

Competitive Intelligence and Users' Patronage Promotion in Polytechnic Libraries: A Review

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Abstract

This paper reviewed competitive intelligence and users' patronage in Polytechnic libraries. Libraries in polytechnics are affected by invasive and unsettled innovative creams of tools which affect clientele needs, and other similar information specialists with the provision of the same services as the library. The challenges of polytechnic libraries could be seen in the inadequate funding and assistance from the controlling body which eventually reduce the number of users. The users therefore have to be responded to in solving quickly any impediment to retain their patronage of the library and its resources. Personnel in polytechnic libraries have to re-strategies in order to meet the later days needs by understanding the forms or shapes of their market rivals and how they attract more customers for their business. This discourse looked at the application of practical competitive intelligence values with approaches in promoting users' patronage in polytechnic libraries. This paper also highlights possible challenges and solution to encourage users to plug into using hard and soft copies of intellectual properties in libraries in the polytechnic in Nigeria. The work concluded by asserting that, it is necessary for the polytechnic libraries to harness the aggressive business advantage to put in place the promotional activities in ensuring the growth and development of polytechnic libraries and users' patronage promotions.

Key words: Polytechnic Libraries, Users' Patronage Promotion, Competitive Intelligence

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1. Introduction

Decree No. 3 of 1979 Federal Republic of Nigeria stated that polytechnics were established to run the full and part-time courses in applied sciences, technology, commerce and management and also to arrange conferences, seminars, workshops and studies of related disciplines of human needs that could improve the nations development; arrange conferences, seminars and study relative to the field of learning specifics and; perform such other functions as the opinion of the council may serve to promote the objectives of the polytechnic. To accomplish these functions, libraries were established in polytechnics. Hence, the 6th edition of National Policy on Education (2013) recognized the role of polytechnic libraries otherwise known as academic libraries in educational development of the country and states. The policy asserted the important of polytechnic libraries in educational activities. It also stated that all federal and state ministries should make funds available for libraries establishment in higher institutions of learning, and for the training of professional, para-professional and other supportive staff of the library to render adequate services because libraries are established to cater for the information needs of people in the community where it is situated. Libraries in institution of higher learning such as polytechnic libraries are referred to globally as academic libraries. The libraries are established in order to cater for the information interests the institutional community which includes education, research and recreation by making available resources both in print and non-print medium on past and current information.

The main focus of polytechnic libraries is to aid the parent organization to achieve its intended goals. The main responsibility of the polytechnic library is to provide information adequate materials for study, recreation and

research to members of its institution. This is done through the acquisition process including selection, organisation, preservation, conservation and dissemination of stored information in printed and audio-visual formats.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Issues: Overview of Competitive Intelligence and Users' Patronage

It means understanding and knowledge of what is trendy in the world outside the business to increase one's competitiveness. It means having knowledge of business happenings in the global environment, to increase one's competitiveness. It involves learning as much as conceivable about the outside situation of a business in general and pertinent players in the business. The term competitive intelligence is frequently regarded as tantamount to analysis of players in a business. Buzzerio & Marcondes (2014) defined competitive intelligence as the course of acquiring information from various sources, analyse and application it to an industry, organization, or project. Competitive intelligence is more than analysing players in an industry; it encircles the whole atmosphere and participants such as clientele, players, distributors, skills, and macroeconomic information as ascertained by Viviers & Muller (2015). The main issues in CI are: it denotes to the capability to gather and use information on factors that affect a company's competitive gain; organizations analyse collected data and information to grow active and effectual business practices; it can be grouped as astute or long-term fixated tactical data and information gathering in CI is multifaceted than carrying out simple Internet searches.

