to be user-centered, it encourages libraries to treat users as customers and to develop systems that actively identify and meet their evolving needs. Hence: Product involves developing collections and services that user's value. Pricing implies the user's time, effort, or institutional fees to maximize accessibility and value. Place ensures resources and services are available wherever users are, be it physically in the library, online, or through community outreach. Promotion involves creating awareness and driving the usage of library resources and services through campaigns.

The purpose for applying the marketing mix in libraries is to enhance user satisfaction and increase usage. The use of a service is a key indicator of satisfaction, which is an essential

achievement for any marketing activity. To achieve this, libraries must not only develop a well-planned marketing strategy but also invest in their human capital. Librarians requires ongoing training and development to effectively manage evolving resources and services, furthermore libraries can better understand and serve their users thereby enhancing satisfaction, demonstrating institutional value and securing their role as essential academic information hub in the digital age

Concept of Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy is a kind of plan that includes raising accessibility of product to customers and raising awareness through marketing communications. It is a marketing strategy that increases product awareness, value and usage and encourages prospective customers to become loyal customers. Marketing strategies are techniques used by libraries to create awareness so as to attract and retain users to make effective use of information resources and services. Edom and Edom (2019) describe marketing strategy as laid down plan or principle that an organization adopts in order to sell its products and maximize profits. Libraries adopt marketing strategies to remain relevant in the competitive information age. To meet the needs of the library users, libraries should carry out research to determine users evolving needs, get users feedback on resources and services that could meet user's needs and adopt strategies for promoting the library's resources and services (Enz, 2010). Marketing strategy is a kind of plan that includes raising accessibility of product to customers and raising awareness through marketing communications. It is a marketing strategy that increases product awareness, value and usage and encourages prospective customers to become loyal customers. Marketing strategies are techniques used by libraries to create awareness so as to attract and retain users to make effective use of information resources and services. Edom and Edom (2019) describe marketing strategy as laid down plan or principle that an organization adopts in order to sell its products and maximize profits. Libraries adopt marketing strategies to remain relevant in the competitive information age. To meet the needs of the library users, libraries should carry out research to determine users evolving needs; get users feedback on resources and services that could meet user's needs and adopt strategies for promoting the library's resources

and services (Enz, 2010). According Aniogbolu & Okpousung (2020) the resources and services of an academic library is its focal point; hence, creating awareness of its existing resources and services becomes imperative.

Market Penetration Strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services

Market penetration strategy is the process by which an organization focuses on marketing its existing products to its current or existing customers. Market penetration strategy is also the process by which an organization focuses on marketing its existing products to its current or existing customers. Marketing strategy is a kind of plan that includes raising accessibility of product to customers and raising awareness through marketing communications. It is a marketing strategy that increases product awareness, value and usage and encourages prospective customers to become loyal customers. In libraries market penetration strategy involves creating awareness and encouraging existing library users to use the existing library's resources and services. Furthermore, in libraries, market penetration strategy involves creating awareness of underused resources such as rarely accessed databases or special collections to promote utilization of these library resources.

In libraries, the goal of market penetration strategy is to create awareness of the existing resources or services, capture the attention of a large number of already existing users, which cut across students, staff, faculty and the entire university community and increased satisfaction of users (Nasokha & Abdullah 2018). Market penetration provides libraries an opportunity to increase use of resources and services thereby increasing revenue, value and accessibility (Nwankwo & Amechi, 2019)). Therefore, for market penetration to be effective, libraries must effectively promote the value of their resources and services, thereby encouraging potential users to use its resources and services and eventually become regular users. A library's goal for adopting market penetration strategy is to improve participation by engaging new users and encouraging existing user to use library services and resources more frequently. This approach helps to build users' loyalty to the library, ensure continuous patronage and reduce user's likelihood to seek information elsewhere. According to Heiens and Pleshko (2010) market

