

Original Research Article

## Enhancing User Satisfaction through Effective People Marketing Strategies in University Libraries

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**Abstract:** This research article investigates the relationship between people marketing strategies and user satisfaction within university libraries in central Uganda. Given the increasing competition among academic libraries for user engagement and service delivery, understanding how people-oriented marketing approaches can enhance user satisfaction becomes crucial. The objectives of this study are: to analyze the people marketing strategies employed by selected university libraries, assess user satisfaction levels, explore the relationship between marketing strategies and user satisfaction, and determine the influence of these strategies on the overall satisfaction of library users. A mixed-methods approach was used, involving quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Findings indicated a positive (0.185-0.509) and significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ) correlation between effective people marketing strategies and higher user satisfaction levels. Staff availability (12.463,  $P \leq 0.009$ ), capacity to guide users (3.583,  $P \leq 0.000$ ) communication skills (0.605,  $P \leq 0.001$ ), effective rapport with users (37.351,  $P \leq 0.058$ ), and support in utilization of new technologies (3.283,  $P \leq 0.007$ ), among others, were the major determinants of user library satisfaction. The study therefore emphasized the need for library administrations to adopt comprehensive marketing approaches focusing on interpersonal relationships and user-centric services.

**Keywords:** People marketing strategy, user satisfaction, and university libraries.

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## INTRODUCTION

Amidst the rapid evolution of information access, university libraries serve as pivotal institutions in academia, providing essential resources such as books, journals, and media in both digital and physical formats (Nasasira, 2018; Nabitotto, 2020; Galinnya, 2017). They cater to a diverse user base, including students, researchers, and academicians, who rely on these libraries for high-quality learning and research (Olorunfemi & Ipadeola, 2018; Audunson, 2014). However, intense competition from alternative information sources, such as Google and other non-library platforms, has diminished the visibility and perceived relevance of university libraries, leading to a concerning decline in user engagement and patronage (Ihejirika, 2020; Leonard & Snyman, 2019). The ease of accessing academic materials directly from various devices has further exacerbated this decline (Friends, 2013). As a result, librarians must reassess their marketing strategies, particularly focusing on 'people' elements and the overall user experience to effectively communicate the value of library resources and services

for retaining existing users while attracting new ones (Madu *et al.*, 2017; Ihejirika, 2020). Despite the implementation of traditional marketing techniques, research indicates widespread user dissatisfaction with library services in Central Uganda, exemplified by alarming statistics showing significant underutilization of available resources and services (Ayebare, 2018; Nasasira, 2018). It is vital for university libraries to adopt comprehensive marketing strategies that encompass the extended 3Ps marketing mix people, process, and physical evidence as synthesized by Booms and Bitner (1981). However, the potential impact of these tailored marketing strategies specifically on user satisfaction within university libraries remains insufficiently explored, highlighting an urgent need for research to bridge this critical knowledge gap. This study therefore explored the role of people marketing strategy towards user satisfaction among university libraries in central Uganda, and this was specifically done through: assessing the people marketing strategies, user satisfaction, relationship between people marketing strategies and library users' satisfaction, and analyzing

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the influence of people marketing strategies on library users' satisfaction.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study area

The study was conducted in three selected universities namely: University of Kisubi (Latitude:0.120567; Longitude:32.531677), International University of East Africa (Latitude:0.284722; Longitude:32.606667) and Ndejje University (Latitude:0.612222; Longitude:32.476111) in central Uganda. University of Kisubi is located in Kisubi along Kampala–Entebbe Road, about 18 KM North-East of Entebbe International Airport (Google, 26 December 2020). IUEA has its main campus on a 20 acres (8.1 ha) piece of property at Kansanga, a south-eastern suburb of Kampala, Uganda's capital and largest city. Kansanga lies approximately 6 kilometres (3.7 mi), by road, southeast of the central business district of Kampala. The main campus of the Ndejje university (where the study was conducted) lies approximately 42 kilometres (26 mi), by road, north of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda (Ndejje University, 16 April 2020).

### Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design due to its high magnitude of precision and accuracy (Ambetsa *et al.*, 2020). The design allowed for collection of data at a single point thus saving on resources and time (Wambua *et al.*, 2019). Ambetsa *et al.*, (2020) explain that cross sectional survey helps researchers describe populations within the study area in regard to the findings and define the extent to which the

results relate to the sampled population. The design employs both quantitative and qualitative data in collecting and analyzing data with an intent of having one phase of the mixed method building into another. It allows for data collected from both quantitative and qualitative to be converged or integrated at the discussion stage of the study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

### Study population and sampling design

The study population consisted of students from three selected universities (IUEA, Unik and Ndejje) (ARs offices, 2020). A two-stage sampling technique was employed. The first stage was purposive selection of three universities due to their possession of well-equipped and highly advanced libraries. This was followed by simple random sampling technique that was used to select the study sample due to its representativeness of the population and being free from bias and prejudice (Neumann, 2012). Each student name was assigned a random number from which a sample of 234 students were randomly selected (Table 1), following procedures of Krejcie & Morgan (1970) as shown below;

$$n = \frac{x^2 NP(1-P)}{e^2(N-1)+x^2P(1-P)}$$

Where:

$n$  = desired sample size

$N$  = population size (i.e. the entire group that the study population is drawn from)

$e$  = acceptable sampling error (0.05)

$x^2$  = chi-square of degree of freedom 1 and confidence 95% = 3.841

$p$  = proportion of the population (if unknown, 0.05).

**Table 1: Total number of selected student participants**

Category of respondents	Population of BA students	Sample size
University of Kisubi	124	48
International University of East Africa	155	61
Ndejje University	320	125
<b>Total</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>234</b>

Source: Primary data (2022)

### Data types and data collection

This study utilized cross-sectional primary data, which was gathered through a pre-tested, researcher-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included items addressing students' demographic characteristics, marketing strategies related to individuals, and library user satisfaction. Specifically, data on students' demographic characteristics including sex, age, and university affiliation were collected. Additionally, a Likert scale ranging from "very high" to "very low" was employed to assess both the marketing strategies and the satisfaction levels of library users.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was performed in SPSS, before the data was exported to STATA v. 14 for econometric analysis. Descriptive statistics and simple

inferential statistics involved computations of means, frequency distribution and standard deviations for students' continuous and categorical characteristics, marketing strategies and the satisfaction levels. Students' perception on people marketing strategies, and user satisfaction of university libraries was measured using a 5-point Likert scale following procedures of Likert (1932). Likert- scale type of interview results in a single score that represents the degree to which a person is favorable or unfavorable with respect to the question asked (Bernard, 1994). Some questions were reverse coded to avoid bias. Each respondent was asked to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement against each statement along a 5-point scale: very low, low, moderate, high and very high. Weights assigned to these responses were 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Cronbach's Alpha analysis was done to determine the

reliability and internal consistency of questions regarding students’ perception on people marketing strategies, and user satisfaction of university libraries (Olaniyi, 2019). Arithmetic means were calculated from the Likert scale to get the overall students’ perception. The data were then dichotomized to get a binary response. This was done through collapsing responses 1,

2 and 3 from the original scale to 0=disagree (negative) and 4 and 5 to 1= agree (positive), following procedures of Jeong and Lee, (2016). The rationale for rubric dichotomization was that people who answered higher than or equal to 4 were positive (agreed) while those who were green and those who scored below 4 were negative (disagreed).

**Table 2: Scale collapsing scheme to generate dichotomized response data**

<b>Original</b>	<b>1 (Very low)</b>	<b>2 (Low)</b>	<b>3 (Moderate)</b>	<b>4 (High)</b>	<b>5 (Very high)</b>
<b>Dichotomized</b>	<b>0 (Disagree/ negative)</b>			<b>1 (Agree/ positive)</b>	

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between people marketing strategies. The binary logistic econometric model was used to assess the influence of people marketing strategies on user satisfaction levels of university library as presented below;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \dots + \beta_nX_n + \epsilon_i$$

Where;

- Y: Dependent variable (User satisfaction),
- $\beta_0$ : Intercept,
- $\beta_1$ -n: Coefficient of the explanatory variables,
- X1-n: Explanatory variables (people marketing strategies).

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive statistics of respondent characteristics

Results showed that majority (67.10%) of the respondents were males compared to females (32.90%) (Table 3). The study though, captured gender imbalance as female respondents were far fewer than the male respondents. This might not affect the study as, extant

studies on satisfaction levels of men and women have produced contradictory findings (Zannie & Véronique, 2006). While some scholars and managers have reported no significant difference between men and women on the issue of satisfaction (Carmel, 1985; Ross *et al.*, 1999), others acknowledged that women tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction than men (Belás *et al.*, 2015) and still others found men to be more satisfied with a service than women over time (Lim & Envick, 2013). Age group 21 - 29 constitutes 80% of the respondents, followed by the age group 20 and below, which constitutes 13.5 %. The age group, 30 - 39 constitutes 5.8% and the age group 40 - 49 is 0.6%. The age group 21-29 is computer savvy and requires technology driven services with internet connectivity which are now available in university libraries. All libraries must endeavor to offer such services if they are to remain attractive to the youth especially undergraduates in universities. The respondents were selected from third year students pursuing a course in business administration in the three private universities around Kampala, Uganda. The composition of respondents by institution and by proportion follows: Respondents from Ndejje University constituted 53%, University of Kisubi contributed 21% and the International University of East Africa contributed 26% of the respondents.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of respondent characteristics**

