ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN LIBRARY INFORMATION MARKETING: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES.

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Abstract
This study explores the role of social media in library information marketing, focusing on opportunities and challenges faced by libraries in Nigeria. The concept of social media and its various types are discussed, as well as the potential benefits of using social media for marketing purposes. The challenges associated with the deployment of social media in library information marketing are also examined. Social media is an online platforms and tools that facilitate communication, networking, and content sharing in virtual communities. It allows individuals and organizations to create, share, and exchange information in real time, providing opportunities for engagement and interaction with a wider audience. *In conclusion,* social media has become an indispensable tool for libraries in marketing their information resources and services to a wider audience. It provides numerous opportunities for libraries to reach potential users, engage with existing users, and strengthen their brand presence. *The study* suggests strategies for libraries to effectively utilize social media for marketing, such as developing a comprehensive marketing plan, collaborating with other libraries and organizations, and regularly evaluating performance. The findings of this study can inform and guide libraries in their use of social media for marketing purposes, ultimately increasing public awareness and usage of library resources and services.

Keywords: social media; Information marketing; libraries; opportunities; challenges

Introduction
The emergence of information communication technologies has greatly affected all spheres of human existence which encompasses the way we communicate, network, and perform routine tasks as well as marketing activities (Okon & Ogri, 2023). The library is not left out as it seeks to keep pace with the ever-changing technologies to remain relevant and provide effective services. Information marketing has become increasingly important in the library profession as libraries seek to promote their services and resources to a wider audience to increase usage and relevance in the digital age. In this regard, social media has become an integral tool in the library's marketing strategies (Olorunfemi & Ipadeola, 2018).
The first sets of social media platforms were launched in 1997 which are the Six Degrees and Bolt Platforms. The popular social media platforms in existence today include LinkedIn launched in 2003, Myspace 2003, Facebook 2004, Flickr 2004, Reddit 2005, Twitter 2006, Tumblr 2007, Pinterest 2010, Instagram 2010, Snapchat 2011, Telegram 2013, TikTok 2017, and Google+ 2019, among others (Hines, 2022). The Economic Times (2024) defined social media as websites and programmes that help people talk to each other, get involved, share information, and work together. People use social media to stay in touch with their friends, family, and neighbors. Social media is a phrase commonly used to describe modern types of media that include active participation (Manning, 2014). Currently, social media platforms such as

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn have become popular tools for libraries to reach out to their target audience, engage with them, and promote their services and resources (Chitumbo, 2023).

To buttress the aforementioned, Kirita and Mwantimwa (2021) argued that librarians and libraries in both developing and developed countries have increasingly adopted social media to publicize and promote their resources and services. Studies have also reported that academic libraries in Africa are now integrating social media platforms to enhance their service delivery to users. According to Bosch (2009), libraries in South Africa have adopted social media platforms such as Facebook, Wikis, Delicious, YouTube, and Podcasts as part of their service offerings. A similar trend is observed in Kenya, where Abok and Kwanya (2014) found that academic libraries utilize platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter to facilitate the dissemination of information resources, provide reference services, share professional network information, and promote library services. In Nigeria, the study by Nduka et al (2021) revealed that academic libraries are adopting social media sites for their service delivery needs.

However, most studies report the use of social media for service delivery purposes, but little is known about the use of social media for marketing purposes in academic libraries in Nigeria. The present study will explore the opportunities and challenges associated with the deployment of social media for marketing purposes in the library context.

Concept of Social media

Social media refers to online platforms and tools that facilitate communication, networking, and content sharing in virtual communities. It allows individuals and organizations to create, share, and exchange information in real time, providing opportunities for engagement and interaction with a wider audience (Lutkevich & Wigmore, 2023). Social media has become an integral part of modern society, with the average person spending over two hours on social media platforms every day.

Some of the key features of social media include user-generated content, real-time communication, and user participation, making it an effective tool for marketing (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022). Social media platforms offer a range of features, including text, images, videos, audio, and live streaming, which can be used to convey information and engage with the target audience. Furthermore, social media provides a cost-effective means for promoting products and services, as users can create and share content for free (Nduka et al., 2021). This makes it an ideal marketing tool, especially for organizations with limited resources, such as libraries.