penetration is a growth strategy in which libraries encourage existing and prospective users to utilize the libraries existing resources and services. Furthermore, segmentation is the process of dividing a broad consumer or business market into subgroups (segments) based on shared characteristics. In libraries market segmentation strategy could be used by dividing library users into groups based on factors such as demographics, needs, priorities, common interests, and other behavioral criteria. Market segmentation strategy if adopted over a period of time will enable librarians to understand better the users and optimize the utilization of the library resources and services. Some examples of segmented-based approach that could promote the use of library resources and services and meet the diverse users needs include providing distinct reading areas for various groups such as top management; establishing distinct reading areas for various groups such as postgraduate students and undergraduate students; seeking for information from the users to determine their specific information needs; delivering outreach services to various online user groups within the university community; offering resources and services tailored to users from diverse social and cultural backgrounds among others.

The importance of applying market penetration strategy in libraries includes increased library service utilization; this implies creating awareness of existing resources and services to existing and prospective users. Libraries may improve both in-person and online interaction by providing interesting programmes, easily accessible resources and services. Furthermore, it foster access with no fee strategies, for example, waive book loan overdue fees, offer free printing days, or provide bundled access to premium resources such as databases, which can play a vital role in attracting new customers and encouraging existing users to use the library regularly. In addition, it not only removes cost barriers but also indicate to users that the library can provide their needs (Hernon & Matthews, 2013). Additionally, market penetration facilitates service enhancements such as extending e-book access hours and introducing new technologies such as 3D printers or virtual reality (VR) stations. This makes library resources and services more appealing and relevant to users (Kaur & Rani, 2020). Market penetration encourages keeping pace with technological advancements, this implies libraries commitment to providing digital and innovative tools for learning, creativity, and

research. In addition, Service accessibility remains a fundamental drive for library users, which involves increasing library opening hours, setting up mobile library units, and improving the library's digital presence through user-friendly websites or mobile apps; this can significantly improve the library user experience (Mbatha, 2021). These measures ensure that users can access resources anytime and anywhere, thereby promoting sustained engagement. Moreover, market penetrations adopt effective outreaches and create awareness. For example focused outreach activities, community events, social media campaigns, and promotional materials can help libraries connect with a wider audience and boost utilization of library resources. (Rowley, 2016). Such efforts create stronger visibility for library services and motivate existing users to explore services they might not have considered. Furthermore, user engagement such as hosting events, soliciting for user's feedback help to strengthens the library's relationships with its users (Activesales, 2024). By making users feel valued and included in decision-making processes, encourage deeper loyalty and sustained user engagement. If more users are carefully targeted and identified as potential users, it is logical to expect that all targeted individuals will eventually make use of the library's resources and services. Therefore, market penetration can serve as a reliable barometer for aimed at increasing the utilization of library resources and services (Masterson & Pickton, 2014). It was noted that this strategy enables a library to promote the use of its resources and services and aim to encourage greater usage among current users (Muchele and Kombo, 2019). This is the reason the researcher intends to determine through empirical evidence the extent of application of market penetration strategy so that if any gap is found in these activities it will be closed in order to improve effectiveness in the library. For libraries to better promote the utilization of their resources and services, the integration of other marketing strategies are imperative hence, the study will discuss product development strategy.

Product Development Strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services

Product development strategy is a plan that focuses on how an organization builds and launches new products or updates existing ones. It is another strategy that can be adopted by an

organization with the intent of growth. Without a product development strategy in place, there is no clear path for an organization to develop new products (Atlassian, 2024). It is the process of developing new products or modifying existing products, and offering those products to existing markets. According to Njomo and Oloko (2016) who posited that some of the factors that may drive an organization to develop new products are changing consumer preferences, technological advancement, shifts in manufacturing costs and competition from existing brands. Any organization that is keen on its future must make the development or innovation of products and systems a priority (OECD, (2018), this strategy seeks to increase sales by improving or modifying present products or services. New products are the basis of survival and success in all organizations and are the key source of innovation in an organization (Awang, Ibrahim & Nor, 2015).

