

## **Communication Media for Information Service Delivery in University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria**

By

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### **Abstract**

Communication media are essential apparatus for developing profitable customer relationship in every organization. This paper investigates the communication media used for information service delivery in university libraries in North Western States of Nigeria. The concept of communication, communications media and the need for communication with customers were highlighted. Survey method was used and library staff comprising professionals and paraprofessionals was the subject of the study. The study found that personal contacts, complaint boxes, notice boards and news bulletin were the popular type of media used for communication with customers in Kashim Ibrahim Library, A.B.U., Zaria, Bayero University Library, Kano and Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto. It was also revealed that there is significant difference in the types of media used for communication with the customers in the selected university libraries in North Western States of Nigeria. It was concluded that the low level of utilization of information resources and services in the university libraries could be attributed to their reluctance to communicate their messages via appropriate media to their teeming customers. The introduction of a course unit entitled Communications in Library and Information work is highly advocated.

### **Introduction**

University libraries are concerned with the provision of variety of information products and services to their numerous customers. These products and services include current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, reference and information service, Internet service, indexing and abstracting services etc as well as the procurement and organization of relevant textbooks, journals, newspapers and magazines for their customers' use. However, these products and services could be underutilized or not utilized at all if their availability in the library is not adequately and properly communicated to the customers, using appropriate channels and format such as personal contacts, meetings, notice boards, bulletins and newsletters. Thus, communications provides a fruitful platform and framework upon which the library can enhance access and use of its information resources and services. Also, important is the appropriate choice of media and format type in communication between organizations and their customers. On this note, Kotler and Armstrong (2006) argued that modern marketing calls for more than just developing a good product... and making it available, organizations must communicate and find ways to communicate with existing and prospective customers. They added that it is a crucial element in an organization's effort to build profitable customer relationships. This explains why it is imperative for university libraries to design appropriate media for communicating their

information products and services to their teeming customers.

### **Statement of the problem**

The main objectives of libraries today are to become relevant in information service delivery and to provide an optimum level of services to reach more potential users and encourage the use of library resources. They invest huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources. Yet, according to Kaur and Rani (2007) these resources are often remain unutilized resulting in wastage of money, time, energy and space. This naturally requires a well planned and functional communication system between the library and the customer. In the light of this worrisome situation, it becomes imperative to speculate whether the non utilization/underutilization of library resources could be due to the fact that the university libraries do not communicate their information products and services to their customers. Or they do not adopt appropriate media for communication.

### **Literature Review**

Organizations have realized that if they are to be successful in their today's businesses, effective communications at all levels is essential. Taylor (2005) have identified the following key points as the benefits of effective communication in business organizations: stronger decision making and problem solving; increased in productivity; clearer and more streamlined work flow;

enhanced professional image; sound business relationships; lower employee turnover and higher employee satisfaction and increased customer satisfaction. Communication can be defined as a process of giving, receiving or exchange of information, opinions or ideas by writing, speech or visual means so that the message communicated is completely understood by the recipients. Because customers differ, library managers need to develop communication programs for specific segments, niches or even individuals. Thus, they must not only be interested in "how can we reach out customers" but also "how can we find ways to let our customers reach us".

University libraries need to understand that the key to effective communication is ensuring that the target audience is identified; communication objectives determined; design the communication and lastly select the appropriate media. By communication media, we mean the various channels or means through which an individual or organization chooses to communicate his/her message. At the most general level, a communication media refers to any transmission vehicle or device through which communication occurs, Stewart (2001). Different types of media exist but they are categorized in different ways particularly with the growth of ICTs.

Duyle (2006) opined that communication media can be classified into oral media; written media, visual media and electronic media. Also, Kotler and Armstrong (2006) classified communication media into 2 broader types which are personal and non personal communications. Similarly, communication media can be divided into physical media and mechanical media. By physical media we mean such media as meetings; discussion forums; personal contacts and complaint boxes. On the other hand, e-mail, SMS, newsletters, personal letters, intranet, notice boards, bill boards, radio etc constitute the mechanical media Wikipedia (2008). However, it is important to note that information/messages flow or travel over both formal and informal media.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that communication media are many and varied. Therefore, library managers/marketers need to take into cognizance certain requirements before choosing the media to be used. On this note,

Thill (2008) outlined the following key points to consider when choosing a communication medium by organizations. These are media richness; message format; media limitation; sender motives; urgency, audience preference etc.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What types of communication media are available for CRM application in the University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria?
2. Which types of media are used for communication with their customers for the provision of information service in the University libraries in North Western States of Nigeria?
3. What types of messages/information are communicated to customers by the selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria?

