

**PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY STAFF AND STUDENTS ON THE LEARNING
MATERIALS IN THE UNIVERSITY BOOKSHOPS IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This study tries to ascertain the views of the University staff and students on the materials in Nigerian university bookshops. It answered two research questions and tested a null hypothesis. Survey research method was adopted while questionnaires interview and consultation of documents sources were used to gather data from 11 bookshop managers, 440 staff and 660 students in 11 Nigerian federal University bookshops and their universities.

The study found 60. % of the university staff LIS against 63,8% of the university students who opined that Nigerian university bookshops had varieties of books; 64.4% of the university staff and 67.4% of the students also confirmed the availability of stationery. The awareness for books was attested to by 28. 8% of the university staff as well as zero percent of the university students, but through the book offers' meetings. While 62% university staff agreed that the materials in Nigerian university bookshops were relevant for teaching and research, 9.7% University students said it was so 13. 9% the university students as against zero percent of the university staff affirmed the affordability of the prices of souvenirs in Nigerian university bookshops

The study found that majority of the customer university staff and student: low opinions as to availability and awareness of material, its relevance and price affordability in Nigerian university bookshops. The study recommended among other things that the managers of Nigerian university bookshops should pool financial resources together, obtain large amounts of foreign exchange and form a consortium for the importation of customer targeted instructional materials to stock their bookshops; market the materials by using appropriate publicity methods to keep customers aware of the materials while selling same at affordable prices.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

A university bookshop is established to provide university-oriented instructional materials that a general bookshop cannot provide. This tallies with the opinion of Evans, (1990) that the university bookshop should provide relevant materials that support the academic functions to the customers. To empower the university bookshops for this task, the universities in Nigeria gave initial take-off grants to their bookshops and as well bought shares in the limited liability Nigerian university bookshops. Also, the university departments and units were directed in most cases to procure materials from the bookshops.

In the words of Steinhoff, (1992:54) a typical university bookshop faces the challenges of providing and servicing varieties of relevant learning materials to its customers at the right time. The task of promoting these materials to the awareness of the different groups of customers; and selling them at affordable prices are parts of contentious issues in most Nigerian university bookshops. Therefore, the aim of this work is to ascertain whether in the opinions of the customers (university staff and students) there is material availability in Nigerian university bookshops; whether the customers are aware of the materials, whether the materials are relevant for teaching, research and learning; and finally whether the prices of the materials are affordable.

Research Questions

Thus, this work sets out to answer the following research questions;

1. What type of materials do Nigerian university bookshops provide?
2. What is the perception of customers (university staff and students) on material availability, awareness for materials, relevance of the materials, and affordability of the prices of materials in Nigerian university bookshops?

METHODOLOGY

This research used descriptive/survey research method to study a population comprising the Nigerian federal university bookshops and their universities. Random sampling technique was however used to select eleven federal university bookshops and their

universities. To ensure adequate representation of the respondents' characteristics, stratified sampling technique (Paula, 1991), was used to select the bookshop managers; and their customers made up of the university staff and students. The sample population comprised 11 bookshop managers, 440 University Staff and 660 university students while questionnaires, on the spot observation, oral interview and consultation of documentary sources were used to gather data for this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

One thousand and two copies of the questionnaires (made up of 405 university staff and 608 university students) representing 91.0% of the 1,100 copies distributed to the two groups of customers, were returned on completion. The figure, 91.0% questionnaire return, is considered high enough for use in this study.

Type of Materials Nigerian University Bookshops Provide

The answer to the research question, *What type of materials do Nigerian university bookshops provide?*, will enable us know if the university bookshops in Nigeria possess tertiary books and other instructional materials the general bookshops cannot provide.

The responses to the interviews with bookshop managers, revealed that all the 11 respondents indicated provision of primary and secondary school books, writing materials and office stationery. While 8 managers agreed that they stock photocopying materials, classroom consumables, i.e., chalk, duster, blackboard renovator and rulers, 6 respondents provide books for recreational reading, office equipment and souvenirs.

Surprisingly however, only 4 university bookshops affirmed the possession of recommended and research-oriented books, which are indispensable to teaching, learning and research functions of the university. In a further move to establish how many of the university course offerings are covered by the collections in Nigerian university bookshops, the researcher selected 128 courses from the Nigerian university Calendars, for the period 2001 to 2005, and cross-matched them with the collections in the sampled university bookshops. The exercise revealed that just two university bookshops located at *Ibadan University and Obafemi Awolowo University*, had materials, which cover more than 50% of the related subject offerings. This concludes

earlier study by Makotsi (2003) that showed that the collections in most institutional bookshops in Nigeria rarely cover 50 percent of the subjects taught in those institutions. The managers in an interview, blamed their inability to stock the required materials on the poor state of Nigerian publishing industry, scarcity of tertiary books in the local markets and the problems associated with the importing research oriented books generally. From the foregoing, the managers of Nigerian university bookshops seemed to have affirmed that their bookshops did not possess the type of materials expected of a university bookshop.