In a continuously changing information world, product development strategies are essential for libraries because it guarantees that the institution stays effective, relevant, and user-centric. Libraries may better serve users' evolving demands, boost library usage, and prove their worth to stakeholders by concentrating on creating and promoting innovative resources and services. Product development strategies in libraries cannot be over emphasized as it helps to address customer needs, improve service delivery, achieve organizational goals, promote inclusivity and reach out to underserved community of users. It's important to note that the specific results of library marketing can vary depending on the library's goals, target audience, resources, and the effectiveness of the marketing strategies employed. Regular evaluation and adjustment of marketing efforts can help libraries optimize their impact and achieve their desired outcomes.

The place of product development strategies for promoting library resources and services cannot be over emphasized because of its benefits and impact on the utilization of library resources and services. Such benefit includes enhanced usage and patronage, this can be achieved by promoting updated resources and services, which not only attract new users but also re-engage existing users and encourage more regular library visits (Sannwald, 1998). In addition, improved customer experience stems from designing services and resources that meet users' needs and preferences, thereby increasing

satisfaction and building loyalty (Wikipedia). The product development strategy introduces new resources and services to new users by combining a set of activities. These activities outline the process a library consistently follows to transform ideas into marketable resources and services. Such activities include implementing augmented reality (AR) tools and virtual maps, which can guide users and supports independent learning (Huang, Li, & Zhou, 2016). In addition, libraries can offer virtual tours accessible via mobile devices, enabling users to familiarize themselves with facilities and services even before physically visiting the library (Harrison, 2016). Furthermore, introducing a laptop lending programmes can attract students who may lack personal computers, thereby encouraging use of digital and online library resources (Leong & Higgins, 2010). Moreover, the creation of maker spaces within libraries provides facilitates for creativity, collaboration, and skill development particularly in areas such as robotics, 3D printing, and coding (Cohen, 2017; Slatter & Howard, 2013). To reach a larger library user group , libraries may also offer mobile library services that extend resources beyond the physical building, especially to remote communities. This specialized service boosts library visibility and fosters (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2013). In a similar vein, installing webcams to allow users to monitor real-time library attendance helps users plan their visits and avoid peak periods, thus enhancing convenience and user satisfaction (Beck, 2015). Additionally, creating a media lab within the library can promote user creativity and self development through activities like video editing and podcasting (Wang & Dawes, 2012). To further promote access to digital content, e-readers can be distributed to users, allowing seamless access to the library's e-book collections (Tenopir, 2003). Also, implementing an online book reservation system simplifies the process of locating and securing desired library resources (Oyedum & Abdullahi, 2014). These activities are reasons this researcher intends to determine the extent of application of product development strategy within the library so that identifying gaps in the current services to new user needs, the study will inform the creation of new, targeted programs and digital resources. This initiative is important for maintaining the library's relevance and promoting increased user engagement

Discussion of Results

Research Question 1

To what extent is the market **penetration strategy** applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean ratings on the extent of application of market penetration strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. N=615

