



DLINE JOURNALS

Improving Public Library Services through a Strategic Publicity Campaign in Nigeria

Ejiro Sandra Ukubeyinje

Library Department, College of Education, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria

ukubeyinjesandra@gmail.com

Diseiye Oyighan

Delta School of Marine Technology, Burutu, Delta State, Nigeria

Diseiyeoyighan@gmail.com

Etido Emmanuel Nelson

Library Department, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

etidoenelson@uniuyo.edu.ng

Bolaji David Oladokun

Department of Library and Information Technology, Federal University of Technology, Ikot Abasi, Nigeria

bolaji.oladokun@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Public libraries in Nigeria have a rich history and play a crucial role in community development; however, they face significant challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, and limited resources. This Paper explores how strategic publicity campaigns can enhance public library services in Nigeria. It begins by examining the current state of public libraries, highlighting their historical evolution, present challenges, and underutilization. The role of publicity in public services is then analyzed, emphasizing its importance in raising awareness, building trust, encouraging community engagement, and attracting funding. Understanding the mechanics of publicity campaigns, including their objectives, components, and strategies, is essential for their successful implementation. Effective publicity can significantly benefit public libraries by increasing public awareness, enhancing community support, attracting funding, building a positive image, promoting lifelong learning, and leveraging digital media. The paper concludes by offering recommendations for Nigerian public libraries to implement strategic publicity campaigns, underscoring the potential for revitalization and sustainability through enhanced visibility and community engagement.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Nigeria, Publicity Campaigns, Community Engagement, Library Services

Received: 2 November 2024, Revised 8 March 2025, Accepted 3 April 2025

Copyright: with Authors

1. Introduction

Public libraries in Nigeria have a rich history dating back to the colonial era when the first public libraries were established to serve the needs of the expatriate community and the elite class. Over the years, these libraries have evolved, aiming to cater to the broader Nigerian populace. Despite their historical significance, many public libraries in Nigeria today face numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, and limited resources. The advent of digital technology has further highlighted the gaps in service provision, as many libraries struggle to keep pace with modern demands. Public libraries play a vital role in society, serving as hubs of knowledge, education, and community development [1]. They provide free access to a vast array of information resources, including books, journals, and digital content, which support lifelong learning and literacy. Public libraries also offer a safe and inclusive space for community members to gather, interact, and engage in various cultural and educational activities. According to Gabriel [2], public libraries contribute to the cultural richness of communities. Furthermore, they play a vital role in bridging the digital divide by offering access to computers and the internet, which are essential for personal development, job searching, and accessing government services.

Despite the critical role that public libraries play, their potential remains underutilized in Nigeria. This essay aims to explore the potential of strategic publicity campaigns in enhancing public library services. By increasing awareness and engagement through well-planned and executed publicity efforts, public libraries can attract more users, secure funding, and foster community support. The essay will examine the current state of public libraries in Nigeria, the role of publicity in public services, and effective strategies for implementing successful publicity campaigns. Through this, the paper seeks to provide a roadmap for revitalizing public libraries in Nigeria, ensuring they fulfill their mission of serving as accessible and vibrant centers of learning and community life.

2. Current State of Public Libraries in Nigeria

Public libraries in Nigeria have a longstanding history that dates back to the colonial era, when the first libraries were established primarily to serve the expatriate and elite communities. Over time, the concept of public libraries expanded to include the general public, providing equitable access to information and educational resources. Despite their historical significance and the crucial role they play in society, the current state of public libraries in Nigeria is marked by numerous challenges that hinder their effectiveness and accessibility. Public libraries in Nigeria are distributed across various states and regions, with notable examples including the National Library of Nigeria in Abuja and state libraries in cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, and Enugu. These libraries offer a range of services, including lending books, providing access to periodicals, and offering spaces for study and research[3]. In addition to physical resources, some libraries have made efforts to integrate digital resources, providing computers and internet access to bridge the digital divide.

Despite these efforts, the reality is that many public libraries in Nigeria are underutilized and often neglected. The infrastructure in many libraries is outdated, and the collections are frequently insufficient to meet the needs of modern users. The role of public libraries as community hubs of learning and cultural engagement has not been fully realized, leaving a significant gap in the provision of information services to the public.

