Nigerian Public Libraries InThe 21ST Century: Overcoming Challenges Through Public Relations and Publicity Activities.

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Abstract: Current development in information technology and consequent multiplier effect on information resources generation, storage, retrieval, accessibility and so on has thrown huge challenge to the public library as the perceived society's information–hub. It therefore becomes necessary for the library to re-strategize so as to maintain relevance. This study employed none probability sampling technique in a survey of 132 users and 10 staff of the Borno state public library, Maiduguri. The aim is to understand the types of public relations and publicity strategies employed by the library.to attract potential users and to retain old clients. Summary of results revealed that the library has no online presence, also, the users rely on friend through word of mouth and self-effort to locate the library. The library employ signage, exhibition and bulletin as major public relation and publicity strategies. It was discovered that low level of awareness is one of the major reason for poor usage of the library by clients. Recommendation were made which should enhance the library's presence and position in the society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Survival in the 21st century has proven to be a daunting task for the public libraries, reasons for this challenge is not far-fetched. The cut in budge is just one of the many challenges, worst among is the beast, "the internet and social media" it is like, why the library if the social media is capable to meet users' information needs? In spite of this, the public library has peculiar roles in the society which the internet and social media are not capable to play such as generation of social trust and capital, serve as a link between the community and information resources in addition to provision of convenient meeting place (Aabo, Audunson&Varheim, 2010; Audunson, 2005). This relationship therefore, is not only an exclusive concern of a small cluster staff in the circulation desk, but to all the staff of the library who work in the institution with the same objective to satisfy the users' needs. Advancement in information technology has subjected the library to various competitions, therefore, advertising the resources and service is fundamental to the survival of any organization, and the public library is inclusive. A takeoff from the status of the gatekeeper of the traditional media to direct interaction with the public, the internet has offered more golden tools to public relations practitioners than any other media in recent times (Sharif, 2003). It has become essential for the libraries to provide beyond the identified information needs, but also the needs of potential users, this therefore calls for dynamism in robust awareness of the library resources through publicity and public relation activities. Public relations as an integral part of marketing "is the climate in which any organization operates, markets its product and the attitudes that various people have towards it and its product" (Epstein, 2003). The library as a social institution is expected to exist in a structured social environment where the community enjoy coherence. Publicity is therefore the actual implementation of the existing coherence and exercise of the bonding between the library and community of users. It is one of the relevant promotional activities through which the libraries keep its customers informed about various services and products available in the library. Publicity in the library often takes the form of phone calls to the librarian, librarian–community-visits, advocacy team, library online blog, radio jingles or programmes about library product, services and uses, and library awareness in weekly newspaper etc. others include commercial publishing activities, advertising, co-operation with cultural groups and institutions, exhibitions for children, adults, cultural; events etc. (Norton, 1984)

Practitioners use different methods of communication strategies and media sources to gain publicity and at the same time strengthen the organizational image (Sharif, 2003). Similarly, in order to retain the habitual

users and gains potential ones, the library need to embark on sophisticated publicity activities to make its services known. The Internet and its various applications such as social media have brought several advantages to public relations practitioners, especially libraries in disseminating information to the right user at a right time. Libraries in Nigeria have been putting considerable efforts in designing information products and services for effective and efficient delivery services to its users (Adeniran, 2011). However, good public relations demand the establishment of a clear relationship with the head of all the organization to establish peace and tranquility. Threat by shortfall in library budget coupled with the paradigm shift from library uses to internet uses by the millennium information users demands that the library must do all it can to maintain relevance. Studies that aimed to highlight the importance of publicity and public relations, in addition to awareness creation of these tools as significant to library existence are considered necessary in present Nigerian public library environment.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public libraries have different objectives identified with serving their assorted groups through assorted services (Kanwal, 2015), the UNESCO Manifesto for public library has designed it to be "the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups" (UNESCO, 2014). Its role in building up civil societies is considered significant, consequently, the significance of public relations and publicity is essential for the public libraries (Kanwal, 2015) which already being practiced as marketing strategy to reach the users and to achieve positive image. Studies have shown that public libraries are better appreciated among the developed countries according to research report (ALA, 2014). In Nigeria however, government and community attitude of unprofitable venture towards the public library, poor and unprofessional management, and politicking have contributed to undermine the roles and importance of the public library in the society.