Social media are now been increasingly adopted in libraries for knowledge sharing, communication, handling routines, rendering services as well as for promotion of library offerings and services (Nduka et al., 2021).

Types of Social media deployed for library information marketing

There are various types of social media platforms available, each with its own unique features and target audience. Libraries can choose which platforms to utilize depending on their marketing objectives and target audience. The following are the commonly deployed social media platforms by libraries:

Social networking platforms: These are platforms that enable users to connect and interact with each other. Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Twitter are popular examples of social networking sites used by libraries for marketing purposes (Bebi & Kumar, 2014). These platforms provide opportunities for libraries to reach out to potential users, engage with existing users, and promote their services and events. For instance, libraries can create Facebook pages or Twitter accounts where they can share updates, photos, and other information about their resources and services (Kenchakkanavar, 2015; Kirita & Mwantimwa, 2021). Social networking platforms also allow libraries to join relevant groups and communities to further expand their reach and interact with their target audience.

Micro-blogging platforms: These are social media platforms that allow users to share short-form content such as text, images, and videos. Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit are examples of micro-blogging platforms used by libraries for marketing (Gillis, 2023). These platforms provide opportunities for real-time communication and engagement with a wider audience, making them effective for promoting library events, new resources, and services.

Photos and video-sharing platforms: Platforms such as Instagram, Flickr, and YouTube allow users to share and view photos and videos. Libraries can utilize these platforms to promote their resources and services through visual content (Chi, 2020). For instance, libraries can share photos of their new library spaces or videos showcasing their services and events.

Specialized social media platforms: These are platforms that cater to specific interests or industries. For instance, Goodreads is a social media platform specifically for book lovers and authors (Thelwall & Kousha, 2016). Libraries can utilize such platforms to engage with their target audience, recommend books, and promote their services related to reading and literature.

Opportunities for library information marketing using social media

Social media offers numerous advantages for libraries, making it an essential tool in their marketing strategy (Sumadevi & Kumbar, 2019). With its global reach, social media allows libraries to connect with a wider audience and attract potential users beyond their physical location. Through two-way communication, libraries can engage with users in real time, receiving valuable feedback that can help tailor their marketing strategies and services to meet user needs effectively (Ternenge, 2019). Additionally, social media platforms provide advanced targeting options, enabling libraries to reach a specific audience based on their interests, location, and demographics.

Akporhonor and Olise (2015) affirmed that regular and interactive presence on social media platforms can also help libraries establish and maintain a positive brand reputation and raise awareness about their resources and services. Furthermore, Jamil et al (2022) affirmed that social media is a useful tool for promoting events and activities, with platforms like Facebook and Twitter offering event management features. By utilizing user-generated content, such as reviews and recommendations, libraries can attract new users and increase their credibility (AIContentfy team, 2023). Acharya and Vagdal (2023) affirmed that social media also offers opportunities for collaborations and partnerships with other libraries, organizations, and individuals, expanding the reach of a library's marketing efforts and attracting more users. Moreover, social media can create a sense of community among users, bringing them together through platforms like Facebook Groups and LinkedIn Groups, where they can engage in discussions and share information about the library (Acharya & Vagdal, 2023).

One significant advantage of using social media for libraries is its cost-effectiveness. With most platforms offering free business accounts, social media is a valuable resource for libraries with limited marketing budgets (Zhiwei & Muhammad, 2021). Additionally, social media allows for real-time feedback and engagement with users, providing libraries with immediate insights into their services, resources, and marketing efforts (Islam & Habiba, 2015). This enables them to make necessary improvements and adjustments quickly. Overall, social media is a powerful tool for libraries, helping them reach a wider audience, engage with users, and strengthen their brand presence in the online space.

Challenges of using social media for library information marketing

Despite the opportunities provided by social media, there are also challenges that libraries may face in using it for marketing purposes. These challenges include:

Time constraints: Managing social media accounts and creating engaging content can be time-consuming, especially for small and under-resourced libraries (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2020). This may lead to inconsistent and ineffective use of social media as a marketing tool.

Lack of expertise: Effective use of social media for marketing requires specialized skills and expertise. Many libraries may not have dedicated personnel or trained staff to handle social media accounts, which can affect the quality and impact of their marketing efforts (Maisiri et al. 2015; Agyekum et al. 2016).