Schmidt (2015) demarcated CI to be a structured and honest programme for collecting and operating instructions or details which has potential to influence organisation's determination and performance. CI allows companies of various sizes to make concrete agreement in connection to attaining their aims and aspirations. Muritala & Ajetunmobi (2019) stated that CI encompasses the application of official resources in expanding knowledge on rivalry, challengers and business community. It therefore converts by interpreting that evidence into knowledge and skills. David (2013) regarded CI as the measure of elucidating, collecting, analysing and sharing perceptions of outcome, contenders and other features of the community required in encouraging administrators and supervisors to decide on structured determination for any company or firm. action. It involves gathering of details from various sources (precisely primary and secondary sources) and interpretation on how that details influence the organisation's combative domain and dissemination of information to policy makers. Competitive intelligence as against economic intelligence to industrial espionage is legitimate and honest, (Haliso & Aina, 2012). Furthermore, Papik (2017) affirmed that focused definitions of CI consider it as the company's purpose responsible for easy and immediate recognition of dangers and prospects in the business environment prior to resulting access evident or pronouncement. Perception collection goal is a key decision within a company. Intellect collection varies from one discipline to the other, but it is done essentially for identification of the instructions desired by policy makers in the challenging situations or community; collection of undiluted data by using legitimate and honest methods through official resources, analysing of knowledge and transforming such to intellect on which action can be taken by people; communication of the end products of intelligence for the usage of policy makers and administrators.

Abolarin & Yaya (2015) viewed CI as publicly essential to challenges with the provision of a continual competitive edge, Furthermore, CI's merits in this current dispensation of knowledge management cannot be exaggerated to be a harmony. The components of CI are the identification of patrons' interests; gathering and information interpretation with the provision of intelligence for policy makers, stakeholders and strategists. It therefore becomes clear that CI is a thin action within information science activities in searching for pertinent information in all sources, capture and communicate routine that looks forward to prepare the organization to compete favourably in varying environments. Considering the myriad of problems, especially reduced patronage facing polytechnic libraries, information professionals are expected to be competitive in the activities by using both competitive intelligences. Basically, adoption of CI is crucial for the existence of polytechnic libraries and

to challenge other sources of information available to users in a thoroughly and knowledgeably. This is because, intelligence is collected, interpreted and made available to the patrons in competitive intelligence.

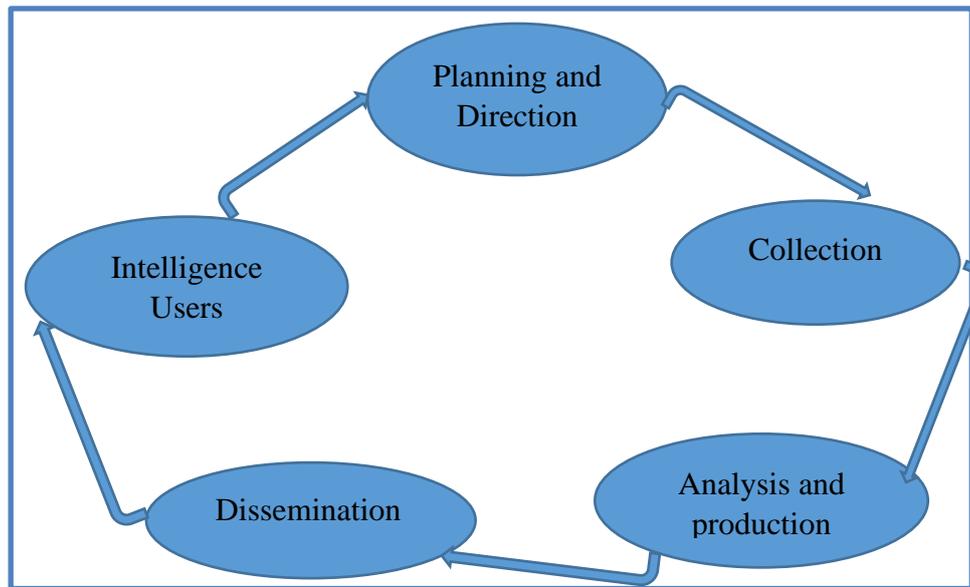


Figure 1: The competitive intelligence cycle. (Swka, 2008; Nikolas & Eveangelia, 2012)

