

Application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the Promotion of Kashim Ibrahim Libraries' Products and Services

By

LAWAN, Aliyu Abubakar

Abstract

This study investigated the Application of ICTs in the Promotion of Kashim Ibrahim libraries' products and services. It was structured to achieve three objectives. Survey research method was adopted for the study. A total of 172 registered library customers and 3 marketing related staff were drawn as sample size. Questionnaire, site visits and observations were used to collect data for the study. The data collated were presented and analyzed using frequency distribution tables and percentages. The study found among others that out of the available means of promotion at the discretion of Kashim Ibrahim Library. Paper based/hardcopy outputs (posters, fliers and banners) were the most frequently employed. The study concluded that Kashim Ibrahim Library apply ICTs in the course of Promoting products and service. This is geared towards paper based or hardcopy emergence as output which can be enhanced by adopting the recommended Electronic Information Promotion Model (EIPM). The model directs output towards reduced printing which cuts promotion costs, saves time and provides cleaner projection for a more enhanced patronage.

Keywords; Marketing, Promotion, ICTs, Libraries, Products and Services

Introduction

Promotion in libraries aims at driving the attention of the customers to what products and services are available and are being used to satisfy their needs or demands. Promotion in libraries aims at informing users what libraries do and what they can do. The benefits include: increased usage, increased value, education of patrons and changed perception among others. Without doubt, libraries have numerous products and services (to be promoted) which are used in satisfying the information needs of customers. However, different libraries adopt

different strategies such as radio, exhibitions, websites, social media, posters and fliers etc. to draw the attention of their patrons to the existence or availability of their products and services. Kashim Ibrahim Library (KIL), Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) is no exception in the application of mostly the traditional strategies.

The libraries' annual report (2013) has shown that the traditional strategies used for library promotion are ineffective and inefficient due to their inability to yield desired patronage. This is further supported by accompanying survey figures in the libraries' 2014 annual

report that signified underutilization of available resources. This points to the need for this study for enhanced patronage and maximum use of the KIL resources and services.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To identify promotional channels used in the promotion of KIL library products and services.
2. To identify the available ICT facilities that are being utilized in the promotion of KIL library products and services.
3. To identify challenges faced in the promotion of KIL products and services.

Review of Related Literature

Marketing is a process which carries goods from producers to ultimate consumers. Marketing, in its broader sense, is the social instrument through which the material goods and culture of a society are transmitted to its members. Marketing, in the library context, refers to those instrument through which information (both raw and processed) are transmitted to its members. (Sharma and Bhardwaj, 2009).

Information professionals globally have come to terms with the need to actively market services. Library marketing is critical for any information professional in order to

spread the word about their library. It doesn't matter what library type, it doesn't matter how large or small the library is - you need to draw attention to your library, your services, your worth to your community, your administration, your staff, and your patrons. Understanding the organization's mission to produce effective marketing material that builds the library's brand and image, drives traffic to your web site, and differentiates your library from its competitors is very important in this regard. That's why in this highly competitive industry marketing plays a very vital role.

The marketing mix as presented by Lauterborn (1990) is a planned package of elements that makes up the product or service offered to the market. It is aimed at supporting the library and information service to reach target markets and specified objectives. The key issues to consider are user convenience, user cost and user communication; taking core services and packaging them according to the needs of specific user groups is a priority. Marketing mix helps to position library or information service very firmly in the perceptions of their communities served: the wider community for the public library, academic community for the academic library or the patrons and patrons for the business or specialist

information service. Marketing mix assist librarians and information managers to perceive the value of different marketing mixes for specific market segments or groups of patrons. The consideration of the interaction of Product, Price, Place and Promotion provides a valuable structure in working towards a set of strategies. When this is coupled with substantial market information and used against a background of careful analysis of the micro- and macro-environment then marketing objectives are more likely to be achieved:

- **Product** – all the product or service characteristics aimed at the target market.
- **Price**– the real cost to the customer or user, including other costs than solely money Centre’s own vision changes.
- **Place** – everywhere and every way the product or service is made available.
- **Promotion**– all the methods of communication used to reach the target markets.