Perception of the University Staff and Students on the Materials in Nigerian University Bookshops

To be able to ascertain the views of the customers (university staff and students) on the materials in Nigerian university bookshops, the materials were grouped into: books, journals, audiovisuals, stationery, souvenirs, sporting wear/equipment and office equipment. These were then listed in a questionnaire and administered on the two groups of respondents to indicate the availability of, awareness for, relevance of, and affordability of the prices of the materials. The percentage responses by the Staff and Students in table-1: below were used to discuss the views of the respondents.

Table 1: Analysis of the Perception of University Staff and Students on the Materials in Nigerian University Bookshops

Materials	RESPONDENTS:			
	University Staff		University Students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Availability of Materials				
1. Books	246	60.7	388	63.8
2. Journals	49	15.5	83	20.5
3. Audio Visual	62	15.3	52	8.5
4. Stationeries	260	64.4	410	67.4
5. Souvenirs	55	13.5	93	15.3
6. Sporting Wear/Equipment	75	18.5	26	4.3
7. Office Equipment	68	16.7	22	3.7

Material Awareness through;				
1. Bookshops' orientation talks	117	28.8	---	---
2. Book officers' forum	---	---	22	3.6
3. Sample distribution	56	13.8	---	---
4. Visits to departments	22	5.4	66	10.8
5. Publication lists	---	---	20	3.3
6. Exhibition and Sales	43	10.6	20	3.3
7. Hand bills on bulletin boards				
Relevance of Materials to;				
1. Teaching	168	41.5	144	36.4
2. Research	25	6.2	59	9.7
3. Leisure reading	---	---	189	32.0
4. Social needs	---	---	203	51.4
5. Knowledge update	---	---	77	13.0
6. Sporting activities	42	5.9	28	4.7
7. writing and photocopying	158	10.4	240	45.3
Affordability of Prices of;				
1. Books	96	23.7	145	23.3
2. Journals	68	16.8	183	30.1
3. Audio Visual	---	---	18	2.94
4. Stationeries	120	29.6	186	30.6
5. Souvenirs	---	---	82	13.3
6. Sporting Wear/Equipment	42	10.4	28	4.67
7. Office Equipment				
Services	38	9.4	28	4.6

Table:-1: above on the customers' views on bookshops' materials shows that 60.7% of the group of the university staff as against 63.8% of the university students opined that varieties of books are available in Nigerian university bookshops. In a further interview regarding this high percentage response, the respondents argued that although most of the available books were not the recommended type, books were however in many of the university bookshops under reference. Apart from books, stationery is another group of materials that 64.4% of the university staff and 67.4% of the university students agreed was available in Nigerian university bookshops. The journals, which are the main sources of current information for teaching and research, were confirmed available in university bookshops by just 12.1% of the university staff and 20.0% of the group of university students. The respondents were however unanimous in their opinions during an interview when they said that the university bookshops in Nigeria hadn't varieties of materials. For examples, art materials like rot film pen, poster colours, tracing papers; soft goods such as jackets, sweaters T. shirts; and others like cosmetics, drugs were conspicuously absent from the shelves of most Nigerian university bookshops. The managers went further to state that most of the materials are produced abroad and that they hadn't money to obtain foreign exchange to import them. With regards to awareness for bookshops' materials, 28.8% of the university staff as against zero percent of the university students said they get information through faculty book officers' meetings. Just as 13.8% of the group of staff affirmed receipt of information on bookshops' materials through managers' visits to the departments, zero percent of the students' group said it was so. The positions of university students here are justifiable in that students are neither included in the book officers' meeting nor are they consulted when selecting materials for bookshop acquisitions. Surprisingly however, publication lists that can advertise bookshop materials far and wide were acknowledged by just 5.4% of the staff group and 10.8% of the university students as their source of information on materials in the university bookshops.

From the foregoing, it is clear that only a small proportion of the respondents were aware of the available materials in Nigerian university bookshops. Consequently, the respondents held very low opinion of the publicity given to bookshop materials. The

managers too, attested to this in an interview when they confirmed using just the window and in-shop display methods of publicity while ignoring the use of publication lists, exhibition/sales and distributing/pasting hand bills on the bulletin boards on the campuses. This is serious because majority of the bookshops' customers agreed in an interview that they had the habit of occasional visits to the university bookshops.