Competitive intelligence circle according to Nikolas & Evangelia (2014) has five components which are; Planning and Direction, Analysis and Production, Dissemination and Intelligence Users. The first step which is planning and direction involves the recognition of important intellect resources with the required skills that stakeholders in competitive intelligence need to have in concluding the interpretation. For polytechnic libraries structure, the materials in the library are supposed to be worked out in connection to the academic activities being executed in the polytechnics. Collection is the second step which has the acquisition of undiluted knowledge. The needed intellect will be sourced from the unprocessed and raw data. Some of the sources where this detail could be gotten are from the internet, markers periodicals and newspaper pages. This stage expects all evidenced information to be collected from legitimately and honest means. For adequate work performance, both list of needed materials and publishers' catalogues should be delivered to academic members, students of the institution and researchers as expected and implore them to choose the needed and relevant resources for their disciplines. Stage three which is analysis and production is the most tasking for it needs competent skills and accomplishment. It is to be noted that some unanalysed evidences dispatched to the libraries and librarians may not be exact, the library professionals exploring perception ability can analyse the entire solicitation through National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN) to confirm the documents delivered by the members of faculties and departments prior to purchase of print materials (books) into the library. The fourth stage of the cycle is dissemination. The professionals in the fields of competitive intelligence convey the products to the policy makers. The goal of polytechnic libraries is the provision of knowledge and evident to those who seek for such information and to assist academic demands in the polytechnic communities. Polytechnic professionals will gather, analyse and choose the list of titles for print materials to be purchased and disseminate to available users

Relevance of competitive intelligence cycle to users' patronage promotion cannot be over-emphasised. Hakansson & Nelke (2015), acknowledged that the CI cycle is grouped into; planning and direction, collection, analysis, and dissemination processes. Planning involves systematic steps through which librarians and information

professionals research into the elements of competitors, internet, ICT provider and many more. To identify what their inimitable qualities and main capabilities stands for at the planning level, worth drivers are determined. (McGonale & Vella, 2012). In the process of data collection from primary and secondary sources, legal and ethical information from publicly available bases concerning competitors is obtained. Information attained is therefore collated, organised, treated and eventually construed as intelligence. In the process of collection of data, ethical and legal information from publicly available bases concerning the competitors is derived. Information already attained is collated together, organised, treated, and construed as intelligence. This stage is regarded as the most tough part of the intelligence cycle. Probable consequences and tactics for action are also projected at this phase. With appropriate analysis, probable yet to be grasp areas of competitors will be revealed with additionally exposed challengers' inclinations and the course. The importance of CI cycle/ process is ultimately to provide perception results/ products for decision makers' necessary course of action (dissemination). Adequate establishment and application of the cycle elements to the strategic promotion of polytechnics, would improve users' patronage of the libraries. The final stage of the cycle is the intelligent users. They put the products of competitive intelligence into use to compete favourably with other challengers in the business community. It is through this that their information needs concerning how to improve their business can be gotten and their goal and objectives can be achieved. Users of the polytechnic libraries who are majorly researchers and students when provided with adequate and relevant information resources when needed will continually and consistently use the libraries. This will therefore increase and promote users' patronage. Invariably, polytechnic libraries should strive hard to meet their users' needs so that they can compete in satisfaction and knowledge acquisition with users of other libraries.

2.2 Competitive intelligence Versus user patronage promotion

Polytechnic libraries can apply competitive intelligence in development of human resources, resources/collection development, customer /readers' services and promotion of library patronage. On human resources development, individual capacity and information utilisation ability will be improved and level of productivity raised. The personnel are responsible for planning and setting of goals for the library in their respective institutions. Through application of competitive intelligence knowledge, a library strategic plan of responsive, and conformity to the organization's mission, objectives and goals will be developed (Isreal, 2017). In the area of customer/readers' services, the primary focus of polytechnic libraries is readers'/ customer services. Competitive intelligence will enable the libraries' personnel to discern the users' needs and render qualitative services. Haliso & Aina (2012), Wright (2013) remarked that higher institutions libraries will keep and retain their clientele who will consistently use library materials and relevant documents provided. Resources or collection are the bed rock of services in polytechnic libraries, as such, resources management require strong acumen and competitive intelligence. Therefore, for adequate and excellence delivery of information resources that can support an institution curriculum, such resources must be intelligently acquired, processed and managed. With competitive intelligence, a responsible resource management plan for library resources can be put in place. These include acquisition, processing, cataloguing, classification, and circulation of the library resources.