S/N	Items on Application of Marketing Strategy	Librarians N=235 X̄ (SD)	Library Users N= 380 X̄ (SD)	Average Mean X̄ (SD)	Remark
1	Use flyers to promote and raise awareness of the library's resources and services.	2.60(0.55)	2.85(0.75)	2.75(0.68)	HE
2	Organize library week and present awards to the best library users as motivation for utilizing the library's resources and services.	3.01(0.73)	1.24(0.82)	1.92(1.01)	LE
3	Extend book lending hours to encourage users to engage with the library.	3.42(0.71)	3.29(0.77)	3.33(0.75)	HE
4	Develop library websites to enhance awareness of the available resources and services.	2.48(0.45)	1.71(0.53)	2.01(0.65)	LE
5	Use social media platforms to connect with users and encourage the use of library resources and services.	3.69(0.83)	2.66(0.91)	3.509(1.02)	HE
6	Offer discounts on fee-based library resources and services to boost utilization.	2.60(0.56)	2.08(0.75)	2.27(0.72)	LE
7	Make available digital materials such as e-journals to promote the use of resources and services.	3.24(0.63)	3.01(0.52)	3.11(0.57)	HE
8	Distribute assessment forms to users for feedback to know the level of engagement with library resources and services.	2.29(0.46)	1.17(0.82)	1.60(0.85)	LE
9	Waive overdue book loan fees to encourage greater utilization of library resources and services.	2.18(0.45)	2.02(0.60)	2.07(0.55)	LE
10	Lower charges costs for book loss to enhance accessibility for users.	1.69(0.91)	1.58(0.78)	1.63(0.84)	LE
11	Rebind library materials to improve their appearance and boost usage.	3.29(0.47)	3.17(0.82)	3.22(0.70)	HE
12	Conduct orientation sessions for users to familiarize them with library resources and services.	1.76(0.45)	1.62(0.60)	1.65(0.55)	LE

13	Implement a suggestion box to gather insights on user interests and ensure resources and services are accessible.	3.69(0.91)	1.58(0.78)	2.38(1.23)	LE
14	Help users find information that interests them to minimize their search efforts and encourage usage.	2.60(0.55)	1.73(0.79)	2.06(0.81)	LE
15	Offer free internet services to inspire users to engage with e-journals and e-books.	2.24(0.49)	2.89(0.54)	2.63(0.57)	HE
16	Conduct workshops aimed at improving users' information literacy and their utilization of library resources and services.	2.29(0.47)	1.17(0.82)	1.62(0.86)	LE
17	Notify users when requested books are available to encourage usage.	2.37(0.45)	1.62(0.60)	1.92(0.67)	LE
Cluster Mean Score		2.80(0.50)	2.29(0.47)	2.34(0.76)	LE

Based on the decision rule; Table 1 revealed that librarians apply market penetration strategy to a low extent. This is seen in an overall cluster mean of 2.34. This implies a low extent of application of market for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on the extent market penetration strategy is applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1

Table 2: t-test on significant difference between the mean ratings of respondents on the extent market penetration strategy is applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries

Group	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	∞-level	Decision
Librarians	235	31.85	4.54	613	24.51	0.000	0.05	Significant
Library users	380	45.59	9.27					

Table 2 reveals a significant difference exist between the mean ratings of librarians and library users, as evidence in the t-test results of $t(613) = 24.51, p = .000, \alpha = 0.05$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users the on extent of the market penetration strategy applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

To what extent is the product development **strategy** applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean ratings on the extent of application of product development strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. N=615

S/N	Items on Application of Marketing Strategy	Librarians N=235 \bar{X} (SD)	Library Users N= 380 \bar{X} (SD)	Average Mean \bar{X} (SD)	Remark
18	Implement augmented reality (AR) tools such as virtual maps to improve library learning experience for users.	1.24(0.43)	1.48(0.54)	1.39(.052)	NA
19	Offer virtual tours accessible via mobile phones to assist users in move around the library resources and services.	1.47(0.45)	1.45(0.55)	1.46(0.52)	NA
20	Create a laptop lending programmes to attract and encourage users to engage with library resources and services.	1.49 (0.91)	1.46(0.81)	1.47(0.85)	NA
21	Introduce innovative technologies such as a maker space to facilitate skill development among users.	2.07(0.56)	1.15(0.75)	1.49(0.85)	NA
22	Offer specialized services such as mobile library options to engage community members and enhance awareness and utilization.	1.24(0.43)	1.45(0.42)	1.37(0.43)	NA
23	Set up webcams to allow current users to monitor library attendance at particular times.	1.29(0.46)	1.23(0.73)	1.25(0.64)	NA
24	Create a media lab to foster self-improvement and creativity among users, thereby boosting usage.	1.37(0.45)	1.31(0.53)	1.33(0.50)	NA
25	Distribute e-readers to grant users e-books.	3.69(0.91)	2.06(0.82)	2.66(1.18)	HE
26	Implement online book reservation services for users to facilitate easy access and usage.	2.01(0.56)	1.48(0.70)	1.68(0.77)	LE
Cluster Mean Score		1.86	1.57	1.68(0.77)	LE