However, several challenges affect the provision of information services in public libraries. One of the most significant challenges faced by public libraries in Nigeria is the lack of adequate funding. Government allocations

for libraries are often insufficient, leading to a shortage of books, outdated materials, and inadequate facilities. This financial constraint affects every aspect of library operations, from maintaining infrastructure to employing qualified staff and expanding collections [4]. Many public libraries in Nigeria are housed in old buildings that have not been adequately maintained. Poor infrastructure, including inadequate lighting, ventilation, and seating arrangements, makes libraries less inviting and comfortable for users. The lack of modern facilities further discourages potential patrons from utilizing library services. According to Osuchukwu et al. [5], public libraries in Nigeria suffer from low levels of awareness and engagement. Many people are unaware of the services offered by libraries or do not see them as valuable resources. This lack of understanding is partly due to insufficient publicity and outreach efforts, which fail to effectively communicate the benefits and services of public libraries to the community.

The quality of library services is heavily dependent on the skills and expertise of the staff. However, in Nigeria, there is often a lack of ongoing professional development opportunities for librarians. This results in a workforce that may not be equipped with the latest knowledge and skills needed to manage library resources and engage with the community effectively. Many public libraries in Nigeria struggle with inadequate and outdated collections. Financial constraints and bureaucratic processes hamper the acquisition of new and relevant materials. As a result, library collections may not reflect the current informational and educational needs of the community.

3. The Role of Publicity in Public Services

Public services encompass a wide range of essential services provided by the government to meet the needs of its citizens, including healthcare, education, transportation, and public safety. For these services to be effective, it is crucial that the public is aware of their availability and understands how to access them. Publicity plays a pivotal role in achieving this goal. One of the primary roles of publicity in public services is to enhance awareness[1]. Many citizens may be unaware of the services available to them due to a lack of information or misinformation. Publicity campaigns can bridge this gap by disseminating accurate and timely information about the services offered, their benefits, and how to access them. This can be achieved through various media channels, including traditional media (television, radio, newspapers), digital media (websites, social media, email newsletters), and community engagement activities (workshops, public meetings, outreach programs). For example, public health campaigns that promote vaccination programs or preventive health measures can significantly increase participation rates. When people are well-informed about the importance of vaccinations and how they can protect against diseases, they are more likely to take advantage of these services, resulting in improved public health outcomes.

Publicity also plays a crucial role in building trust and credibility for public services. Effective communication can help establish a positive image of public institutions and foster trust among citizens [6]. Transparent and consistent messaging can demonstrate public service providers' commitment to meeting the community's needs, thereby enhancing their credibility. For instance, during times of crisis, such as natural disasters or public health emergencies, precise and reliable communication from public authorities is essential. When citizens trust the information provided by public services, they are more likely to follow guidelines and take necessary precautions, which can mitigate the impact of the crisis.

Public services rely on active engagement and participation from the community to be effective. Publicity campaigns can motivate citizens to take part in various programs and initiatives, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility [7]. By highlighting success stories, showcasing the positive impact of public services, and encouraging feedback and involvement, publicity can stimulate greater community involvement. For example,

public education campaigns that promote literacy programs or adult education classes can enable individuals to participate, thereby improving educational outcomes. Similarly, campaigns that highlight the benefits of public transportation can increase ridership, reduce traffic congestion, and promote environmental sustainability.

Publicity is also instrumental in attracting funding and partnerships for public services. By showcasing the successes and positive impacts of public services, publicity campaigns can garner support from stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private sector partners. Effective publicity can demonstrate the value and necessity of public services, making a compelling case for increased funding and resources. For instance, public libraries that promote their programs and services through effective publicity campaigns can attract grants, donations, and partnerships with local businesses and community organizations. This additional support can enhance the quality and reach of their services, benefiting the broader community.

4. Understanding Publicity Campaigns

Publicity campaigns are strategic efforts designed to inform, persuade, and engage target audiences about specific messages, products, or services. They are essential tools used by organizations, businesses, and public institutions to communicate with the public, shape perceptions, and drive desired actions [8]. Understanding the mechanics of publicity campaigns involves exploring their objectives, components, types, and the strategies employed to execute them effectively. The primary objectives of publicity campaigns are to raise awareness, influence public opinion, and encourage specific behaviors. These objectives can vary depending on the context and goals of the campaign. Some of the common objectives include:

1. Publicity campaigns often aim to inform the public about new products, services, policies, or issues. For example, a government health department may run a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination.
2. Campaigns can be used to influence public attitudes and perceptions about a particular topic. For instance, environmental organizations might launch campaigns to promote sustainable practices and highlight the impact of climate change.
3. Many campaigns are designed to motivate people to take specific actions, such as adopting healthier lifestyles, voting in elections, or supporting charitable causes.
4. Publicity campaigns can also enhance the reputation and credibility of a brand or organization. Businesses often use campaigns to position themselves as leaders in their industry or to improve their public image.