The aim of promotion is awareness creation for customers and users on the need for them to patronise the library to access the newly acquired, processed and organised materials. For every new information services package added to the library, there is need for a new promotional strategies campaign. Haliso & Aina (2012) reiterated that any academic library (polytechnics libraries) that is able to provide and delivers adequate information resources and quality services should be able sure of retaining the users' consistent patronage. It is therefore necessary for the libraries and librarians to establish, develop and share promotional information items like: brochures, newsletters and other information awareness creation packages to the users. Library outreach and in-service programmes to interpret and market library resources and services intelligently should also be encouraged. This can be done with the knowledge and understanding of the library's host environment. It is important for librarians to be involved in their institutional activities (seminars, workshops etc) which are in accordance with the

respective polytechnic goals and objectives. There is the need to create and uphold relationship with users through the employment of selective dissemination of information (SDI), current awareness services (CAS) and referral services and many more. Adequate and proactive users' services is needed in promoting users' patronage through such activities like reference/research, literature services and electronic literature search.

2.3 Challenges of applying Competitive intelligence (CI) to promotion of Users' patronage

Besides the external competitors on patronage that polytechnic libraries have, leadership of their parental institutions is also important. The institutions' management precedence is largely on academic sections in the polytechnic that have measurable effects on users (students) achievements, viable research findings, and world-wide standing. Polytechnic libraries are consequently confronted with rivalry inside their institution. This boils down to share of attention, obligation, recruitment materials, collaboration, technology, opportunities, partnerships, and so forth, (Piehler, 2015). Budget cuts is a serious challenge to effective CI practices in the libraries. CI practices involves the processes of planning, collection, analysing, and intelligence dissemination for users' patronage promotion need huge amount of funds which is an obstacle particularly for underfunding being experienced by the polytechnic libraries. This is a challenge particularly in the face of budget cuts being experienced by the polytechnic libraries. Polytechnic libraries acquire information resources pertinent to the objective of their parent institutions, (Kim,2011). The necessity for the instituting libraries in institutions of higher learning cannot be over emphasized as the Federal Government of Nigeria enshrined this aspect in the 1981 National policy on education as Umoh (2017) underlined the objectives of academic libraries as ; to offer informational and research support services to their primary clientele, the institution members, students and the academic staff of the Polytechnic. The functions of Polytechnic libraries are acquisition and organisational processes necessary for academic programmes, preparation of materials for the use of students, staff and other who required them. This preparation includes classification, cataloguing of materials, research and reference services to staff, students and the polytechnic community members. It also include provision for recreation and future self-development of individuals; provision of research information resources; provision of reference services to staff and students; provision of information resources on recreation for personal self-development of users; inter-library cooperation with other libraries with similar aim and objectives at appropriate levels for the improvement of information services and provision of protection and security of those materials. McCartney (2012) stated that services of academic libraries, especially polytechnic libraries vary from one and other though some common services which are; technical services, lending service, document delivery services, inter library loan services, circulation services, reservation services and provision of setting facilities.

Eze & Nworu (2016) listed the activities being rendered by polytechnic library and any academic library as; circulation of information resources to registered users using the laid down polices; reference and referral services provisions; indexing and abstracting services on academic journals and periodicals in libraries; current awareness services (CAS) provision which includes compilation of bibliographies, library display, selective dissemination of information (SDI) and provision of continuing instruction to users in the effective use of the library (user education), preparation of library handbook providing specifics of rules, resources, services and staff of the library and making it accessible to patrons without charge or at a minimal cost; promoting inter-library cooperation loans; provision of user education instructions ,preparation of users' handbooks that explain specific guidelines, rules and regulations, materials, activities and operations and staff of library and allow access by the clientele free of charge; computer services display of newly acquitted books in appropriate places and; arrangement of information sources on different disciplines through use of cataloguing and classification rules. In the same way, Badaoui & Chettih (2017) identify the following as the services available to users of polytechnic libraries: registration of authorised users for the purpose of having access to the services of academic libraries such as borrowing/lending privileges, charging and discharging services, bindery services, library display and presentation of library materials. Such special materials in the polytechnic libraries are specifically stored for references and therefore

cannot be loaned out of libraries. **Photocopying / Reprographic Service:** This offer photocopying services to their users especially when there is need to make photocopies from the reserved library materials. Reprographic Service on the other hand is a kind of copying technique which can be microphotography or microforms which consist of micro film, fiches and micro prints or micro cards.