Promotion being a major aspect of marketing was further described by Nicholas (1998) as an essential means of informing users what you do and what you can do. The benefits for those who promote their library services include: increased usage of available resources, increased value in the

organization, enlightenment of users, enhanced patronage and changed perceptions. The promotional plan emerges from the broader marketing plan. It has to do with how to achieve the objectives that have been forecast. It involves:

- ✓ a description of the service requiring publicity;
- ✓ description of the audience at which publicity is targeted;
- ✓ details of the campaign method to be employed including type of publicity to be used and method(s) of distribution;
- ✓ execution of campaign;
- ✓ Analysis of campaign performance.

The setting of clear promotional objectives will also ensure that the success of the advertising campaign can be evaluated. From time to time it should be accepted that promotional activities have not met their objectives.

The 'promotional mix' according to Block (2001) is a term used to describe the set of tools that an organization can use to communicate effectively the benefits of its products or services to its patrons.

The promotional mix includes the following; advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and personal selling

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is defined as a diverse

set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate store, and manage information (Blurton, 1999), and they encompasses a wide range of rapidly evolving technologies including telecommunication technologies, such as telephony, cable, satellite, TV and radio, computer-mediated conferencing and videoconferencing, as well as digital technologies, such as computers, information networks (Internet, the World Wide Web, intranets and extranets) and software applications.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a tool that can be utilized to suit ones' needs in any area or field. By applying ICTs to promotion, Currie (2010) opined that libraries will be able to provide their patrons with knowledge about

the library's physical features, resources, services, programs, and events, and to let them know about the benefits libraries offer. Promotion benefits the library by increasing usage, educating users, and increasing or at least maintaining a positive perception of the library.

Methodology

The research method adopted for the study is Survey. A sample of **1%** of **17,216 (172)** was chosen to represent the target population. Curry's table in Youth (2006) revealed that a study with a target population above 10,000 has an ideal sample size of one percent of its total population. While the entire three marketing related staff were considered from the library, totaling 175. The relevant data collected were analyzed using cumulative frequency tables and percentages

Results and Discussions

Table 1.0 Promotion Channels of KIL’s Products and Services.

Promotion Channels	Kashim Ibrahim Library
Bulletin	√
Newspaper	X
Social Media	√
Library Website	√
Electronic Billboard	X
Television	X
Magazine	X
Orientation	√
Fliers	√
Posters	√
Banners	√
Exhibitions	√
Radio (Jingles)	√
Notice Board	√
PR (Verbal)	√

The Table 1.0 discovered that KIL have diversified their use of promotion media in recent times for the promotion of their products and services. It can clearly be seen that the most employed means of promoting KIL’s products and services are those media that are affordable due to the nature of the establishment as being not-for-profit. However, newspapers, magazine and TV among others are being avoided, possibly due to lack of funds and scope of coverage considerations. Another

implication for the most employed means of promotion as revealed by the Table is the use of paper based products instead of going green (Paperless means) as is the trend in line with global best practices, not forgetting that the use of library website and social media though ICT based have other requirements for access.

The fact that variety of promotion media exist in the 21st century information environment, their choice for not-for-profit

organizations like the library is dependent on funds available and or appropriated for that. This discovery is in line with Sharma and Bhardwaj's (2009) opinion that each library needs to identify what it wishes to promote and how. Marketing is not just about developing and promoting new services and products but also about

bringing awareness to patrons of existing services and products and determining its appropriateness in diverse ways. This is because, there is an enormous responsibility to ensure that value is received for the significant resource expenditure being made on many of these areas.

Table 1.2 ICT Facilities Utilized for Promoting KIL's Products and Services.

Information and Communication Technology Facilities	Kashim Ibrahim Library
Internet	√
Computers	√
External storage devices	√
Printers	√
Television	√
Video Player	√
Video cassette	√
Application software	√
DVD Player	√
Digital Camera	√

Table 1.2 portrayed that available ICT facilities in KIL are being put to use depending on the task at hand. Promotion related businesses employed more of printing using the likes of computers, external storage devices and printers as ICT facilities in all the libraries of the complex. The application software on PCs used for promotion are mostly text editors that are being applied towards a hardcopy output meant for notice boards. Contents on Video Home System

(VHS) and Discs are documentaries-like, that revealed available products and services within the complex which are being displayed at certain occasions or on demand. KIL also utilizes DVD to play promotion content.