As stated by Gabriel [2] a successful publicity campaign consists of several key components:

1. Identifying the target audience is crucial for tailoring the message and selecting the most effective communication channels. Understanding the demographics, preferences, and behaviors of the target audience helps in crafting effective messages.
2. The core message is the central idea or information that the campaign seeks to convey. It should be clear, concise, and compelling, addressing the needs and interests of the target audience.
3. Selecting the appropriate media channels is crucial for effectively reaching the target audience. Channels can include traditional media (television, radio, newspapers), digital media (social media, websites, email), and direct engagement (events, workshops, community outreach).

4. The timing of the campaign can significantly impact its success. It is crucial to launch the campaign at a time when the target audience is most receptive and when it can achieve maximum visibility and impact.

5. Measuring the effectiveness of the campaign is vital for understanding its impact and making necessary adjustments. Key performance indicators (*KPIs*) such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates can provide valuable insights into the campaign's success.

Publicity campaigns can take various forms, depending on their objectives and target audiences (2). Some of these publicity campaigns include:

1. Informational Campaigns: These campaigns aim to educate the public about specific issues, policies, or programs. Government agencies and non-profit organizations often use informational campaigns to raise awareness about public health issues, environmental concerns, or social causes.

2. Promotional Campaigns: Businesses typically use promotional campaigns to market their products or services. These campaigns often focus on highlighting the benefits and unique selling points of the offerings to attract customers.

3. Advocacy Campaigns: Advocacy campaigns are designed to promote a particular cause or policy change. They seek to mobilize public support and influence decision-makers. Examples include campaigns advocating for human rights, environmental protection, or social justice.

4. Crisis Communication Campaigns: These campaigns are deployed during times of crisis to manage public perception and provide timely information. Effective crisis communication can help mitigate damage to an organization's reputation and maintain public trust.

In addition to the foregoing, Adindu and Nyemezu[6] note that there are several strategies for effective publicity campaigns. Some of these include:

1. Research and Planning: Thorough research and planning are the foundation of a successful campaign.

2. Creative and Engaging Content: The campaign's content should be creative and engaging to capture the audience's attention.

3. Multi-Channel Approach: A combination of traditional and digital media, along with direct engagement activities, ensures that the message reaches a diverse audience.

4. Consistent Messaging: Consistency in messaging across all channels is crucial for reinforcing the campaign's core message and building trust with the audience.

5. Monitoring and Adaptation: Continuously monitoring the campaign's performance and being flexible to make adjustments as needed can improve its effectiveness.

5. Best practices used

Chan et al emphasize the significance of integrating usability principles when assessing the service quality of

each distinct application. They also offer valuable insights for professionals working on the next wave of applications aimed at smart public information services and urge further exploration of the suggested hierarchical model and other relevant factors influencing service quality. [9]

It is anticipated that public libraries will share information regarding the remote library services offered during their closure, along with uplifting and socially supportive messages, and details about financial, health, and food assistance available to the community. Throughout the library's closure, public libraries generally maintained their operations as usual, potentially providing a sense of normality to the communities they serve during those challenging and stressful times. [10]

Wearable technologies are becoming increasingly prevalent in various sectors, serving as valuable tools for research and practical applications. In this regard, wearables are viewed as essential tools for a more digital, personalized, and preventive approach to domains. However, these devices have also been linked to various issues and risks, particularly those concerning privacy and data sharing. Most discussions in the literature have predominantly addressed either technical or ethical aspects, treating these as largely distinct fields of inquiry. At the same time, the role of wearables in the collection, development, and application of insights has only been partially explored. To address these gaps, Canali [11] and others present an epistemic overview of the primary functions of wearable technology: monitoring, screening, detection, and prediction. Based on this foundation, they highlighted four areas of concern regarding the use of wearables for these functions: data integrity, balanced assessments, health equity, and fairness.

