Library Extension Services for Hospitality Industries via ICT: Potentials for Culture and Tourism Development

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LIBRARY EXTENSION SERVICES FOR HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES VIA ICT: POTENTIALS FOR CULTURE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The paper highlights essential library services extension services for hospitality industries which could be provided through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs). The services in this category through the library that are expected to be useful in the hospitality industry include: provision of guides in form of maps, directories, biographies, etc, referral services (providing answers to client's questions), entertainment (recreational facilities like provision of traditional games, toys, etc). All these services are expected to be potentials for cultural and tourism development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that Librarians seriously ought to attract tourists to their sites as it would go a long way in promoting the services of the libraries.

Keywords: Library, extension services, hospitality industries, ICT, cultural tourism
Introduction
The present growing interest on tourism development and hospitality industries in Nigeria is a positive disposition which can foster national development. This emerging trend has shown that tourism is increasingly becoming an important catalyst for socio-economic development in Nigeria. As one of the world's largest industries, it creates job opportunities for people such as retail business, construction work, manufacturing, telecommunication, etc. hence, “Tourism” is now the second largest source of foreign exchange earnings in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) as a whole (Neto, 2003).

The tourism industry is both dynamic and diverse in nature, developed to serve the needs of travelers. Tourism generally is making a significant economic impact on the national economy especially in this present state of dwindling national economic situation. There are a lot of potentials in tourism industry as people continue to travel or work, research, do business etc. Tourism development in Nigeria received its boost during the creation of the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1999. The establishment of the Tourism Policy of the Government of Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation Acts of 1992 is for the industry to contribute meaningfully to the wealth-creation efforts of the nation and its citizens, largely through foreign exchange-generation and employment-creation, while providing interesting hospitable and worthwhile experience for visitors (2003-2009 Bureau of Public Enterprises).

Nigeria is endowed with many tourist attractions and cultural heritage which could be harnessed for socio-economic development of the nation. But unfortunately, most of these cultural heritage and tourism sites are still largely untapped. Owing to the economic potentials in the tourism sector, there is an urgent need for all hands to be on deck; the government, private sector, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, etc to contribute their quota in developing this sector.

Library Extension Services
According to Harrod's librarians' glossary, cited in Edoka (2000), extension services are “activities which are undertaken with the objective of reaching out to groups of people who might otherwise be unaware of the library, such as lecture societies, reading circles, discussion groups; and the provision of books for prisons, clubs, hospitals, literary societies, etc”. It has been in the tradition of libraries to offer services to users when they visit the library. But these services are sometimes extended to patrons who are unaware of the existence of the library, thereby extending the services of the library beyond the confines of the library building. Hence Library extension services are services that users can enjoy outside the library building. Such services as lending of books to users, photocopy of materials for users, and others.
According to Edoka (2000), the overall goal of library extension work which centres on provision of service to all in essence restate the mission of public libraries. Public libraries exist to cater for the information needs of all members of the community on equal terms, not just the citizens who are able to go to the libraries. Library services could be extended to different areas like churches, prisons, government houses, children centres and hospitality industries. Hospitality industries include service sector work like tourism and food service.

**Hospitality Industries**

The traditional Nigerian society is well known for her hospitality industries. Various approaches are being employed in welcoming guests, strangers, and visitors. Different attraction centres and locations such as beaches, ideal for different kinds of games, unique wild life, natural environment like waterfalls, game reserves, etc are being used in different locations. Some of the tourist centres in Nigeria that are well known for their hospitality services include: Obudu Cattle Ranch in Calabar, Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State, Mambilla Plateau in Taraba State, etc.

There are different hospitality outfits at different locations serving a certain group of people, providing employment and contributing to the socio-economic development of the nation. In tourism development, hospitality is a key word which demands a quality service. The quality of the hospitality service could be determined through the following factors:

- the tangibility of the tourism services
- the reliability of the tourism information services
- the responsiveness of the employees
- empathy and friendly services rendered.