Based on the decision rule; Table 3 revealed that librarians apply product development strategy to a low extent. This is seen in an overall cluster mean of 1.68. This implies a low extent of

application of product development strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on the extent product development strategy is applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test on significant difference between the mean ratings of respondents on the extent product development strategy is applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries

Group	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	∞-level	Decision
Librarians	235	17.91	2.37	613	19.65	0.001	0.05	Significant
Library users	380	23.31	4.43					

Table 4 reveals that a significant difference exist between the mean ratings of librarians and library users, as evidence in the t-test results of $t(613) = 19.65, p = <0.001, \alpha = 0.05$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users the on extent of the product development strategy applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

branding on patronage, with significant effects, implying users recognize high extent of application of the strategies, which is contrary to a low extent as indicated in this study.

Discussion of Findings

Extent market penetration strategy is applied for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

The finding from the research question one revealed that librarians of apply market **penetration strategy** for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria to a low extent. This finding is supported by the findings of Ishaku, Yahaya and Ibrahim (2021) which revealed that academic librarians expressed barriers such as high costs and lack of management support limits actual of application, potentially leading to lower user recognition of these efforts. Furthermore this finding agreed also with that of Akporhonor (2020) which revealed negative attitude and overall low extent of application. This could explain why users might perceive even lower implementation. In contrast to the finding of this study, Obi (2023) showed users perceiving a positive influence of marketing indicators such as awareness creation and

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on the extent of application of market penetration strategy by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The significant mean difference may be because **librarians believe they are doing a lot** to make library resources and services visible, available, and attractive to students and staff. In their view, they are already applying many techniques (such as awareness campaigns with flyers, award presentation during library week, extending book lending hours, outreaches through library websites, social media and email among others) to get people to use the library more. **But library users** feel that very little has actually been done to encourage them to make use of the library resources and services. In other words, the efforts that librarians think are “visible and effective” are not being felt strongly by the users. It is important to note that the success of market penetration strategy is determined by the user’s opinion, not the librarian’s intention. This provides a background to consider the effective channels for creating awareness of existing resources and services, evaluating user’s preferences and needs. Importantly it bridges the gap between librarians and library users by developing strategies that are users-centric, thereby improving resource and service utilization. This finding agreed with the finding of Esan and Adeyemi (2022) that marketing as a form of

awareness significantly influences the use of library services in the two federal universities in Nigeria.

Extent of application of product development strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

The finding in research question two revealed that librarians apply product development strategy for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the universities libraries in South-South, Nigeria to a low extent. This statement simply means that the librarians did very poorly in improving or introducing new resources and services in the university libraries. This finding is consistent with the study of Oyemike et al. (2016) which revealed the use of traditional methods, such as library notice boards and face-to-face interactions. This suggests that some strategies such as introducing digital platforms, creating mobile-friendly library apps, or adding new forms of interactive learning resources are not being employed comprehensively or effectively enough to significantly promote the utilization of resources and services in the university libraries across South-South, Nigeria. Furthermore, the finding of Oduwole, Adekunmisi and Oyedokun (2023) revealed that majority of the participating libraries reported that some librarians have adopted innovative products and services to a "low extent" revealing a critical implementation gap. This disparity suggests that adoption does not equate application. The finding of the study disagreed with that of Abimbola and Affiong (2020) that promotional techniques such as brochures, flyers, library email, library websites, reading lists, bibliographies, and newsletters among others were used to a high extent. The difference between each finding could be as a result of varying opinions of the respondents based on geographical location.

The corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is significant difference between the mean ratings of librarians and library users on the extent of application of product penetration applied by librarians for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in the university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Furthermore, the significant difference reveals that both groups feel that such efforts are minimal or rarely seen in the university libraries across South-South Nigeria. This is because

strategies such as augmented reality tools, virtual tours, laptop lending media lab and online book reservations among others are not effectively applied by librarians. The non reliance on these basic methods highlights a deficit in more innovative and user-centric marketing approaches. The finding of this study is in contrast with that of Otuu and Unegbu (2022) which found that marketing strategies significantly influences the use of library information services in university libraries in Lagos State. This gap serves as a critical mandate to adopt a more user-centric approach to product development. To bridge this gap, libraries must implement augmented reality (AR) tools such as virtual maps to improve library learning experience for users, offer virtual tours accessible via mobile phones to assist users in move around the library resources and services, create a laptop lending programmes to attract and encourage users to engage with library resources and services among others, ensuring that innovation are both user-informed and effectively communicated is essential for enhancing the value and utilization of library resources and services.

Conclusion

This study examined the application of market penetration and product development strategies for promoting the utilization of library resources and services in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The findings present a coherent narrative yet raises concerns: both strategies are applied to a **low extent** that is low extent of application of market penetration and product development strategies. This indicates a systemic deficiency in practical, user-centric marketing initiatives within the university libraries in the South-South Zone. The analysis reveals a persistent **reactive and infrastructural service model**. Libraries demonstrate higher competence in basic, transactional functions such as extending lending hours, distributing e-readers, or rebinding materials which represent maintenance rather than strategic growth. In contrast, activities fundamental to strategic marketing are critically underutilized. These include comprehensive user needs assessments, segmented orientation programs, innovative service development (e.g., maker spaces, virtual tours), and dynamic promotional outreach via modern channels.

Furthermore, the statistically significant differences between librarians' and users' perceptions as evidenced by the rejected null hypotheses underscore a profound **implementation communication gap**. Librarians' self-assessments consistently rate application levels higher than users' experiences. This discrepancy suggests that marketing efforts, where they exist, are either inadequately executed, poorly communicated, or misaligned with user expectations and needs. Consequently, the potential impact of these strategies on driving utilization is severely diminished. In summary, the libraries are caught in a transitional inertia. While conceptually aware of the need for marketing in a competitive digital landscape, they have not successfully adopted strategic frameworks such as Marketing Mix to transit from a traditional, collection-centric institution to a dynamic, user-centric organization. This gap threatens their relevance, their ability to demonstrate value to stakeholders, and ultimately, their role in supporting academic excellence.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

Develop and Implement a User-Centric Strategic Marketing Plan: University library management should mandate the creation of a formal, integrated marketing strategy that explicitly prioritizes **market penetration** and **product development**. This

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plan must be informed by continuous, systematic user research through surveys, focus groups, and analytics to replace assumptions with evidence. It should specifically allocate resources and set in place measures for currently low-performing but high-impact activities, such as orientation for users segmentation of reader groups, robust social media engagement, and the piloting of at least one innovative service (e.g., a laptop lending program or online booking system) annually.

Introduce an Uninterrupted Feedback and Flow of Communication to Bridge the Perception Gap: Libraries must institutionalize mechanisms to align service development with user perception and need. This involves establishing a **dual-pathway system**: First, a transparent communication channel to actively promote new and existing services through user-preferred mediums (e.g., targeted social media, student portals, and departmental collaborations). Secondly, a formal feedback mechanism, such as periodic user experience surveys and service design workshops, to evaluate the effectiveness of these communications and services. Librarians should receive regular training in digital marketing and user experience principles. Ultimately, a portion of library performance profile should be incorporated into user satisfaction scores and engagement data, fostering an organizational culture that values and responds to external user feedback.

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