### **Hypothesis**

Ho1. There is no significant difference in the type of media used for communication with their customers in the University libraries in North Western States of Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this research are to:

1. To identify the types of communication media available for CRM application in the University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria.
2. To determine the various types of communication media used in the application of CRM in information service delivery in the selected University libraries in North Western States of Nigeria.
3. To find out the type of messages/information communicated to customers by the selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The survey research design was adopted to conduct this research. This is because survey design could be conveniently used in the study of large and small population without sacrificing efficiency, time, cost and accuracy, Aina and Ajiferuke (2002). The research instrument used

for the study was questionnaire. Sambo (2005) argued that questionnaire is more economical for reasons of time or funds and are directly associated to survey research design. Library staff (professionals and paraprofessionals) in readers' services division, collection development division, reference division, serial division, ICT unit/division and research and bibliographic service division of Kashim Ibrahim Library, Abdullahi Fodiyo Library and Bayero University Library located at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and Bayero University, Kano respectively formed the population of this study. The choice of the library staff in these divisions was informed by the fact that, they are the people involved in interaction with the clients (customers) and are regarded as the front line staff. Below is the breakdown of the number of staff in each university library;

Table 1-Total number of Library staff in readers' service, collection development, reference, serial, ICT unit and research and bibliographic service divisions of the three selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria

University Library	Total No. of Staff		Total
	Professional	paraprofessional	
Kashim Ibrahim Library	22	59	81
Bayero University Library	14	35	49
Abdullahi Fodiyo Library	5	25	30
Total	41	119	160

Source: Library Duty Roster for the Month of August, 2009

### Sample and Sampling Technique

It is apparent that the population of this study is not too large; therefore, all the 160 library staff were used as sample for this research. Hence no sampling technique was required.

### Findings and Discussions

One hundred and sixty copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents but only 148 (92.5%) copies were returned duly completed and found usable for this study. Also, the data collected from the research questions raised were presented and analyzed using frequency tables, histograms and simple percentages while the hypothesis was tested using One Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). Below is the analysis of the responses:-

**Type of Communication Media Available in the Selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria**

Table 2: Type of Media available for Communication with Customers by the University Libraries

Types of Communication Media	Names of Libraries		
	KIL, ABU Zaria	BUL, BU Kano	AFUL, UDU, Sokoto
Personal contacts	√	√	√
Costumer forums	√	√	√
Meetings	√	√	√
Notice boards	√	√	√
Library webpage	√	√	√
Library website	√	×	×
Telephone	√	√	√
Television	×	×	×
Radio	×	×	×
Complaint boxes	√	√	√
Library newsletter	×	×	×
News bulletin	√	√	√
Public Announcement	×	×	×

Key: KIL-Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria ; BUL- Bayero University Library, Kano  
AFUL- Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto

Table 3: Type of Media used for Communication with Customers by the University Libraries

Types of Communication Media	Names of Libraries					
	KIL, ABU Zaria		BUL, BU Kano		AFUL, UDU, Sokoto	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Personal contacts	57	75	35	74.5	19	70
Costumer forums	7	9.2	4	8.5	2	8
Meetings	6	7.9	4	8.5	2	8
Notice boards	54	71.1	39	83	19	76
Library webpage	8	10.5	4	8.5	14	4
Library website	2	2.6	0	0	0	0
Telephone	2	2.6	1	2.1	2	8
Television	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radio	0	0	0	0	0	0
Complaint boxes	71	93.4	37	78.7	21	84.
Library newsletter	16	21.1	0	0	0	0
News bulletin	70	92.1	4.4	93.6	2.3	92
Public Announcement	0	0	0	0	0	0