It has been affirmed by Stephen (2006) that the use of ICTs improves productivity through the creation of models for turning inputs into products and/or services. As organizations learn and deploy

new technologies, labour can be redeployed to more efficient tasks, discrete components of a new system can be better coordinated and raw information can be more effectively manipulated to assist decision making. This in turn results in more innovation, leading to

a ‘virtuous cycle’ in which the initial adoption to new technologies snowballs into increased profits at the firm level and beyond. This implies that in the context of information service provision, better service delivery will therefore be attained.

Table 1.3 Challenges to Promotion of Kashim Ibrahim Library’s Products and Services.

Library Products and Services	Challenges			
	Approval Delay	Processing Delay	Lack of Funds	Shortages of working resources/tools
Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)			√	
Reference Services		√		
Customer Services				
Media Services	√	√	√	√
Current Awareness Services (CAS)		√	√	
Journals (new arrivals)	√	√		
Books (new arrivals)				
Online Databases	√	√	√	
Offline Databases	√	√		
Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)		√		
Orientation		√		

The Table 1.3 has revealed various challenges faced by marketing related staff in the course of carrying out their duties. Among the existing challenges identified, there is a reasonable amount of hitches on a particular item in each category. The likes of lack of funds on Online Databases and CAS, processing delays on journals and orientation, approval delays on electronic resources and shortages in promotion.

The implication of lack of fund featuring most, brings to the fore the need to

device a means through which promotional tasks can be performed without necessarily incurring costs, thereby cutting promotional expenses and in a way serving as a solution to the most pressing of all the challenges of promotion in KIL. It was further observed that almost all the other problems/challenges mentioned rests on lack of enough funding to take effect.

Moreover, communicating what libraries do has always been a challenge. It has become even more difficult now that

many patrons do not come to the Library physically as frequently (or at all). This is bringing to fore the need to do even do more to reach out to patrons despite lack of the fore mentioned. Dugan (1994) advised that limited funds provided or generated must be well-managed and carefully utilized.

Conclusion and Recommendations

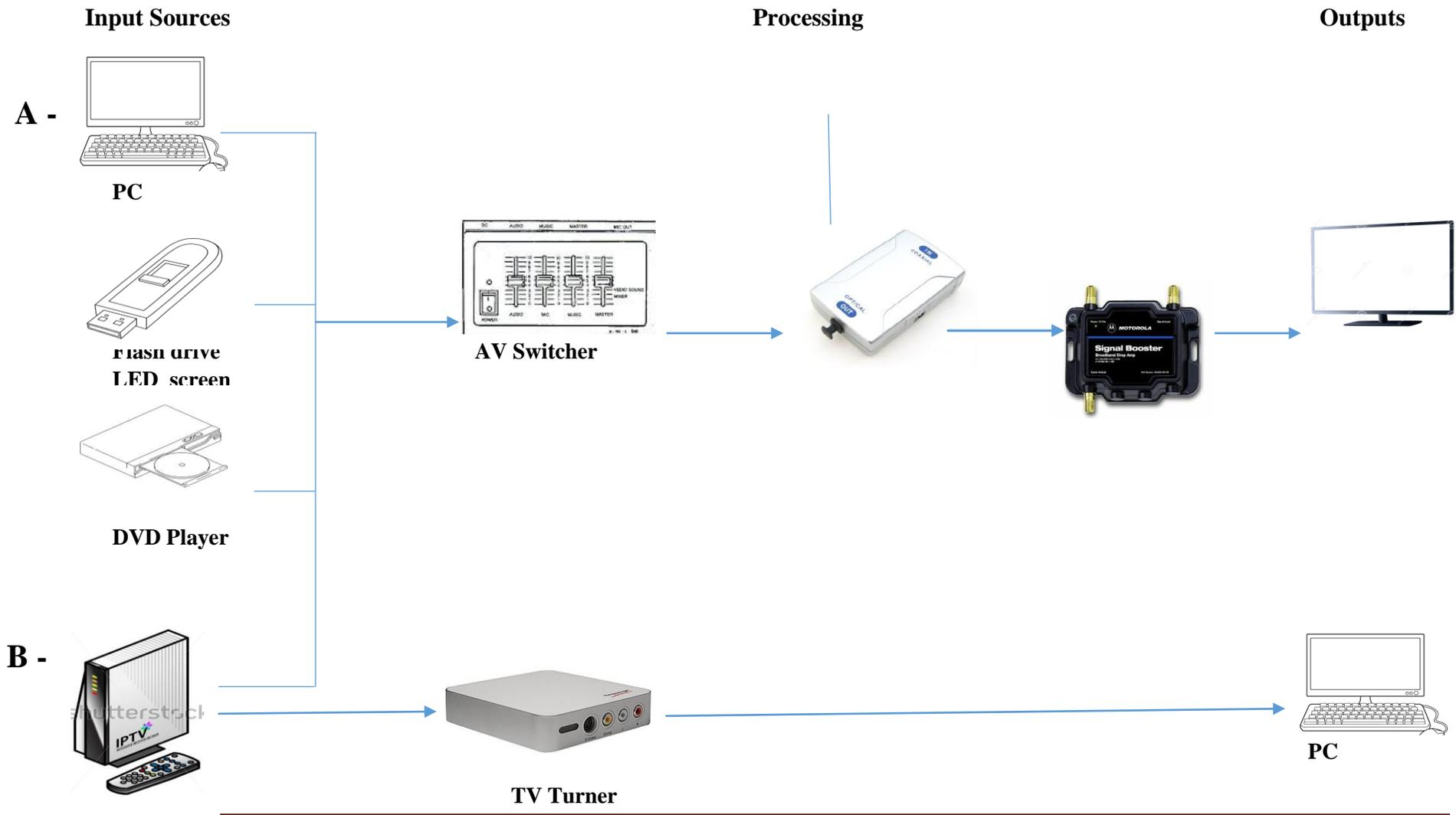
Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that KIL apply ICTs in the promotion of products and services geared towards paper based or hardcopy emergence (traditional). That can be enhanced by (going-green) directing output towards reduced printing. The benefits of such are numerous. From reduced expenses/costs, reduced pollution, more space and easy maintenance to a more enhanced patronage and cleaner projection among others.

