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A Survey of the Publishing Strategies of the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited, Calabar

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Abstract

The survey study was undertaken to investigate the publishing strategies of the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. A sample of forty-nine (49) staff were used for the study. A structured questionnaire titled UNICAL Press Publishing Strategies Questionnaire (UPPSQ) was adopted as instrument for data collection. Descriptive analysis (involving frequency and simple percentages) was the statistical technique employed to analyze the research questions, (the results are presented on tables). The result of the analysis revealed that, the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited majorly depend on authors to bring their manuscripts to the publishing house for publication, it was also revealed that they do not provide marketing and distribution services of the published books for their authors neither do they engage in any form of advertising services for the authors. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that the management of University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited should engage the services of literary agents who can scout for manuscripts from authors, undertake to support their authors in the marketing and distribution of the published books and also render advertising services for their customers.

keywords: manuscript acquisition, marketing strategies, publishing services, publishing house and publishers.

Introduction

Publishing has over the years remain an integral part of knowledge circulation and economic advancement to researchers and publishers respectively. For a business to thrive and survive in any competitive economy, it has to deploy good business strategies. A key business

strategy involves meeting the customers where they are with products that augment or fit into their present demand life-style. Hence, for a publishing house to survive, the publishers must learn how to develop and apply strong, effective and consistent publishing strategies that takes their business closer to the people if they must survive and make profits in a competitive economy.

According to Bassey (2018), publishing strategies should focus on how an organization can effectively differentiate itself from its competitions while capitalizing on its unique skills to provide superior value to its customers. It answers the question of how, when and what publishers can do over time to remain competitive and perform matrix, high productivity level and ensure consistent quality production of intellectual contents. Publishers have to plan ahead of time with the best publishing strategies that allow them to examine both long and short-term goals, which makes it possible to meet performance within a given time frame. For the purpose of this study, the publishing strategies would be discussed in terms of method of manuscripts acquisition, marketing strategies and various publishing services offered in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited.

Manuscript writing and acquisition is seen as the initial steps of the publishing process. According to Bassey, Enidiok and Mathias (2024), manuscripts acquisition can occur in different ways such as purchase, donation or deposit. Generally, authors send either a draft of their manuscript or a proposal to multiple publishers, and often times the publishing houses deploy the services of literary agents to scout for publishable manuscripts for them. The quality of what is being published is dependent on the quality of the manuscripts that the publisher is able to acquire, hence a good publishing strategy must be that which begins with attracting credible manuscripts from reputable authors and from topic of global interest to enhance their marketing and profit margin (Harahap, Fajar, Ahmadi, Kudus & Ceha, 2020; Nugraha, Rukmana, Mulyati, Pamungkas & Satriani, 2022).

Publishers are to adopt marketing strategies that will ultimately help them reach their target vendors and readers as marketing strategies is the process or series of steps business follow to promote their products or services to potential customers. A publisher can distinguish himself in the publishing industry through the provision of basic publishing services offered to the publishing

community. Such services can include editing, designing, printing, advertising, distribution and marketing of the published materials.

The importance of a publishing house within the University community cannot be over emphasized, as it serves as a linchpin in the realization of the institutions academic objectives as well as contributes to the circulation of intellectual research findings, which explains why the establishment of the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited is a laudable venture in the University of Calabar community. The University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited was established in the year 2005 to support and cater for teaching, learning and research activities of the University of Calabar. It has four departments; computer, lithography, production and finishing departments.

The publishing house currently has forty-nine (49) staff, and they play the crucial role of disseminating academic knowledge, supporting research through their various printing and publishing services within the institution. As a central hub for the production of academic materials, the printing and publishing house is integral to the University mission of advancing education and fostering intellectual growth. The significance of a University publishing house in the academic landscape has been underscored by Smith (2018) who emphasized the pivotal role they play in ensuring timely publication of research findings and educational materials. It is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to investigate the publishing strategies of the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited.

Despite the fact that there is a printing and publishing house in the University of Calabar, the researchers observed that most staff and authors on campus do not patronize it as they still publish their text books, journals, handbooks and booklets with other publishers outside the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited. Could it be that the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited has not carried out strategic business plans to attract these authors to publish with them? It is based on this observation that the researchers conducted a survey of the publishing strategies of the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press

Limited in terms of their method of manuscript acquisition, marketing strategies and the different publishing services offered to the University community Drake, Gulliver & Harle, 2023).