Hospitality industry is aimed at providing accommodation and other services to people. It is an integral part of tourism industry. According to Wikipedia (2009), the hospitality industry consists of companies within the food service, accommodations, recreation and entertainment sectors. Hospitality industry can be empirically divided into two parts: entertainment areas like clubs and bars, and accommodation. Accommodation takes the form of public houses, resorts, inn, compounds, hotels, hostels, serviced apartments, and motels. The clubs and bars category include restaurants, fast foods, and night clubs. The hospitality industry also includes tourism support commercial activities like airline cabin staff and trained agents. Trained technology like applied information technology (IT) and its workers in hospitality travel and tourism are included in the hospitality industry (http://www.economywatch.com/world-industries/hospitality).

**The Potentials of Library Extension Services in Tourism and Hospitality**
Industries

Tourism is a service-oriented industry which mainly focuses on meeting the needs of the tourists. The success and effectiveness of any tourism centre depends on the ability to reach out to the needs of the clients. The information need of the traveler is very crucial and needs adequate attention for effective service which ranges from general facts about geographical locations to specific details concerning available tourism sites and services.

Library extension service could be seen as those programmes and services designed to cover areas or cater for people that the library by their design and focus, could not reach at. This implies that the extension service could be seen as an out-reach programme which aims at providing the information needs of people outside any library establishment. The introduction of library extension services in tourist centres will help in providing a balanced information service to the travelers, hence reaching out to a wider audience and including the excluded. These extension services include story telling, games, film shows, public enlightenment on library services, photography, photocopying and other reprographic services, etc.

For tourism potentials in Nigeria to be fully utilized, there is need for providing adequate infrastructure, enabling environment, tourism incentives and information on tourism which will attract both national and international tourists. Information on the existence of these tourist sites such as game reserves, waterfalls, wild life parks, bar beaches etc should be readily made available to tourists and the general public. It is basically the role of the librarians to gather, process, store and disseminate and make it readily available and accessible to the public. Perhaps with some coordinated planning and preparation through a partnership between libraries, the ministry of culture, and the tourism board, more tourists might visit the local library and thus discover a vibrant dimension of the local culture. Clearly museums enjoy such visitor attention and there may be merit in offering the library comparable visibility.

Travelers need access to information before and in the course of their trip. Some of the materials that could be very useful in meeting the information needs of the travelers include maps, directories, biographies, etc. The use of maps in obtaining the geographical locations of different tourism destinations is of great importance to travelers. The physical map shows the type of vegetation, landscape, elevation, savanna, river, plains and other geographical features. Hence, the provision of such tourism information services to travelers will help in promoting tourism activities in Nigeria.

For tourists, the prospective benefits of visiting the local library would include the opportunity to see and engage with the local population at the library, as well as to view its collections, including works by local authors. Conversely, a potential outcome for the library and its community would be to impart to foreign visitors an
even deeper and more complete and authentic appreciation of the culture than would be possible from the usual trip highlights: the recreational sites, the casinos, the shops, the museums.

In an informal survey carried out by Whitman (2009) in the Caribbean region on 'Libraries and Tourism', several factors were raised for consideration viz:

- **Set up a small area focusing on topics of likely interest to foreign visitors**
- **Prepare an information sheet (library hours, history, layout, resources, etc.), as well as a bookmark souvenir that visitors could add to a growing collection.**
- **Highlight other special collections, particularly featuring the local history, culture, genealogical records, and scientific and business contributions.**
- **Offer a children's program of reading or story telling (especially if it involves local children as well).**
- **Describe the architecture of the library building and the surrounding community.**
- **Allow access to reference librarians for questions of particular interest to foreign visitors (and keep track of these questions as an indication of foreign awareness and concerns).**
- **Offer resources for visiting teachers, librarians, and other kindred professionals that could be useful for reference back home.**

Such services as mentioned above can prompt the tourists to make book and other donations to the library instead of leaving the way they came. According to Whitman (2009), "tourists could donate to the library the books they finish reading at that location (instead of leaving them at the hotel). Tourists could also complete questionnaires offered by the library as a means to collect information on visitors, their questions, suggestions, and feedback."