In recent years, the expansion of digital services has experienced tremendous growth in information centers globally. Unfortunately, minimal attention has been given to identifying the factors driving digital adoption worldwide, particularly in developing markets. [12]

Numerous studies identify the most common types of information services utilizing *ICT* and the environments in which digital technologies are frequently employed. Several deficiencies can be pinpointed in digital competencies among information handlers, as well as in the initial and ongoing training models, which contribute to the challenges faced during emergency remote learning. Involvement in *ICT* educational innovation projects and the effectiveness of *ICT* coordination are linked to more hands-on training. Flexible education necessitates a re-evaluation of the information training framework that promotes learning anytime, anywhere. [13].

6. Discussion

Public libraries are crucial institutions in society, providing access to information, supporting education, and fostering community engagement. Despite their importance, public libraries often struggle with low visibility and underutilization [14]. Effective publicity can address these challenges by increasing awareness, enhancing community support, and ensuring that libraries fulfill their mission. One of the primary benefits of publicity for public libraries is raising public awareness. Many people are unaware of the full range of services and resources that libraries offer, from traditional book lending to digital resources, educational programs, and community events [4]. Publicity campaigns can highlight these offerings and inform the community about the valuable services available at their local libraries. By utilising various media channels, such as social media, local newspapers, radio, and community bulletin boards, libraries can reach a broader audience and attract more visitors. Increased patronage not only justifies the library's existence but also enhances its relevance

and visibility within the community. When more people utilize library services, it highlights the library's role as a vital community resource. Publicity can significantly enhance community support and engagement with public libraries. By promoting the library's events, programs, and services, publicity helps to create a sense of community and belonging. People who might not otherwise visit the library become aware of its offerings and are more likely to participate in its activities[3]. Engaged community members are more likely to advocate for the library, participate in volunteer opportunities, and support fundraising efforts. This increased support can lead to more robust community involvement and a stronger network of advocates who can help sustain the library's operations and growth.

Effective publicity can also play a crucial role in attracting funding and resources for public libraries. Publicizing the library's successes, impact stories, and community benefits can draw the attention of potential donors, sponsors, and government agencies. When the value of the library's services is communicated clearly and compellingly, it can lead to increased financial support from various stakeholders. Grants and donations often require evidence of community impact and engagement. By documenting and publicizing the library's achievements and the positive effects on the community, libraries can strengthen their case for funding. This additional financial support can be utilised to enhance library services, expand the collection, upgrade technology, and improve facilities

Publicity helps build a positive image and reputation for public libraries. A well-publicized library is seen as an active, dynamic institution that contributes significantly to the community. Favourable media coverage and testimonials from satisfied patrons can enhance the library's reputation and foster public trust [1]. A strong reputation not only attracts more patrons but also positions the library as a key player in the community's educational and cultural landscape. This positive image can lead to partnerships with schools, local businesses, and other organizations, further extending the library's reach and impact.

Public libraries are essential for promoting lifelong learning and literacy. Publicity campaigns that highlight literacy programs, educational workshops, and resources for all age groups can encourage more people to take advantage of these opportunities [5]. By showcasing success stories and the benefits of continuous learning, libraries can inspire individuals to engage in self-improvement and personal development. Publicity efforts can also target specific groups, such as children, teenagers, and seniors, promoting tailored programs that meet their unique needs. By raising awareness of these programs, libraries can play a pivotal role in enhancing literacy rates and educational outcomes within the community.

In the digital age, leveraging digital media is crucial for effective publicity. Social media platforms, library websites, and email newsletters offer cost-effective ways to reach a large audience. Digital publicity enables libraries to engage with the community in real-time, share updates, and promote events and resources. Online publicity also provides an avenue for interactive engagement, where patrons can ask questions, provide feedback, and share their experiences. This interaction fosters a sense of community and keeps the library relevant in the digital landscape.

7. Conclusion

Strategic publicity is indispensable for the revitalization and sustainability of public libraries, particularly in Nigeria, where these institutions often grapple with low visibility, limited resources, and underutilization. By

implementing well-crafted publicity campaigns, public libraries can significantly enhance their relevance and importance within their communities. Effective publicity not only raises awareness about the library's resources and services but also fosters a more profound sense of community support and engagement. This engagement is crucial as it transforms passive users into active advocates who champion the library's cause.