Key: KIL-Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria ; BUL- Bayero University Library, Kano  
AFUL- Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto

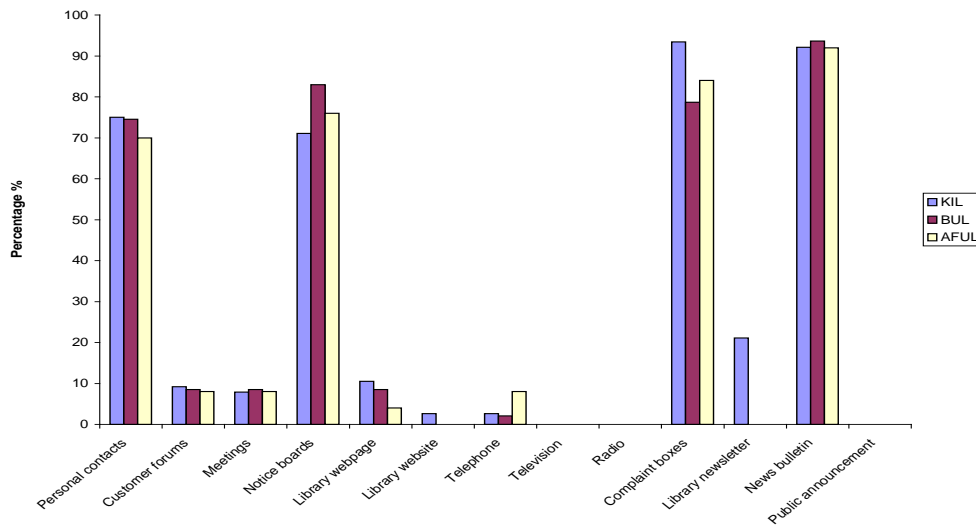


Fig. 1 Type of Media used in communication with customers by the University Libraries

From the table 2 above it can be clearly seen that personal contacts, customer forums, meeting, notice boards, library webpage, telephone, complaint boxes, news bulletin were the type of communication media available in the selected university libraries in North Western States of Nigeria. while library website and library Newsletter were only available in Kashim Ibrahim Library. On the other hand, media such as television, radio, library newsletter and public announcement were not available in all the 3 selected university libraries studied.

**Type of Communication Media Used to Communicate with Customers in the Selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria**

In order to find out the types of communication media used to communicate with Customers in the selected university libraries in North Western States of Nigeria, library staff were asked to indicate as many types of media used in their respective libraries as table 2 and fig. 1 above.

Personal contacts, complaint boxes, notice boards and news bulletin were the popular type of media used for communication with customers in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Bayero

University Library, Kano and Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto. Those media of communication identified to be less used in these libraries are library website and telephone, customer forums and meeting. Also it was found that communication media such as television, radio and public announcement were completely not used to communicate with customers in the selected university libraries studied. And this could be as a result of their non availability and lack of access to these media within the university campuses.

The high use of personal contacts, notice boards and complaint boxes by the university libraries might not be unconnected with the fact that these media are more accessible with ease to the majority of library customers. It was also observed by the researcher that notice boards and complaint boxes were provided within and outside the library buildings to facilitate communication between the library and its customers. This finding corroborate the finding of Hordon (2001) and Constable et al (2007) that University library of North Umbria had several avenues such as suggestion boxes, personal contact with any aggrieved reader and library

users panels through which complaints were channeled.

**Type of information/messages communicated to the customers by the selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria.**

This is aimed at identifying the type of information/messages communicated to the customers by the selected university libraries studied.