**ICT and Tourism Development**

Developments in ICT have made significant impact on all spheres of human life. The impact has been rather prominent in case of service activities such as banking, health, transportation, education and libraries. Benefits of use of ICT in services can be broadly explained in terms of 4 Es, namely economy, ease, extension (or expansion) and efficiency.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are crucial drivers in promoting tourism development globally. Presently, most people are using the Internet to obtain information, plan and buy their travel. In the context of digital divide and globalization, it remains indispensable for librarians in collaboration with other information specialists to upload all tourism-related information on the Internet. The dynamics of this innovative process in the tourism industry is the
opportunity to compete on an equal footing on the global tourism market and to offer a platform for e-tourism system.

ICTs are very viable catalysts in enhancing international tourism enterprises worldwide. It serves as a critical component in competing successfully in the global tourism industry. To this effect, the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) is quite indispensable for developing a spatial data analysis (information linked to geographic locations); uploading tourism data into clear, useful and accessible form to users. This could be in the form of computerized mapping and Database Management System (DMS). Geographic Information System (GIS) is a set of computerized tools, including both hardware and software (Cook, 2006). GIS is used for collecting, storing, retrieving, transforming and displaying spatial data. This development is gradually transforming tourism industry as the Internet has dramatically changed the way in which people plan, buy, promote and sell their tourism products and services. Using ICT to exchange information about products and services enables all actors involved in tourism to be aware of what services are on offer. For example, an entrepreneur can make sure her hotel will be visible to tour operators who are involved in arranging package holidays (UNCTAD, 2009). Inkpen (1998) and Sheldon (1997) have examined the main characteristics of the industry structure and the operation of the new technologies in it. ICT applications in different sectors like airlines, hotels, tour operators, road and rail transport etc is dealt in detail with informative case studies. Some of the world's largest GDS (Global Distribution System) namely Sabre, Galileo, Amadeus and Worldspan are examined. Besides analyzing the telecommunication technologies in the industry, the hospitality sector, entertainment sector, transport sector, management sector and other intermediaries have been diligently explored.

Generally, tourism business relies heavily on information. Tourists need information on the type of tourist centres and hospitality industries available; the type of services offered such as transportation system, accommodation, leisure activities etc. The use of the Internet and other ICT facilities will enable tourists to be aware of the type and qualities of service offered and also enable the management to have a direct contact with consumers around the globe. In addition, developing websites for tourism centres will help immensely in high level of connections, unique insight and specialized services.

**ICT and Library Extension Services for Hospitality Industries**

Computers can be used for a variety of reasons which may include surfing the Internet, word processing a letter or CV, creating a poster, sending an email, finding out more about your hobbies, researching your Family history, reading newspapers online, and finding information to help you with your studies or
In the service of users in hospitality industries, what should come in mind of any librarian should be:

What kind of users am I serving?
What kind of information do they need?
How do they want this information provided?
How do I provide the information needed?
How fast do the clients need the information?
What can I use to enhance the information provision?

These are questions the researchers have deemed necessary for every librarian to ask him/herself when rendering services to users in hospitality industries. This will give the librarian a sense of direction as is expatiated further.

**What kind of users am I serving?**
As we already know, hospitality industries provide home facilities to strangers in a particular place. Every traveler is a stranger in his/her place of visit, especially if it is the first time of visitation. These home facilities could be food, accommodation, entertainment and orientation. Eg. Hotels, cafes, bars, motels, public viewing centres, casinos. Users can be adults or kids who just came for holiday.

**What kind of information do they need?**
By knowing the kind of users, the librarian will then be able to imagine the kind of information they need. This will go a long way in saving the time it will take to make provisions for materials needed.

**How do they want this information provided?**
How an adult would want to be served may be different from how a kid would want to be served with information. The most important thing here is for the librarian to be smart enough to know what each group may need.

**How do I provide the information needed?**
Knowing how the users may want the information will determine how the librarian will decide on how to provide the information.

**How fast do the clients need the information?**
Of course, every professional librarian should not fail to keep the fourth law of Ranganathan's which states *(Save the time of the reader(http://valinor.ca/muffin.html))*

**What can I use to enhance the information provision?**
Here comes the issue of technology. Information and Communication
Technologies have taken over today's world to the extent that nothing is done today without attempting to bring in the use of computer for its enhancement.