In order to increase the existing level of awareness of KIL products and services among patrons, there is the need to design and implement an Electronic Information Promotion Model (EIPM) using most of the existing ICTs in a way that can help cut promotion expenses/costs, eliminate unnecessary delays, reduce other promotion hitches/challenges and provide a platform that will put products and services before the rightful target at all times.

Fig. 1 shows the proposed template for

promotion of products and services.

Fig I Electronic Information Promotion Model (EIPM)



The EIPM was designed mainly to empower libraries and Information centres with the ability to tell their own story, through design and projection of promotional content in the forms of video, audio or both, within their work environment in order to inform and create awareness about products and services. The reason behind the design of the EPIM was born out of the need to complement existing promotion media, using available resources/technologies to eliminate delays in the production of promotional resources, create variety, cut promotional expenses and above all, place the much needed information before the patron/customer.

The EIPM have two options: **A** and **B**

Option A: This comprises a computer system, Flash drive, and DVD player serving as input devices. The PC with a pre-installed software (Flash ad creator, Aleo Flash Intro Banner Maker, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe After effects, Sony Vegas Pro etc.) is used to create electronic adverts that can easily be transferred using a flash drive to a DVD player for projection. The AV Switcher receives multiple signals from input sources, mixes it and passes it through AV cable to the AV converter. The signal is then converted and sent through coaxial cable to

the boosting device. The booster is necessary so as to replace lost quality due to distance for projection through the LED screen as appropriate.

Option B: This uses solely the Cable TV Network as its input source. It transmits its signal through an AV cable to the TV tuner for transmission through USB to the PC. This medium is mainly used for instant digital recording of local educative programmes and or documentaries that supports teaching, learning, research and entertainment.

Transmission modes: The EIPM has the following display modes;

- **Dedicated Screen:** This is a situation whereby the projected advert takes the entire screen/display for a given period.
- **Split Screen:** The AV switcher splits the screen into two to show both news (audio visual) item and a flash advert (Visual) simultaneously on the same screen.
- **Picture-in-picture:** This is where the primary source takes the largest part of the screen with an inset showing adverts/cable TV as set.

Advantages of the EIPM

- Compatible with available ICT devices/technologies.

- Easy set-up/deployment
- Eliminates production cost of promotional materials
- Announcements and instant messages can be projected timely.
- Eliminates unnecessary delays of producing promotional resources
- Easy output content organization/management
- Easy access to achieved content
- User friendly
- Multiples of Adverts can run over and over again
- Adverts can be re-used/edited at certain intervals
- Instant recording capability
- Multitasking abilities
- Low cost of maintenance
- Suites all information service provision environment

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