Publishing as posited by Dare, Olujinmi and Ifeduba (2022) is making anything publicly known, it is the activity of making information available to the general populace. It includes the publication of materials like books, magazines and periodicals, in either print or electronic form. It should be noted that the publishing process begins with the writing and submission/acquisition of manuscripts. This was expounded by the publication from the Africa Publishing Institute (API) Training Manual (2000) which stated that publishing is a process that begins with the generation of an idea. The idea is on what to publish and may be borne out of many factors including new markets, development of new syllabuses, revision of syllabuses and changing market demands. This idea is always expressed in a manuscript which according to Oso, et al, (2008) cited in Ming, Behzad, and Sanjayan (2019) is defined as handwritten or typed documents that contains the authors concern on or about issues and ideas for publication.

Manuscript according to Areo (2011) can be acquired by literary agents through various sources which include editorial travels and tours, bookfair, tertiary institutions, research institutes, topical problem, great and notable events, public debates, workshops, seminar and conferences. The publishers must therefore be on the lookout for manuscripts from these sources using their literary agents. It should be noted that publishable manuscripts are approved by editors as Akangbe (2009) submitted that the task of acquiring and assessing manuscripts is the responsibility of the editor who midwifes all publishing processes and activities, as every manuscript is a potential good book depending on the expertise of the editor who handles it.

This view was corroborated by Montagnes (2006) whose work Svetlana and Xueqing, (2021) cited and were of the opinion that the publishers through their editors must provide guidance and encouragement to the authors (Christopher, 2014; Ibrahim,2017).. This must be given to the writing team through written guidelines, detailed schedules, formal contracts and regular meeting. Osunbiyi, (2009) posited that every publishing firm aspires to grow, and that such aspiration is expected to be in line with the steps to efficiently and effectively manage the resources for desired

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business profit, which demands the identification of potential growth outlet and marketing strategies (Aloko, 2014; Alexandra, 2017; Sanyaolu, 2019). Marketing strategies as described by Bearden, Ingram and Laforge (2017) are the series of steps businesses follow to promote their products or services to potential customers. It involves identifying the target audience, creating a business plan, implementing the plan, and capturing customers value.

This description corroborates with the submission of Usani, Etuk and Ekpenyoung (2021), that marketing strategy in the publishing business is an act that involves painstaking effort by the publishers or authors in creating awareness in the minds of the target audience on the availability of a publication and being ready to go through all the strategic stages required to get the publication to the target audience(readers) and in so doing increase sales which is the underlining factor in marketing. Bassey, Enidiok and Mattias (2024) noted that no matter how well equipped and intellectually engaging a publisher may be, without strategic marketing, people may not know about its existence, and that even the best written books need marketing and publicity for it to get to the hand of interested readers (Ali,Azahari, Rosnan & Sumarjan, 2019).

Adams (2002) cited in Bawa, (2020) stressing the importance of marketing in book publishing opines that publishers should take advantage of the development in information technology to push their products as well as bring in as much of the attraction as possible into book marketing. Adams further frowns at the way some publishers in Nigeria produce books and offer them for sale without promoting their use. The researchers therefore affirm that the failure to adequately market books truncate the communication chain between the author and the reader, because until the reader receives the message, the communication process is not complete (Mallapaty, 2020; Kushybek, 2021).

Osarobu and Ogunsina (2021), opined that the usage of social media for marketing by book publishers in Nigeria seems to be less common than anticipated, despite the obvious advantages and benefits associated with doing so. It is required that social media marketing should be made available to marketers so that their knowledge and expertise in the use of social media will be directed toward book marketing, which will have a negative impact on the publishing company's

marketing and sales efforts (Noor,Ali , Shalida, Norzuwana, Rusmadiah, 2021; Irawan, Zahroh & Puebla, 2022).

According to Christopher (2010), there is much room for improvement in Nigeria's book marketing and publishing. Nigeria publishers must work within the marketing paradigm in their pursuit of profit and survival through reader satisfaction if they want to foster a country of readers. With a focus on how much online advertising and non-advertising services produce revenue, Ifeduba (2019), demonstrated that the hunt for alternative revenue streams in the digital sphere is bearing fruit. In order to maintain the evolving income streams, publishers should devote more resources to website optimization and online collaboration and marketing. Unfortunately, Osarobu and Ogunsina (2021) noted that the usage of social media for marketing by book publishers in Nigeria seems to be less common than anticipated, despite the obvious advantages and benefits associated with doing so.

Publishing services as exposited by Bassey, Enidiok and Mattias (2024) refers to a wide range of products offered by publishers to authors, vendors and readers. It ranges from article review, editing, designing, typesetting, indexing, abstracting, printing, packaging, advertising, distribution and marketing. It also includes the ease of payment and discount offered to customers. Elalami (2016) exposited on the various professional services provided by a publishing house to include editing, proofreading, designing, printing, warehousing, and distribution (making the book available at bookstores, libraries, and other institutions). This exposition was corroborated by Bassey, Enidiok and Matthias (2024) who stated that book publishing companies that want to thrive in business must typically offer services such as editing to refine the manuscript; designing to give professional cover and interior layout; printing to produce physical copies, distribution to get the book into bookstores and online retailers; as well as marketing to promote the book through various channels (Tollefson, 2018; Eger & Scheufen. 2021; Verly, Mohamed, Rusmadiah, & Zuraidy, 2022)

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the publishing strategies of the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited. The specific objectives of the study was to;

- 1. Examine the methods of manuscript acquisition adopted in the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited.
- 2. Identify the marketing strategies adopted in University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited.
- 3. Identify the different publishing services offered in the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

- i. What are the different methods of manuscript acquisition adopted by the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited?
- ii. What are the marketing strategies adopted by the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited?
- iii. What are the different publishing services rendered by the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited?