**Library Services that can be enhanced via ICT**

**Referral Services:**
This entails providing answers to users' complexities. Reference work is the personal assistance given by librarians to individual readers who are in pursuit of information. According to Ifidon (1997), this involves not only locating the material where the required information can be found but also locating the information and sorting out what information is relevant from a mass of relevant and irrelevant information. Tourists can be directed to places where they do not know. There could be provision of maps which can help them locate any nearby hotel, eating café and shops. Maps can be programmed into CD-ROMs. A typical example is the Encarta map which can be provided to travelers. The map gives description of where places can be located.

Keeping pace with technology, R.R. Bowker has made Ulrichs's international periodicals directory available both online through all the basic vendors and on CD-ROM disc. EBSCO HOST has done a similar thing with the *The Serials directory*. Two useful directories offer tremendous assistance by way of giving information about periodicals online. Many travelers in this 21st century tour with their laptops, and so when in need of periodicals, such services can be rendered to them. These are:

- Books and periodicals online. New York: Learner Information, 1987 to date.

This online referral services could be characterized by (1) Use of common asynchronous tools, email, subject gateways, FAQs, electronic libraries; (2) Interactive tools chat, virtual classroom, VRS; (3) Ask-a-librarian- this is help desk where users' questions are answered.

**Internet Services**

There could be Internet provision to tourists who may have the need to consult e-books, e-journals, coursewares, patents, etc.

**Lending Services**

Books and other library resources could be given out to tourists on loan. Books can be lent to these users online. This may not deliver the physical book to the user, but if the user indicates interest in making use of the book, he/she can mail the circulation librarian who can then reserve the book for the library user. E-books
can be loaned out to users. There could also be request for book lists. The Darwen Borough Council website makes provisions for online book lending service where a user can view his/her personal borrower details by using a library borrower number and Personal Identification Number (PIN). The user will be able to see what loans he/she currently has and the date they are due back.

**Library OPAC**

This can run independent of library management system. A tourist can from any destination, view the materials available in a particular library and then decide whether to consult such books or not. This is Web OPAC and can be accessed via the Internet. This will give room for multiple searches, multi-user, remote access, fast updating and retrieval, data exchange and sharing, more information, and additional services. Another instance can be drawn from “Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council” Online Library Catalogue. The service is available night or day for users to search through the stock for books, talking books, language material, CDs, DVDs, videos and CD-ROMs. The catalogue will tell one which libraries the titles are held in and whether they are currently available for you to reserve or borrow. One can choose to use a variety of search terms, including author, title, and keyword or class number (http://195.8.175.2/cgi-bin/blackburn-cat.sh?).

**Member Registration**

New users can register as members of a particular library via the web. This is a service which many libraries are trying to adopt. By providing this service, tourists can operate from whichever place they find themselves. Data about the user can be filled in the e-form provided.

**Conclusion**

Librarians seriously ought to attract tourists to their sites. This will go a long way in promoting the services of the libraries. Apart from promoting the library services, there should be adequate extended services to tourists in their respective centres, especially by imbibing the use of ICT facilities in rendering such services. In agreement with Whitman (2009)'s remark, the prospect of promoting libraries as a tourist destination is a matter for consideration by each individual board of tourism. This concept could be further explored in connection with the stated missions of the IFLANET UNESCO Public Library Manifesto which proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women (http://www.unesco.org/webworld/libraries/manifestos/libraman.html), and as follow-up to the Seminar on IFLA/UNESCO School and Public Libraries Manifestos and Guidelines, hosted by NALIS in Port-of-Spain from 5-7 May 2003.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that library extension services for hospitality industries via ICTs have great potentials for cultural and tourism
development in Nigeria. Therefore, it becomes imperative to submit that the role of libraries in general and their engagements with tourism might also be considered by Ministries of Culture in Nigeria. This will go a long way in creating a link between libraries and tourists which will at the end, attract more information to be stored in the library databases about tourism. Libraries will then disseminate this information to the public. It is therefore the strong belief of the authors that when this is effectively implemented especially in the Nigerian terrain, there will be brighter and more potentials in cultural and tourism development in Nigeria.

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