Category	Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	104	67.10
	Female	51	32.90
Age (Years)	Below 20	19	12.26
	21 - 29	123	79.35
	30 - 39	9	5.81
	40 - 49	4	2.58
University	UniK	73	47.40
	IUEA	54	35.10
	NDU	27	17.50

Source: field survey (2022)

### Demographic profiles of informants

Table 4 shows the demographic profiles of informants. Six librarians from three selected university libraries were interviewed and this made 100% participation. 67% were females whereas 33% were males. This showed gender imbalance as there were more females than males. 33% of the respondents possessed Bachelor’s degree in Library Science (BLIS),

(51%), Masters (MLIS) and PhD (16%). Findings further indicated that 50% of the informants were at the rank of University Librarian, 16.7% at Senior Librarian level while 33.3% were Assistant Librarians. The working experience category of respondents showed that 50% had over 10-20 years of working experience, while, the rest (50%) had 5–6 years.

**Table 4: Summary of informants’ demographic profiles**

Coding	Gender	Qualification	Rank	Working experience
Informant 1	Female	MLIS	University Librarian	6 years
Informant 2	Male	BLIS	Assistant Librarian	5 years
Informant 3	Male	MLIS	University Librarian	12 years
Informant 4	Female	BLIS	Assistant Librarian	5 years
Informant 5	Female	PhD	University Librarian	20 years
Informant 6	Female	MLIS	Senior Librarian	10 years

Source: Field research, (2022)

**People marketing strategies among selected university libraries**

Table 5 presents the scores and rankings of various people marketing strategies. Staff availability was rated as the most significant strategy among the people marketing strategies, with the highest mean value ( $\bar{X}$ =4.73,  $SD$ =1.102). This indicates that the presence and accessibility of staff are crucial for effective library marketing and user satisfaction (Rajashekhar and Kumbar, 2004; Ibrahim, 2017). Zheng and Du (2018) had similar findings in their study on Service Marketing of University Libraries in the New Media Environment. The capacity to guide users was another important strategy, with a mean score of ( $\bar{X}$ =3.882,  $SD$ =1.141). This reflects the importance of staff being able to assist and direct users effectively within the library (Kathleen Hughes, 2019). Johnson *et al.*, (2012) and Du. (2016) reported related findings. Competence at work, with a

mean score of ( $\bar{X}$ =3.848,  $SD$ =1.242), highlights the need for staff to be knowledgeable and skilled in their roles to provide high-quality service (Kimberly, 2022). Communication skills were also highly rated, with a mean score of ( $\bar{X}$ =3.791,  $SD$ =1.217). Effective communication is essential for understanding and meeting the needs of library users (Du and Wang, 2017). The capacity to troubleshoot users’ problems scored ( $\bar{X}$ =3.781,  $SD$ =1.248), indicating the importance of staff being able to resolve issues and provide solutions promptly. Support in utilization of new technologies ( $\bar{X}$ =3.248,  $SD$ =1.363), and indifference to users’ needs ( $\bar{X}$ =3.142,  $SD$ =1.251) had the lowest means. This suggests that while important, they are not as critical as other strategies and should not be highly considered to ensure user satisfaction (Fang *et al.*, 2010).

**Table 5: People marketing strategies**

People marketing strategies	Respondents’ ranking (%)					Mean	Std dev	Translation	Ranking
	SD	D	N	A	SA				
Staff availability	7.10	7.10	16.77	32.90	36.13	4.073	1.102	Very high	1
Capacity to guide users	6.45	5.16	12.26	45.81	30.32	3.901	1.153	High	2
Competence at work	6.45	3.87	16.77	40.00	32.90	3.882	1.141	High	3
Communication skills	3.87	5.81	12.26	36.77	41.29	3.848	1.242	High	4
Capacity to troubleshoot users’ problems	7.74	5.81	17.42	37.42	31.61	3.791	1.217	High	5
Managing users adeptly	7.74	9.68	19.35	33.55	29.68	3.781	1.248	High	6
Effective rapport with users	7.10	7.10	19.35	33.55	32.90	3.684	1.187	High	7
Provision of quick service to users	10.32	15.48	36.13	23.87	14.19	3.678	1.259	High	8
Support in utilization of new technologies	12.90	14.19	27.10	24.52	21.29	3.248	1.363	Moderate	9
Indifference to users’ needs	8.39	5.16	20.00	42.58	23.87	3.142	1.251	Moderate	10

Key: SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree

Legend: 4.01- 4.75 (very high), 3.26 - 4.00 (high), 2.51-3.25 (moderate) 1.76 -2.50 (low), 1.0-1.75 (very low)

Source: field survey (2022).