For Nigerian public libraries to effectively implement strategic publicity campaigns, several steps are essential. First, thorough research and planning must be conducted to understand the target audience and set clear, achievable goals. Crafting compelling and emotionally resonant messages is crucial to capturing the audience's attention. Selecting the right mix of media channels, including traditional outlets like newspapers and radio, as well as digital platforms such as social media, ensures that the message reaches a diverse audience. Creating engaging content through visuals, videos, and storytelling can further enhance the campaign's impact. Consistency in messaging across all channels helps to reinforce the library's image and mission. Continuous monitoring and evaluation allow for adjustments to be made, ensuring the campaign remains effective. Additionally, leveraging partnerships with local businesses, schools, and community organizations can amplify the campaign's reach and impact.

The long-term benefits of strategic publicity campaigns for public libraries are substantial. Sustained patronage is one of the primary outcomes, as ongoing publicity efforts keep the community engaged and continuously aware of the library's offerings. Enhanced funding from donors, sponsors, and government agencies becomes more likely as the library's visibility and demonstrated impact increase. Improved services result from greater community involvement and feedback, allowing libraries to adapt and better meet the evolving needs of their patrons. Stronger community ties are forged as libraries become integral parts of the social fabric, fostering social cohesion and cultural preservation. Ultimately, these efforts lead to sustainable growth, enabling libraries to expand their collections, upgrade technology, and improve facilities, ensuring their long-term viability and success.

References

- [1] Adeyemi, I. O., Abiona, B. F., Adebisi, A. I., Ishola, K. I., Ogunlowo, H. D. (2024). Assessment of corporate social responsibility practices in selected public libraries in South-West and North-Central, Nigeria. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 9(1), 1–17.
- [2] Adindu, L., Nyemezi, C. O. (2024). Mobile and digital banner marketing strategies on students' utilization of library information resources and services in state university libraries in South-South Nigeria. *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 15(1), 47–59.
- [3] Gabriel, J. T. (2021). *Influence of public relations practice on information service delivery and librarians in federal university libraries in North-Central, Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation).
- [4] Ilo, P., Ifijeh, G., Segun-Adeniran, C., Michael-Onuoha, H. C., Ekwueme, L. (2021). Providing reproductive health information to rural women: The potentials of public libraries. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 25(5s), 210–218.
- [5] Lucky, A. T., Umar, I. M. (2018). Assessment of marketing strategies used for marketing information

resources and services in University of Nigeria Library, Nsukka. *Nasarawa Journal of Library and Information Science (NAJLIS)*, 2(1), 162–173.

[6] Odine, R. O. (2011). *Marketing library and information services in academic libraries in Niger State* (Published MLS Thesis). Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

[7] Olorunfemi, M., Ipadeola, D. A. (2018). Marketing library and information services in selected university libraries in South West Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1.

[8] Omopupa, K. T., Abdul, H. A., Sulaiman, K. A., Olajide, O. E. (2022). The impacts of public libraries in promoting knowledge society among civil servants in Nigeria. (*Publication info incomplete—please provide journal name and volume/issue if available*).

[9] Osuchukwu, N. P., Anyadiegwu, C. C., Eneh, E. A., Nzewi, A. N. (2015). Lobbying and advocacy for improved library development and services in Anambra State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(1), 135–140.

[10] Chan, Vanessa Hiu Ying, Chiu, Dickson K. W., Ho, Kevin K. W. (2022). Mediating effects on the relationship between perceived service quality and public library app loyalty during the COVID-19 era. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 67, 102960.

[11] Canali, S., Schiaffonati, V., Aliverti, A. (2022). Challenges and recommendations for wearable devices in digital health: Data quality, interoperability, health equity, fairness. *PLOS Digital Health*, 1(10), e0000104.

[12] Alajmi, B. M., Albudaiwi, D. (2020). Response to COVID-19 pandemic: Where do public libraries stand? *Public Library Quarterly*, 40(6), 540–556.

[13] Abbasi, G. A., Tiew, L. Y., Tang, J., Goh, Y.-N., Thurasamy, R. (2021). The adoption of cryptocurrency as a disruptive force: Deep learning-based dual stage structural equation modelling and artificial neural network analysis. *PLOS ONE*, 16(3), e0247582.

[14] Valverde-Berrocoso, J., Fernández-Sánchez, M. R., Revuelta Dominguez, F. I., Sosa-Díaz, M. J. (2021). The educational integration of digital technologies pre-COVID-19: Lessons for teacher education. *PLOS ONE*, 16(8), e0256283.