Libraries have several ways through which it communicate with their end users successfully such as library's monthly newsletter, the Bookworm Digest in electronic and print format, Fliers, brochures, bookmarks and other promotional materials which may be distributed in-house and/or throughout the community etc., (Lee Public Library Board of Trustee, 2011), also, public relations and publicity through social media has been identified by many scholars as the perfect environment to administer dialogue and build mutual relationships (Linvill et al., 2012). Recent growth in social media has increased opportunity for library services marketing and has provided the blueprint to add dialogic features into online public relations and publicity activities according to Kent and Taylor (1998). Notwithstanding, most public libraries in Nigeria are absent in the web which powers the use of social media platforms to build strong public relation and improved publicity. Regardless of how libraries react to the requirements of their clients, their qualities won't be acknowledged without a forceful, methodical and decided program of publicity to educate, and win over the information seeker/library users (Israel, 2012). Connecting your community with your stocks and activities is what Taylor (2002) considered as the bases for public relation and publicity.

Almost near total neglect by relevant authorities, competition for resources among by essential product and services, low compliance to technological development have contributed to the lethargic position of public libraries in Nigeria. Also, empirical research that is expected to address public relation and publicity among Nigerian public library is lacking while few attempts were based mainly on library and information services marketing. This study was undertaken to raise awareness about the significance of tools of public relation and publicity and investigate the nature and extend of public relation and publicity activities in Nigerian public libraries.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public relations is a concept that is universally significant to both human being, organization and institutions. Its significance cuts across marketing and product branding (Byrnes, 2009; Mikáčová&Gavlaková, 2014), banking industry (Uduji, 2013; Chinweoke, 2015; Keating, 2018), arts, leisure and entertainment (Tench&Yeomans, 2009; Yeoman et al, 2012), organization's Corporate Image (Compton, 2014) etc., and as relationship management it has triggered more interest among scholars and public relations practitioners (Jo, 2006). The roles of perceived public relations, which rely on symbolic activities designed to enhance organizational image, have been extended to a new paradigm for the domain, fostering long-term relationships that lead to mutual benefits for both organizations and key publics (Ledingham &Bruning's, 2000; Jo, 2006). From library and information perspective, Weingand (1999) considered public relation as the "overall relationship between the library and its current and potential customers. PR reflects the mutual perceptions and attitudes held by both library staff and library customers" while publicity as "the news coverage of the library's affairs secured at little or no cost" (p. 134). De Saez (2002, p. 80) shed light on the plight of the librarians regarding low library patronage due to users' indifference which suggested remedy through public relation practices. However, study on the role of public relation and publicity by the public libraries has gone into coma in recent time. One of the few and current studies in this context is one by Kanwal (2015) in Lahore, Pakistan.

The study employed content analysis with aim to explore the use of public relations and publicity by the public libraries as well as to create awareness among practitioners in the field regarding public relation and publicity in public libraries. Result of the study showed none application of public relation and publicity by the public libraries in the study environment. The author made recommendations which covered policies, technology, website up datedness, internet access among others. Public relation and publicity planning and evaluation by the library management should not be considered as an option (Wylie & Slovacek, 1984) due to the competition, budget cut and other challenges to the survival of the library.