**User satisfaction among selected university libraries**

The research results presented in Table 6 offer insightful data on the factors that contribute to user satisfaction in university libraries. The conducive environment of the library for learning purposes stands out as the most significant factor, with a mean score of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 1.094, suggesting that users place a high value on a study-friendly atmosphere (Abdulsalam and Salami, 2013; Ilo *et al.*, 2020). Closely following is the library’s location, with a mean score of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.104, indicating that

accessibility and convenience are nearly as important to users as the internal environment (Aderibigbe & Farouk, 2017). Useful library orientations appear to have a strong positive impact on user satisfaction, scoring a mean of 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.035, which implies that users appreciate being effectively guided on how to utilize library resources (Anaehobi & Odume, 2017). The communication skills of library staff are also highlighted as a key factor, with a mean score of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 1.094, reinforcing the importance of interpersonal interactions in the library experience

(Benard & Dulle, 2016). The availability of library services, with a mean score of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 1.203, suggests that users expect library resources to be accessible whenever they need them (Benson *et al.*, 2016; Kumar, 2017). Signage within the library, which aids in navigation, scored a mean of 3.13 with a standard deviation of 1.108, indicating that while important, it is not as critical to user satisfaction as the aforementioned factors (Leechaimongkol *et al.*, 2021). On the lower end of the spectrum, the informativeness of

the library website on its services, with a mean score of 2.93 and a standard deviation of 1.071, suggests that users may find the online resources less satisfactory or perhaps less crucial to their overall library experience (Thongsrihow & Tuntrakul, 2020). The lowest mean score was for the library charging users for accessing its services, at 2.33 with a standard deviation of 1.240, clearly indicating that the imposition of fees is a deterrent to user satisfaction (Abbas, *et al.*, 2016).

**Table 6: User satisfaction among selected university libraries**

User satisfaction	Respondents' ranking (%)					Mean	Std dev	Translation	Ranking
	SD	D	N	A	SA				
Library environment is conducive for learning	4.52	10.32	25.81	40	19.35	3.89	1.094	High	1
Library is well located	3.23	7.74	22.58	43.23	23.23	3.88	1.104	High	2
Library orientations are useful	11.61	18.06	39.35	23.87	7.1	3.79	1.035	High	3
Library staff have good communication skills	9.68	18.06	47.1	18.71	6.45	3.77	1.202	High	4
Library services are always available	30.32	24.52	25.16	16.13	3.87	3.62	1.094	High	5
Library has good signage for directional purposes	13.55	15.48	27.74	29.03	14.19	3.49	1.203	High	6
Library staff inform users about the available resources	3.87	5.16	17.42	45.16	28.39	3.13	1.308	Moderate	7
Library uses social media to promote its services	5.16	3.23	20.65	43.23	27.74	2.96	1.128	Moderate	8
Library website is informative on its services	5.81	7.1	20	38.06	29.03	2.92	1.071	Moderate	9
Library charges users for accessing its services	6.45	10.32	30.32	32.9	20	2.33	1.240	Moderate	10

**Key:** SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree

**Legend:** 4.01- 4.75 (very high), 3.26 - 4.00 (high), 2.51-3.25 (moderate) 1.76 -2.50 (low), 1.0-1.75 (very low)

**Source:** field survey (2022)

**Relationship between marketing strategies and user satisfaction**

The analysis conducted in this study indicates a noteworthy relationship between people marketing strategies and user satisfaction, with correlation values ranging from 0.185 to 0.509. These values signify a positive and statistically significant correlation, demonstrating that as people marketing strategies improve, user satisfaction levels also increase (Table 7). This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the critical role of marketing strategies in fostering user engagement and satisfaction in service-oriented contexts (Homburg *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, the internal correlation among various marketing strategy variables, with values ranging from 0.312 to 0.789 at a significance level of  $P \leq 0.01$ , suggests a robust interconnectedness among the strategies employed. This reinforces the premise that effective marketing strategies

not only enhance user satisfaction but may also influence each other in ways that could amplify their overall impact (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The significant correlations observed underscore the importance of a cohesive approach in implementing people marketing strategies to enhance user experiences in university libraries. To further investigate the influence of these marketing strategies on user satisfaction, a binary logistic regression analysis was employed. This statistical method allows researchers to evaluate the predictive capabilities of independent variables, and in this case, the various facets of people marketing strategies on the dependent variable of user satisfaction. Such analysis is crucial for understanding which specific aspects of the marketing strategies are most effective in promoting user satisfaction, thus providing actionable insights for library management (Field, 2013).