Research design and Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population consisted of forty-nine staff currently working in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited. Given the small population size, the researchers decided to utilized a census approach whereby the entire 49 staff were involved in the research. A structured questionnaire titled UNICAL Press Publishing Strategies Questionnaire (UPPSQ) was adopted for data collection. The questionnaires were administered personally by the researchers, and all questionnaires were retrieved at the spot for analysis giving a hundred percent (100%) returned rate.

Results and discussion

Research question one: What are the different methods of manuscript acquisition adopted in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited? The result is as presented on table 1.

Table 1: Responses of respondents on the methods of manuscript acquisition (N = 49)

| S/N | STATEMENT | Applicable | Not Applicable | Total % |
|-----|--|------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1 | Authors personally bring their manuscript to the | 49 (100%) | 0(0%) | 49 (100%) |
| | publishing house for publication | | | |
| 2 | The publishing house have agents that scout fo | 0(0%) | 49(100%) | 49 (100%) |
| | manuscripts from authors | | | |
| 3 | The publishing house develop contents and pag | 10(20.4%) | 39(79.6%) | 49 (100%) |
| | authors to develop manuscripts based on the | | | |
| | contents | | | |

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 1, on the methods of manuscripts acquisition revealed that the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited, majorly depend on authors to personally bring their manuscripts to the publishing house for publication as indicated by response from question 1, in which a hundred percent (100%) of the respondents indicated that it was the method of manuscripts acquisition applicable in the publishing house. Hundred percent (100%) of the respondents also responded that the publishing house does not have agents that scout for manuscripts from authors for publication as indicated by response in question 2. Again, respondents when asked whether the publishing house develop contents and pay authors to develop manuscripts based on the contents, majority 39(79.6%) said not applicable while 10(20.4%) said applicable, this implies that developing contents and paying authors to develop manuscripts based on the contents is not a consistent method of acquiring manuscripts in the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited.

Research question two

What are the marketing strategies adopted by the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited? The result is shown on table 2.

Table 2 on the analysis of the various marketing strategies adopted in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited revealed that, hundred percent (100%) of the respondents agreed that the publishing house offers discount payment opportunities to authors for bulk printing as indicated by response in question 4. Hundred per cent (100%) of the respondents also agreed to the fact that the publishing house allow authors to make payment in installments.

Table 2: Responses of respondents on the marketing strategies adopted (N = 49)

| S/N | STATEMENT | Applicable | Not | Total % |
|-----|---|------------|------------|-----------|
| | | | Applicable | |
| 4 | Offering discount payment opportunities | 49(100%) | 0(0% } | 49(100%) |
| | for bulk printing. | | | |
| 5 | Allowing authors to make payment in | 49 | 0(0%) | 49 (100%) |
| | installments. | (100%) | | |
| 6 | Render free publishing consulting services | 44 | 5(10.3%) | 49(100%) |
| | for the authors. | (89.7%) | | |
| 7 | Carrying out free indexing for the authors. | | 0(0%) | 49(100%) |
| | | 49(100%) | | |
| 8 | Marketing and distribution of books for | 5(10.3%) | 44(89.7%) | 49(100%) |
| | authors. | | | |

Source: Field survey, 2024

The publishing house also render free publishing consulting services to the authors, as indicated by ninety per cent (89.7%) representing the majority of the respondents. Again, respondents when asked whether carrying out free indexing for authors is one of the marketing strategies all agreed that it was an applicable strategy in the publishing house. Also, on the marketing and distribution of published books, majority 44(89.7%) of the respondents said it was not applicable while 5(10.3%) said it was applicable; this implies that the percentage of response on not applicable is higher than those that said applicable, with this result, it therefore implies that marketing and distribution of published books are not marketing strategies applicable in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited.

Research question three

What are the different publishing services rendered in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited?

Analysis from Table 3 on the different publishing services rendered in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited, revealed that hundred percent (100%) of respondents agreed that editing of manuscripts, designing/formatting of the manuscripts, as well as indexing services were services rendered in the publishing house as indicated by response in question 9, 10, and 12

respectively. On abstracting services, majority 46(94%) of the respondents agreed that it was not applicable in the publishing house.