The use of social media as a tool to connect, communicates, and builds mutual relationships with their end users to their tech-savvy, are becoming a leading factor in a new era of development for public relations and publicity activities among many profit and non-profit organizations. Because of its ability to share information, social media has been proven to offer up many benefits to libraries, especially in the area of public relations practice (Beverly, 2013). According to Ferguson (1984), the relationship of the public relation and publicity will focus on the quality to measure and evaluate the main purpose and outcome of any public relations work. If the ultimate goal of public relations is to build mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics, then measuring the outcomes of those relationships provides an important indicator of public relations effectiveness (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Lindenmann, 1999 cited in Ki & Hon, 2007). Publics are all the stakeholders who affect the organizational bottom line. Therefore, the relationship should be positive to ensure effectiveness in relation to the organizational bottom line (Jo, 2006). Proper planning is necessary to create favorable publicity for specific services, using well-designed publications as press releases, brochures, newsletters, annual reports, and other tools and techniques. Like all other organisations, libraries need to establish regular communication channels with their patrons to promote an understanding of their roles, and properly performed public relations can help establish the library's image and position within the community (Alansari, 2013). Moreover, the activities of public relation and publicity in libraries are to effectively promote and to educate the community about the goals and mission of the library. Similarly, "carefully planned public relations programs can help guarantee long-term survival and success for libraries" (Kunaka, 1998 cited in Alansari, 2013), further claim that effective public relation activities are particularly important in building libraries'. However, an increase in the activities of public relation and publicity in non-profit organisations (libraries), will enhance the number of users and may be used to justify the accountability and budget to the parent organisation (Kiran & Diljit 2011, Alansari, 2013)

Based on research in public relation in Nigerian university libraries, Nwezeh, (2010) discovered that; 40 per cent of students do not know where to locate materials in their disciplines area within the University's library. Adding that; an even higher number have a poor opinion of the library staff competences. These are sign of poor or inadequate public relations and publicity activities to attract the attentions of the library patrons. The library needs to take on a greater role in this respect and use its ICT capabilities more. This study will help the librarian to critically utilize the feedback to transform the affairs of public relations from the technical function of message generation into a managerial function to inform the teeming users on the strategic planning, resources and services available within their domain.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed non probability sampling method in a survey of 132 users and 10 staff in the Borno state public library, Maiduguri. The reason which informed non probability method arose from the fact that the library had no register of users, the characteristics of the users were therefore not known while the staff worked in shifts making it difficult to schedule sampling. Moreover, the library space and environment was devoid of activities which would normally attract many users. It was strictly for those who have need for particular information. The researchers had to rely on the users as the come in trickle for one month to be able to get the sample which is adjudge good for this study. A total of 149 questionnaire was retrieved after completion, 17 copies were rejected for wrong entries and in-completeness. The 132 valid copies and 10 staff questionnaire was subjected to descriptive statistics to determine the nature and level of public relation and publicity engaged by the library as well as factors that hinder library use.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profiles shows that majority of the respondents were male 92(69.7%), while the female counterpart constitute 40(30.3%) and this indicates that males respondents have greater participation than female in the study. Similarly, age of the respondent reveals that, respondents aged 15-25 years were the majority in the study with 60 (45.5%), ages between 26-35 years accounted for 50(37.9%) and the least were those above 36 years old which was represented by 22(16.7%) respondents indicating that majority of the respondents are still young. In terms of the occupations of the respondents, 60(45.5%) were student, and lecturers were 42(31.8%) whereas the remaining 30(22.7%) were civil servant in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Items	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	92	69.7%
Female	40	30.3%
Age		
15-25 years	60	45.5%
26-35 years	50	37.9%
36 and above	22	16.7%
Occupation		
Civil servant	30	22.7%
Student	60	45.5%
Lecturer	42	31.8%
Others	-	-

Table 2. Question 4: How frequent do you use the Library?

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Very Regular	48	36.36%
Regular	47	35.61%
Seldom	37	28.03%

The frequency of use of the Borno state public library, Maiduguri was investigated, according to the analyses presented on table 2, majority of the respondents 47(35.61%) had use the library regularly, 48(36.36%) use the library very regularly while 37(28.03%) seldom use the library.

Table 3. Question 5: How did you get to know about the Library?

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Through sign post	16	12.1%
Through media, radio & TV	8	6.061%
Through friends	70	53.0%
Self-effort	30	22.73%
Library Website	0	0 %
Others	8	6.0%

This section provides the descriptive statistics for the knowledge and awareness of the library, information in table3 shows that 70(53.0%) of the users know about the library through their friends, 30(22.73%) became aware about the library through self-effort and 16(12.1%) through sign post while the least 8(6.0%) became aware of the library through Media like radio, TV and other means of communication respectively. Meanwhile, none of the respondents knew the library existence through its website. This indicates that the public library has no online presence since it had no website.