There are problems confronting polytechnic libraries in Nigeria today. These problems are undesirable outlook of polytechnic management towards polytechnic libraries, paucity of funds available to the libraries, lack of innovation by library heads and, low commitment of staff, influx of ICT and, low patronage by users. Many polytechnic libraries have been relegated to the lowest ebb by the management of respective polytechnics. This has manifested in the management disregards of the position of the librarians on issues concerning their libraries and diversion of funds meant for projects in the libraries to other things. (Diyaolu,2019) Obaseki & Idhalama (2018) in their study observed that management of polytechnics has negative attitudes towards the polytechnic library. This implies that polytechnic management see the library as a store house for books, hence the librarians as bookkeepers as such disregard opinions and suggestions they have regarding library development. Inadequate Funding is another challenge faced by libraries in polytechnics. This is a serious constraint as regards to polytechnic libraries development. Ubogu & Okiy (2011) emphasized this when they averred that out of all types of libraries in Nigeria, only university libraries have a standard policy on funding, because they are allocated 10% of the recurrent annual budget of their parent institutions for all library financial obligations. Unfortunately, poor funding has stifled the growth of libraries in the polytechnics making it difficult for them (libraries) to accomplish their roles. This is discouraging given the present state of inadequate funding of polytechnics Libraries to finance its developmental programmes. Men & Israel (2017) acquiesced that polytechnic libraries are among the worst funded academic libraries. For a polytechnic library to meet present global demands and challenges in terms of information acquisition, storage and dissemination is an uphill task as management of polytechnics rarely make available 5% of their recurrent budget meant for their libraries but to other projects. One could not help but ponder at the state of structures called polytechnic libraries and imagine if at all the 5% of polytechnic recurrent budget is been released for its library yearly up keeping. Other problems facing polytechnic libraries are: uninspiring position of polytechnic library heads, Lack of qualified staff, Library staff and ICT trend and low patronage. The issue of low patronage of services of polytechnic libraries have been discussed by several authors. Prominent among the perceived causes of low patronage of these libraries are the advent of information technology and, alternative information sources for users. The alternatives information sources and organizations which are competing with polytechnic libraries include the E-journal and e-book providers, telecommunication(telephone) operators Internet and web sites providers; Online vendors e.g. Ebscohost, Jstor, my library, Science direct, Agora, E-granary etc.; Archives and documentation, special and private information centres.(Hamid,2018)

These challenges have made libraries in polytechnics to experience low patronage. Some approaches have been adopted to remedy the situation with resounding success hence the need for another measure, such as competitive intelligence to promote the usage of polytechnic libraries. Polytechnic library personnel can make use of competitive intelligence as an essential tool in carrying out the promotion function effectively and encourage good use of information resources users. It is on this basis that this work explains extensively the aggressive market advantages in promoting users' patronage promotion of polytechnic libraries. There are six public, government owned polytechnics in Ogun State. These are; The Federal Polytechnics, Ilaro, Ogun State Polytechnic, now (MAPOLY) Abeokuta; Abraham Adesanya Polytechnic, Ijebu-Igbo, Gateway Polytechnic, Saapade; Dauda Adegbenro Polytechnic, Itori; Gateway Polytechnic, Igbesa. There are other privately owned polytechnics in the state.

3. Impediments to Provision of Effective Services for Users

It is essential for the library of any type or background to make available resources and materials that will motivate and increase the rate of users patronising the libraries especially academic libraries which are the hearts of

academic achievements. In a situation where this important function is not met, the patronage level of the users becomes very low. Some of the impediments are;

- Lack of skilled and competent personnel to handle and operate technologies. This is a factor that impedes the libraries adequate growth, in Nigeria
- Adequate funds is another great challenge to the provision of the expected services to the users. Without funds, there is no business. Before a reasonable collection and service provision is done for the library, there must be sufficient financial power to do that. In the present-day Nigeria, information and communication technologies are readily available and at a relatively cheaper rate, still many libraries cannot afford them for lack of funds.
- Instability of some ICT resources like internet connectivity and services, uninterrupted power supply, digital camera, e-mailing and other sophisticated ICT materials have also affected the provision of essential services and has reduced the expected patronage levels in many of our academic libraries across the country.
- Closed accessed information resources is another issue affecting effective service provision. Many information materials that could have been obtained and accessed with ease have been placed under strict closed access because the library could not get the needed copies at a time.
- The economic condition of the country is also not favourable, because of high cost of materials. The cost of importation of materials to be used in providing services for the potential users are very expensive. Unfortunately, the locally made materials are not durable and they are of poor quality, of which if used may not give correct information.