Information overload: With the increasing use of social media, there is a lot of content and information available online. This can make it difficult for libraries to stand out and reach their target audience with their marketing messages (Feng et al., 2015).

Privacy and security concerns: Libraries have a responsibility to protect the privacy and security of their users' information. Social media platforms may not always provide adequate privacy and security measures, making it a challenge for libraries to use them for marketing purposes (Agarwal et al., 2023).

Audience receptiveness: Not all target audiences may be active on social media or receptive to marketing messages on these platforms (Djaked & Raza, 2023). This can limit the impact of social media as a marketing tool for libraries.

Language barriers: Libraries in multilingual or multicultural settings may face challenges in reaching a diverse audience with their marketing efforts on social media due to language barriers (Alnassai & Roze, 2024).

Limited reach: Social media platforms may have limitations in the reach of their algorithms, making it difficult for libraries to reach their target audience with their marketing messages (Gibson, 2018).

Technological barriers: Access to reliable and stable internet connection and necessary technological resources can be a barrier for libraries in utilizing social media for marketing purposes (Bastian et al., 2023). This may be particularly challenging for libraries in developing countries with limited resources.

Copyright issues: Social media platforms may have limited capabilities for enforcing copyright laws, making it a challenge for libraries to share copyrighted materials as part of their marketing efforts (Bosher, 2020).

Maintenance cost: While social media platforms are free to use, there may be costs associated with maintaining a professional presence, such as hiring graphic designers or social media managers, which can be a challenge for libraries with limited budgets (Hood, 2023).

Rapidly changing technology: With the constantly evolving nature of social media and emerging platforms, libraries may struggle to keep up with the latest trends and changes, making it a challenge to effectively use social media for marketing purposes (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Recommendations:

To effectively utilize social media for information marketing, libraries can consider the following recommendations:

1. **Libraries should establish a social media marketing plan**: Libraries should develop a comprehensive social media marketing plan that aligns with their overall marketing objectives and target audience. The plan should include a content strategy, budget and resource allocation, and performance evaluation metrics.

2. **Libraries should utilize multiple social media platforms**: Instead of relying on one platform, braries should utilize various social media platforms to reach a wider audience and engage with different demographics.

3. **Develop engaging content**: Libraries need to create content that is visually appealing and relevant to the target audience. This can include multimedia content such as videos, images, and infographics.

4. **Collaborate with other libraries and organizations**: By collaborating with other libraries and organizations, libraries can expand their reach and attract new users. This can also help in sharing resources and expertise in utilizing social media for marketing purposes.

5**. Train staff on social media management**: Libraries should provide training and resources to staff on social media management to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize social media for marketing purposes.

6. **Monitor and evaluate performance**: Libraries should regularly monitor and evaluate their social media performance using analytics tools provided by the platforms. This will help in measuring the success of their marketing efforts and making necessary adjustments.

7. **Consider local languages and cultural sensitivities**: In multilingual and multicultural settings, libraries should consider utilizing local languages and being culturally sensitive in their social media posts to reach a wider audience and avoid any unintentional cultural misappropriation.

8. **Ensure privacy and security**: Libraries need to have privacy and security policies in place to safeguard the information of their users on social media. This can include regularly monitoring privacy settings and responding to any security breaches.

Conclusion

Social media has become an indispensable tool for libraries in marketing their information resources and services to a wider audience. It provides numerous opportunities for libraries to reach potential users, engage with existing users, and strengthen their brand presence. However, there are also challenges that libraries may face in utilizing social media for marketing purposes, such as time constraints, lack of expertise, information overload, and privacy concerns.

Suggestions

1. To effectively utilize social media for marketing, libraries should develop a comprehensive marketing plan, utilize multiple platforms, create engaging content, collaborate with other organizations, and regularly monitor and evaluate their performance.
2. Additionally, libraries should also consider local languages and cultural sensitivities, safeguard privacy and security, and invest in staff training.
3. With a strategic and targeted approach, social media as a powerful tool for libraries should be in a good position to promote their resources and services, increase usage, and remain relevant in the digital age.

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