Table 4: Type of Information/messages Communicated to the customers by the University Libraries

Type of information/messages communicated to customers	Names of Libraries					
	KIL, ABU Zaria		BUL, BU Kano		AFUL, UDU, Sokoto	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Available resources and services	68	89.5	39	83	22	88
Breaking news	5	6.6	3	6.4	2	8
Information on scholarship	67	88.2	32	68.1	16	64
Job opportunities	18	23.7	8	17	12	48
Working schedules of the library	66	86.8	42	89.4	14	56
Seminars, workshop, conferences and meetings	67	88.2	42	89.4	21	84
Information on lost document/property	69	90.8	45	95.7	24	96
Greetings messages	5	6.6	2	4.3	0	0

Key:

KIL-Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria

BUL- Bayero University Library, Kano

AFUL- Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto

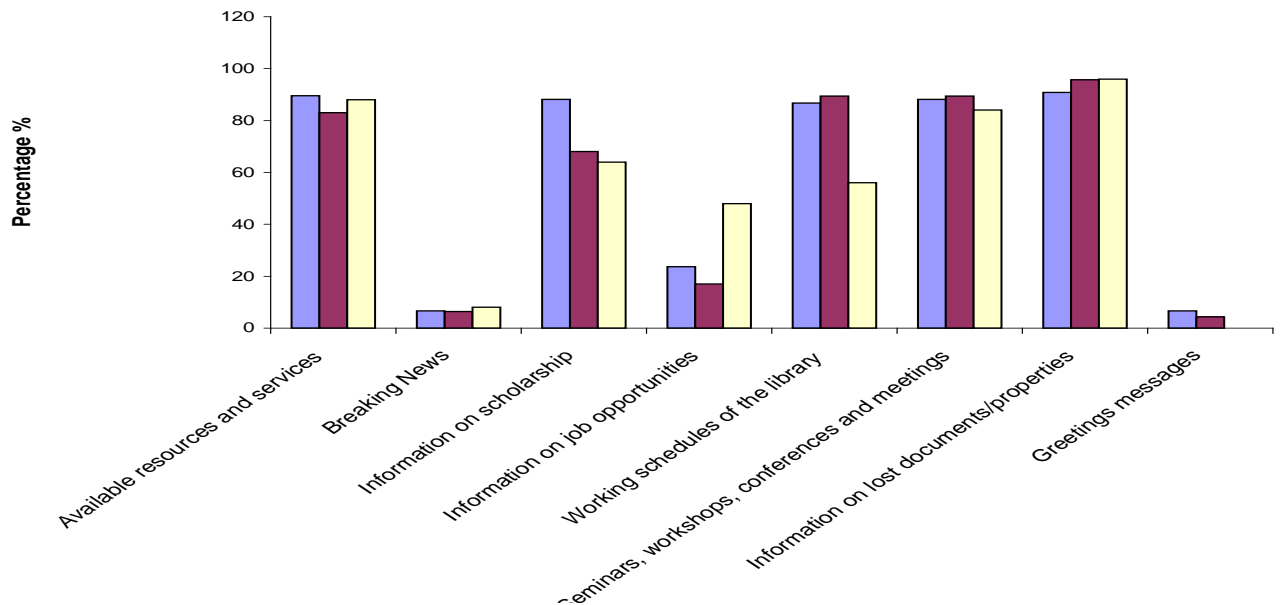


Fig. 2 Type of Information/messages communicated to the customers by the University Libraries

**Table 5: Feedback Mechanism employed to secure customers' impression by the University Libraries**

Feedback Mechanism employed	Names of Libraries					
	KIL, ABU Zaria		BUL, BU Kano		AFUL, UDU, Sokoto	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Complaint and suggestion boxes	70	92.1	31	66.9	16	64
Organized discussions	8	10.5	2	4.3	1	4
Interview with customer	6	7.9	4	8.5	2	8
Personal contact	67	88.2	40	85.1	17	68
Library webpage	8	10.5	4	8.5	3	12
Library website	4	5.3	2	4.3	6	24
Short Message Service (SMS)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Telephone hotlines	0	0	0	0	0	0

Key: KIL-Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria ; BUL- Bayero University Library, Kano AFUL- Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto

Table 4 discovered that Kashim Ibrahim Library, Bayero University Library Kano and Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library Sokoto in their effort to secure customer feedback have instituted the following feedback mechanisms as indicated by the highest responses of the library staff. These were complaint and suggestion boxes and personal contact. Also, it was discovered that the least feedback mechanisms used by them to secure customers' impression on the services provided include library website, organized discussions, and library webpage while SMS and telephone hotlines recorded no response at all. This justifies the assertion by Kelley et al (1990) that service providers must develop mechanisms for securing customer feedback in order to ensure that customers provide the required information and effort to facilitate the service encounter and outcome. This is because the customer is required to contribute information or effort in the service process before the service transaction can be consummated. This finding was also supported by Constable et al (2007) who observed that most common consultation

approach used by libraries or information centers is the use of a suggestion box, whereby customers write down their problems, concerns and comments regarding the services rendered or any improvement thereof.