In trying to sample the opinions of the customers on the relevance of bookshop materials, the learning, teaching, research, leisure reading, social activities, knowledge update, sports, writing and photocopying of materials that are done by the respondents (university staff and students) were used.

Thus, the study revealed that a small proportion of the customers, 6.2% university staff and 9.7% university students, agreed that the materials in Nigerian university bookshops were useful for teaching and research, which unfortunately are the main functions of the university and its communities. While 10.4% of the university staff opined that the materials in their bookshops are relevant for writing and photocopying functions, a higher percentage, 45.3% of the university students affirmed it is so. Moreover, 51.4% of the university students as against zero percent of the university staff agreed that the souvenirs in the university bookshops were relevant to their social needs. Unfortunately however, these sundry goods (souvenirs, toiletries and cosmetics) that were sought after by majority of the students were not provided by most of the university bookshops in the sample, as found under 2.2 above.

As to the affordability of the prices of the university bookshops' materials, 23.7% of the university staff as against 23.8% of the group of university students agreed that the prices of books are affordable. Just as 29.6% of the group of university staff acceded to the affordability of the prices of stationeries in the university bookshops, a slightly higher percentage of the students, 31.9% agreed it is so. However, while zero percent of the university staff held the view that the prices of souvenirs in Nigerian university bookshops were affordable, 13.9% of the university students concord that it is so.

The findings of the study showed low customers' opinions on: material availability, awareness for the materials, relevance of the materials to customers' needs, and affordability of the prices of materials in Nigerian university bookshops. The low

perception of the respondents might be because managers of Nigerian university bookshops didn't use the information on the marketing environment: students, staff, the various university courses; and customers' social needs to stock their shops as suggested by Morden, (1991:38). This was confirmed by the wish of majority of students to have social goods like toiletries, cosmetics, greeting cards and souvenirs that were not stocked by most of the university bookshops in the sample. In the same vein, most university staff in an interview gave preference to materials for teaching, learning and research, which were not available in most of the university bookshops under reference.

Test of Hypothesis

One hypothesis was raised, to find out the opinions of the university staff and students on the materials in university bookshops. The hypothesis is stated below and tested. (Steel, 1980).

There is no significant difference between university staff and students in their perception of the available materials in Nigerian university bookshops.

In the test of this hypothesis, an attempt was made at finding out the opinions of staff and students as to the availability of materials in the university bookshops, awareness and relevance of the materials as well as the affordability of the materials. Thus, the hypothesis takes into consideration factors like; availability of, awareness for, relevance of, and affordability of the prices of books, journals, audiovisuals, stationery, souvenirs, sporting wear/equipment and office equipment in Nigerian university bookshops. The t-test was applied because of the two independent variables, staff and students. Table-5 below shows the t-test result.

2. The university bookshops should provide awareness for their materials by sending information guides on their stocks as well as distributing new arrival lists to faculties and departments.
3. *The managers of Nigerian university bookshops should endeavour to strengthen their collections by providing social goods not currently available in their shops, but were preferred by university staff and students, who want them for social functions.*
4. The university staff and students should participate in the selection of varieties of relevant materials for ordering and stocking the university bookshops in Nigeria.
5. The managers of Nigerian university bookshops should use the information on the university, various course offerings as well as the on-going researches to stock the university bookshops with materials that are relevant to the needs of the customers.
6. The managers of Nigerian university bookshops should buy directly from the publishers and producers of stationery and other instructional materials instead of buying from a third party or retailers that would bring about high and unaffordable prices.

TABLE-2. T-test on the Difference Between Staff and Students on their Perception on the Materials in Nigerian University Bookshops

Variables	N	MEAN	S.D	S.E	T	D.F	P
Students	575	2.5228	0.327	0.014	26.32	1018	0.00
Staff	438	1.8824	0.450	0.011			

The observed t-test value (26.32) is higher than the critical value, which is 1.96 at 1018 degree of freedom. The observed level of significance (P) is lower than the accepted level of 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected, ($P < 0.05$).

The implication is that the students tended to have a higher perception of the available materials than the staff. This could be due to their frequent visits to the bookshops and also a direct result of their social needs.

Conclusions

From the findings on the customers' opinions on bookshop materials it can be concluded that majority of university staff and students agreed to the availability of books and stationery while confirming the unavailability of the remaining groups of materials. Also, few of the customers agreed to the awareness for as well as the relevance of those materials while a much smaller proportion accepted that the prices of the materials were affordable. This can, by extension, be the reason that customers, (university staff and students) gave low patronage to their university bookshops.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that:

1. The managers of Nigerian university bookshops should pool financial resources together to obtain large enough foreign exchange, form a consortium for material acquisition and beat the present economic situation that prevents individual university bookshops from importing varieties of relevant instructional materials from the overseas.

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