Table 4. Question 6: How you locate needed Information in the Library?

Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Through instruction in the library	60	45.5%
Through assistance from library staff	26	19.7%
Through Library catalogue	31	23.5%
By chance	15	11.4%

The above table provides the information on how the patrons get their information need in the library, and the result shows that; majority of the users 60(45.5%) get their information through user instruction in the library, 32(23.5%) consulted the library catalogue and 26(19.7%) through the assistance of the library staff while 15(11.4%) of the respondents get the needed information by chance. This shows that the library has organized the material in such a way that will be easily identified.

Table 5. Question 7: How can you rate the Library's Public Relation and Publicity?

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	37	28.0%
Below average	27	20.45%
Average	38	28.79%
Good	30	22.73%

The users were asked to rate the library performance on publicly and public relations, according to table 5, a total of 38 (28.79%) respondents rated the library's public relations and publicity as average, this is closely followed by 37(28%) respondents who said it is poor while 30(22.73%), agreed that it is good. On the other hand, 27(20.45%) said that the rating is below average.

Further, ten (10) staff of the library were surveyed with questionnaire that which sought to understand the method of public relation, publicity adopted by the library, it also asked the staff regarding their perceived constraints to the users intention to use the library on regular basis.

Table 6. Question 1: What are your Library's Public Relation Techniques?

Public Relation Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Advocacy	0	0%
Online through SM	0	0%
Librarian Visits	2	20%
Community analysis	2	20%
Promotional Activities	3	30%
Library community Bulletin	3	30%

Descriptive analysis for staff question one (1) is presented in table 6. The results showed that Borno state public library, Maiduguri uses promotional activities and library community bulletin as major public relation techniques with 3(30%) responses respectively. Further, Librarian visits and community analysis had 2(20%) responses to the question while advocacy and online through social media were not been considered an important public relation technique by the library management. This explains the inability to reach wide users since has no website and is yet to adopt the use of internet technology to publicize its activities.

Table 7. Question 2: What are the main Publicity Techniques your Library uses?

Items	Frequency	Percentage
TV & Radio	0	0%
Social Media	0	0%
Newsletter	1	10%
Sign post	4	40%
Exhibition	3	30%
Word of Mouth	2	20%

The above table indicate the techniques use by the library for publicity activities, and 4(40%) of the staff surveyed said that the library depend more on signpost for publicity. 3(30%) chose exhibition, 2(20%) said that they use word of mouth and newsletter 1(10%) while Radio, TV and social media did not attract any positive response from the staff as techniques for library services publicity.

Table 7. Question 3: In your own opinion, what are the main hindrances to the Library use?

Items	Frequency	Percentage
The library is located in hidden location	2	20%
Lack of interest	1	10%
Inadequate of publicity	3	30%
Side attractions	1	10%
Lack awareness of library presence	3	30%

The above table indicate the factors that prevent user from patronizing the library according the staff. The result reveals that lack of awareness and inadequate publicity of the library contributes mostly to poor or none use by patrons. The location of the library is another issue with 2(20%) of the respondents while lack of

interest from the users and side attraction contributed 1(10%) respectively to pose as a hindrances to the library use.

VI. CONCLUSION

An outlook of the result beginning from library use shows that Borno state public library, Maiduguri is enjoying fairly good patronage despite non formal public relation and publicity plan put in place by the management. However, reliance on old model of publicity, or dormancy about publicity can only prove the authority's perceived insignificance of the public library which justifies the neglect. It is clear that the library is located in hidden spot with only signpost to announce its presence.

VII.   RECOMMENDATION

The importance of public library and the perceived roles in the social setting demand that the management should make total overhaul of the workers with aim to introduce competence and expertise. There is serious need to design public relation and publicity policy for public libraries by the authorities, this will help the libraries to fulfil objectives to its patrons and the general public if implementation is ensured. Moreover, the benefits of the internet and social media should be appreciated by the public library management beginning with website development. The management of the library should engage in advocacy to the user community and encourage them on exhibition, event, cultural or social sponsorship, this will project the image of the library. Finally, the libraries should consider central and conducive environment with social activities for the old, teen etc., for location.

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