On this note, it is the opinion of the researcher that the use of complaint/suggestion boxes and personal contacts for securing customers feedback by the university libraries are inadequate to collect the necessary information required from the library customer. Therefore university library management need to adopt the use of emerging ICT devices and other initiatives such as the use of telephone hotlines, e-mail, SMS and customer forums in order to track customer feedback on the various workings of the library.

**Hypothesis One**

There is no significant difference in the type of media used for communication with their customers in the University libraries in North Western States of Nigeria.

**Table 5(a): Analysis of Variance on the Type of Media used for Communication with Customers by the selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Means of Squares	F	P	F critical
Between Groups	280.859	2	140.430	5.417	.005	3.00
Within Groups	3759.114	145	25.925			
Total	4039.973	147				

**Table 5(b): A Post hoc Scheffe Test on the Type of Media Used for Communication with Customers in the selected University Libraries in North Western States of Nigeria**

Dependent Variables	(i)University Libraries	(j)University Libraries	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard error	Sign.
Type of Media	KIL, Zaria	BUL, Kano AFUL, Sokoto	2.430* 3.223*	.945 1.174	.039 .025
	BUL, Kano	KIL, Zaria AFUL, Sokoto	-2.430* .792	.945 1.260	.039 .821
	AFUL, Sokoto	KIL, Zaria BUL, Kano	-3.223* -.792	1.174 1.260	.025 .821

NB: \*Denote the pairs of University Libraries that are significantly different at 0.05 level of significance

KEY:

KIL-Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria

BUL-Bayero University Library, Kano

AFUL-Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto

Table 5(a) shows the observed F value of 5.417 is greater than the F critical value of 3.00 at the same degree of freedom. Also, the observed level of significance from the test is 0.000. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. It can therefore be concluded that there is significant difference in the types of media used for communication with the customers in the selected university libraries in North Western States of Nigeria. However, a further post hoc test of multiple comparisons carried out on the mean scores of the different university libraries selected is presented in table 5(b) below:

Table 5(b) indicated that the type of media used for communication with customers in Kashim Ibrahim Library is significantly different from the type of media used in Bayero University library, Kano and Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library, Sokoto respectively. It was also discovered that the type of media used for communication with customers in BUL, Kano was not significantly different with the media

used in Abdullahi Fodiyo University Library Sokoto.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that the University libraries studied have realized the need for ensuring effective communication through appropriate media in order to promote demand for their products and services as well as build relationships with their customers. However, University libraries do not explore to a large extent the advantages and opportunities opened by ICTs as instruments for effective communication with their customers. Therefore, the low level of utilization of information resources and services in the university libraries could be attributed to their reluctance to communicate their available products and services to their teaming customers (Staff and Students). There is no doubt that if relevant message is constructed and appropriate media for communicating the message is chosen there will be high customer patronage, high



customer loyalty and above all high customer satisfaction with their information products and services.

### Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Media for communication such as customer forums, regular meetings, library newsletters and telephones should be employed to facilitate communication between the university library and its customers.
2. University libraries should make provision for organized discussions and telephone hotlines as veritable avenues for tracking their customers' feedback. The use of Short Message Service (SMS) facility is also advocated as most customers (Staff and Students) have access to mobile phones.
3. Library schools should introduce the teaching of a course unit titled "Communications in Library and Information work" which will contain the following sub-topics as its course content: needs assessment skills; communication media and types; communications flow; communication pattern; communication skills; promotion strategies, developing effective communication; communication technologies and interactive Marketing communications. This will go along way in inculcating in the minds of would be librarian the requisite skills and knowledge in fostering customer relationships via communication

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