**Table 7: Relationship between people marketing strategies and university library users' satisfaction**

Variables	SA	CGU	CW	CS	CTUP	MUA	ERU	PQSU	SUNT	IUN	US
Staff availability (SA)	1	.720*	.638*	.512*	.720*	.660*	.716*	.178*	.492*	.611*	.355*
Capacity to guide users (CGU)	-	1	.644*	.499*	.681*	.585*	.581*	.183*	.513*	.582*	.185*
Competence at work (CW)	-	-	1	.606*	.789*	.766*	.684*	.322*	.555*	.718*	.247*
Communication skills (CS)	-	-	-	1	.605*	.613*	.570*	.331*	.312*	.549*	.225*
Capacity to troubleshoot users' problems (CTUP)	-	-	-	-	1	.725*	.746*	.245*	.444*	.608*	.227*
Managing users adeptly (MUA)	-	-	-	-	-	1	.784*	.351*	.546*	.690*	.471*
Effective rapport with users (ERU)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.268*	.541*	.670*	.419*
Provision of quick service to users (PQSU)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.368*	.281*	.479*
Support in utilization of new technologies (SUNT)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.548*	.509*
Indifference to users' needs (IUN)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.370*
User satisfaction (US)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: field survey (2022)

**Influence of people marketing strategies on library users' satisfaction**

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis presented in Table 8 provide valuable insights into the factors influencing library users' satisfaction. The high R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.767 indicates that approximately 76.7% of the variance in users' satisfaction can be explained by the identified determinants (Field, 2013). Key positive influences include staff availability, capacity to guide users, communication skills, the ability to establish effective rapport, and support for new technologies. Each of these factors significantly correlates with increased satisfaction levels among library users. Specifically, staff availability showed a substantial positive effect (12.463, P≤0.009), suggesting that accessible staff members contribute significantly to users' overall satisfaction (Bennett & Wie, 2019). Likewise, the capacity to guide users (3.583, P≤0.000) emphasizes the importance of staff providing clear direction and assistance, which is particularly critical in

enhancing the user experience (Hernon & Whitman, 2019). Communication skills are also essential, as indicated by their significant influence (0.605, P≤0.001), proving that effective communication fosters a supportive environment conducive to user satisfaction (Jones *et al.*, 2018). Conversely, several factors were found to negatively influence satisfaction, particularly managing users adeptly (-31.376, P≤0.021) and the capacity to troubleshoot (-58.070, P≤0.004). These negative correlations suggest that deficiencies in these areas can lead to dissatisfaction, highlighting the need for libraries to adequately train staff in user management and problem-solving skills (Carter & Checkett, 2020). Additionally, the findings regarding provision of quick service and indifference to users' needs indicate an interesting complexity: while these areas showed positive but non-significant relationships with satisfaction, they underscore the need for a more nuanced approach to customer service in libraries (Webster, 2021).

**Table 8: Influence of people marketing strategies on library users' satisfaction**

People marketing strategies	Library user satisfaction			P
	B	Std. Error	β	
Staff availability	12.463	9648.225	258640.5	0.009**
Capacity to guide users	3.583	3431.459	35.975	0.000**
Competence at work	11.764	2370.003	128595.7	0.106
Communication skills	0.605	2.401	1.831	0.001**
Capacity to troubleshoot users' problems	-58.070	2808.283	6.03E-26	0.004**
Managing users adeptly	-31.376	2820.378	2.36E-14	0.021*
Effective rapport with users	37.351	2806.545	1.66E+16	0.058*
Provision of quick service to users	1.496	1.179	4.462	0.605
Support in utilization of new technologies	3.283	3.352	26.656	0.007**
Indifference to users' needs	1.693	2.214	5.437	0.204
Constant	1.534	0.748		0.014*

\*\* Statistically significant at .01, \* Statistically significant at .05 R<sup>2</sup>=0.772, adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.767

Source: field survey (2022)

## CONCLUSION

The study revealed a positive relationship between people marketing strategies and user satisfaction in university libraries. As academic environments evolve, library administrations must prioritize interpersonal relationships and user-centric services. By adopting comprehensive marketing strategies that emphasize the human element, libraries can enhance user satisfaction and foster loyalty among their users.

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