The above highlighted issues therefore necessitated the application of competitive intelligence in the provision of effective services, increase users' patronage for adequate national growth of polytechnic libraries.

4. Findings and Suggestions from Review

This work revealed a number of things including the need to have increased patronage promotion in polytechnic libraries, there is the urgent need to apply competitive intelligence into the libraries marketing strategies. This will enable the libraries to compete favourably with other competitors like ICT operators, book shops owners, information managers and other information providers.

There are many services in the library like SDI, CAS, Referral services, and a host of others which if monitored and provided adequately will encouraged and promote users patronage promotion in academic libraries.

It was also discovered that if adequate funds are made available and judiciously spent on library resources and services, the library will retain its position as the heart of the academic activities in the higher institutions where they have been established.

Library professionals and paraprofessionals should avail themselves for every available training opportunity so as to be able to compete with other colleagues both at home and abroad in providing relevant and adequate services to retain their users. Also, the library staff should endeavour to market their products and services by disseminating information services to the appropriate users who need them as at when necessary.

Adequate application of competitive intelligence into the libraries will assist the libraries to have a well-spelt objectives and mission statements and avail the library a good opportunity to explore strategies that could sustain and assist the library professionals to know their competitors' plans ahead of execution by having prior knowledge and work faster to edge them. Finally, adoption of competitive intelligence into library operations and services

will make polytechnic libraries to disseminate effective and adequate services that will increase the users patronage.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The necessity for competitive intelligence for librarians and library personnel and libraries in polytechnics is to recognise risks and prospects. This has made it necessary for business and other establishments, including libraries to be up-to-date of fluctuating atmosphere in the industry through appropriate decision making. Promotional strategies in library and information services will undeniably meet the issue of bringing users to library, especially polytechnic libraries in the face of several competitors. It will also improve the weight of the profession and promote service delivery in libraries. These, consequently, require adequate devotion to exploitation of competitive intelligence in library services in planning and implementation of promotional policies for effective and efficient library services in polytechnic libraries.

For improved patronage of polytechnic libraries, librarians must regularly reformulate and manoeuvre through aggressive market advantage in positioning themselves for improved conspicuousness, patronage, better users' satisfaction, understanding and retention. This will also encourage supports from the parent institution. Because Competitive intelligence is a key measurement tool to be considered in upgrading library services and operations, the application and combination of CL methods into the strategies for promoting users' patronage will be of tremendous assistance.

The advent of the Internet and other sources of information have drastic effects on the patronage of libraries users in polytechnics and this has necessitated stiff competition among the libraries and other information institutions. As a result, competitive intelligence approach is required to meticulously scan the competitors' environment with a view to maintaining relevance and gain competitive advantage on the users' patronage. Libraries in polytechnics as hubs of scholarship must continuously pursue to the principles of value-added services to its processes particularly in the area of readers' services and collection development, processing of resources of the library and dissemination of such information materials to attract and retain users. Robust collections, technology driven retrieval system and, electronic reference services will bring about commendable users' satisfaction and heightened patronage of library services and resources. Other specific recommendations are:

Polytechnic libraries managements should think of better ways to provide information and services to patrons in the competitive business environment through application of ICTs in library functions, activities, operations and services. Parental institutions of the polytechnic libraries should support their libraries by making available adequate funds for their functions and services in order to have a superiority over their competitors and thus promote users' patronage. Polytechnic libraries should provide appreciable and value-added services to users with the assistance of modern technologies. Polytechnic libraries should practise benchmarking so as to be up-to-date with best practices in the world. The management of polytechnic libraries should regularly conduct Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis in order to have competitive advantages. Training and retraining of polytechnic libraries staff on best practices in service delivery is indispensable in having competitive market advantage over other challengers. This can be done through adequately planned on the job and off the job training.

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