Table 3: Responses on the publishing services rendered (N= 49)

| S/N | Statement | Applicable | Not Applicable | Total % |
|-----|-------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| 10 | Editing of manuscript | 49 (100% } | 0(0%} | 49(100%) |
| 11 | Designing/formatting services | 49(100%) | 0(0%) | 49(100%) |
| 12 | Abstracting services | 3 (6%) | 46(94%) | 49 (100%) |
| 13 | Indexing services | 49(100%) | 0(0%) | 49(100%) |
| 14 | Advertising services | 6(12%) | 43(88%) | 49(100%) |
| | | | | |

Source Field Survey, 2024

Forty-three 43(88%) respondents agreed that advertising services was not applicable in the publishing house, while a minority of the respondents 6(12%) agreed that advertising services was applicable in the publishing house. This implies that the percentage of response on not applicable is higher than those that responded that it was applicable. With this result, it therefore implies that advertising services is not applicable in the publishing services rendered by the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited.

Discussion of findings

The findings from analyzing research question one on the method of manuscripts acquisition adopted in the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited, revealed that the publishing house majorly depend on authors to personally bring their manuscripts to them for publication. This finding is in contrast with the findings of Akangbe (2009); Harahap, et al., (2020); Kushybek, (2021); Drake, et al., (2023) who submitted in their various studies that the task of acquiring and assessing manuscripts is the responsibility of the editor who midwifes all publishing processes and activities, as every manuscript is a potential good book depending on the expertise of the editor who handles it.

The findings also is in line with the findings of Bawa, (2020) and Mallapaty (2020) who respectively revealed that the publishing house does not have agents that scout for manuscripts from

authors for publication. This finding is consistent with the exposition of Areo (2011), who stated that publishing houses can acquire manuscripts using literary agents through various sources which include editorial travels and tours, bookfair, tertiary institutions, research institutes, topical problem, great and notable events, public debates, workshops, seminar and conferences.

Findings from the study also revealed that the publishing house does not get involved in developing contents and paying authors to develop manuscripts based on the contents for them. This finding is however in contrast with Montagnes (2006) and Sanyaolu, (2019) who in their respective studies opined that the publishers through their editors must provide guidance and encouragement to the authors. This must be given to the writing team through written guidelines, detailed schedules, formal contracts and regular meeting. This multiple source of advance information, the researcher said, will ensure that problems that may arise are kept to the barest minimum.

The result of the second research question revealed that the marketing strategies adopted by the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited, include discount payment opportunities to authors for bulk printing, allowing authors to make payment in installments, rendering of free publishing consulting services to the authors, as well as carrying out free indexing for authors. The publishing house however does not undertake the marketing and distribution of published books for authors. This finding is in line with Osarobu and Ogunsina (2021), who opined that the usage of social media for marketing by book publishers in Nigeria seems to be less common than anticipated, despite the obvious advantages and benefits associated with doing so.

The result of analyzing the third research question showed that the different publishing services rendered in the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited include editing of manuscript, designing/formatting of the manuscripts, as well as indexing services. The publishing house does not render abstracting services and advertising services to their customers. This finding is at variance with the submission of Bassey, Enidiok and Matthias (2024) who noted that no matter how well equipped and intellectually engaging a publisher may be, without strategic marketing, people may not know about its existence, and that even the best written books need marketing and

publicity for it to get to the hand of interested readers. As important as marketing and distribution of book is, the findings revealed that the publishing house does not offer it to their authors.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to conduct a survey of the publishing strategies of the University of Calabar printing and publishing press limited. The result of the analysis revealed that the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited majorly depends on authors who personally bring their manuscripts to the publishing house for publication, as they do not use literary agents to scout for manuscripts nor develop contents for authors to write on.

It was also revealed that, there exist various marketing strategies adopted by the Publishing house which include discount payment opportunities to authors for bulk printing, allowing authors to make payment in installments, rendering of free publishing consulting services to the authors, as well as carrying out free book indexing for authors. They however do not render abstracting services and advertising services to their customers.

The analysis of research question three showed that the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited offers several publishing services such as editing of manuscripts, designing/formatting of the manuscripts, as well as indexing services, but does not offer abstracting and advertising services to their authors.

Recommendations for policy directions

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that the management of the University of Calabar Printing and Publishing Press Limited should:

- Engage the services of literary agents who can scout for manuscripts from authors within
 the University community and its environs, if they must have more customers and boost
 their production margin.
- Constitute editorial boards that can develop contents on contemporary issues for authors to write on. This can increase the production output and profit margin of the publishing house.

- Undertake to support their authors in the marketing and distribution of the published books
 by creating a marketing department in the publishing house.
- Render advertising services for their customers, as this will in turn serve as a means of publicity to the publishing house.

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