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The Evolving Presence of Information Brokerage and Consultancy Services in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the presence of information brokerage and consultancy services in Nigeria. It examines the role of these services in facilitating access to information and expertise for individuals and organizations in the country. The research highlights the benefits of information brokerage and consultancy in improving decision-making, enhancing competitiveness, and driving innovation in Nigeria's economy.

Keywords: Information Brokerage, Consultancy Services, Nigeria, Information Industry, Economic Growth.

Introduction

In the early eighties in Nigeria, there were little or no threat to graduates employment. As many graduates secure employment immediately after NYSC scheme and many with promises of great jobs even after completion of their degree. This rosy period of graduate employment opportunities started diminishing from the late eighties to the late nineties, only to be replaced by great massive graduate unemployment.

This unhealthy period of unemployment coupled with the global economic problem ushered in the idea of self-reliance. Organizations, both government and governmental organizations and group in the society begin the campaign of self-reliance. Gospel are being preached for youth s and graduate not to wholly depend on white collar job.

This change now led to higher institution into introducing courses entrepreneurship as a core course in our higher institutions. The essence of this programme is not only to inculcate the culture of being self-reliance but also to teach them to be creative and innovative. The knowledge gained enables the to see opportunities in librarianship is the idea of information brokerage and consultancy. This paper, therefore, represents an attempt at providing basic information about the business opportunity in Nigeria especially in the area of its prospect and problem in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS

There is no generally accepted definition of the two key terms, information brokerage and consultancy. Scholars are even divided into their views about the two terms. Some scholars have believe that the two terms are different but contemporary terms. Perhaps, a few of the views of the scholars may suffice to clarify the two terms. Gupta, Kundra, & Gupta (1998) first defined information broker as a person who buys from and sell information to the needy and information brokerage as business of being an information broker. In this paper, Gupta et al. identified consultancy as one of the information services offered by an information broker.

In his own paper "information, consultancy, and brokerage in Botswana", Ocholla (1998) conceptualized consultation as a specialist who gives expert advice on information". on the same page of the paper, Ochella defined information broker as individuals or organizations who operate enterprises that charges fees for information related services and products. To the author, the two terms, by his definition possesses less semantic differences. In their own paper, the views of Nwosu & Unagba (2-14) are not markedly different form the earlier cited scholars. To them information broker embraces information consultant. They defined information brokerage as a "fee based information services, they further defined information brokerage as "a form of business outfit which offer other information services for an agreed fee". as far as they are concerned information is like any other commodity in the market. Thus, information brokerage in the business of buying ans selling information as a product.

Nnadozie & Nnadozie (2014) in their paper"Library Consultant Business" tried to distinguish between information broker and information consultant. They defined information consultant as the aspect of library and information services (LIS) entrepreneurial practice that is specifically concerned with giving expert advice and professional services to practicing librarians, libraries, library schools and library associations at agreed fees and other terms and conditions. They argued that an information consultant does not sell information like the information brokers. This means that while information brokers deal more with individuals, information consultants deal more with groups or organizations. However, a consultant will not decline a business from an individual; a business is a business, notwithstanding who is involved. In their paper, they also implied that information brokers are experts in their own right, the level of expertise required in consultancy business is higher than that required in information brokerage. To the best of the knowledge of authors of this paper, brokers and consultant require the same qualifications and expertise in order to be efficient and effective in the business.

In this paper, however, both terms are regarded as synonyms. They are one and the same term. The conceptual framework of this paper, therefore, is "any trained librarian who establishes a business for purpose of selling, buying and providing expert advise on all aspects of librarianship for fee can be referred to as information broker of information consultant.

Reasons for Information Brokerage and Consultancy Business in Nigeria

The word business in context of trade is activity of making, buying, selling, supplying goods or services and rendering advisory and other intellectual oriented services for money engagement in business as the sole means of livelihood in Nigeria is really not normal circumstances or a situation permitting freedom of choice, majority would prefer business as a secondary means of livelihood. This is a common practice among working class in Nigeria. In Nigeria today, however, we are witnessing increasing full-fledged graduate businessman and woman. This development may not be in anyway surprising in the case of very well-known management, marketing etc even where employment opportunities abound, some of graduates from these fields would have still opted for business not only as a survival means but also as a career by which such graduates would remain relevant professionally.

Nature of Information Brokerage and Consultancy Business in Nigeria

Before the era of Information and Communication Technology, brokerage and consultancy according to Marita et al. (1986) was organized around literature search, selective dissemination of information, quick and extended reference services, cataloguing and classification of library documents, opening and organization of new libraries. Library building design and such advisory services as the best place to locate a library. The nature of rural library services, most of these services were manually accomplished for clients and fees were charged based on the time spent in executing the task.

In post Information and Communication Technology era, such as this millennium, which is characterized by both simple and complex technologies, the nature of information brokerage and consultancy business has not only changed, it has expanded so much to embrace other services and opportunities that were hitherto outside the services of traditional information centers, in their "information brokerage" Gupta, Kundra & Gupta (1983: p. 70) identified the following brokerage services:

a. Document Procurement Services: These services include such traditional services as document location and provision services, current awareness and Selective of Information Dissemination Services. Literature search on a particular or specified problems and bibliographic services. In this post information and communication technology era, most of these services are carried out with the help of relevant technology other services listed by the scholars are: Online searching, information research and analysis (involving simple reference questions to preparation of a full report on a specific topic). information consultancy (which involve services ranging from design of library and information systems to the design of library and information networks) computer based library and information service which specialized in digitization of library resources, development of computer software oriented to a library system and services. Organizing conference, seminars, workshops and publication of literature of any kind on behalf of a library as an information center.
b. Other Consultancy Services listed by Ocholla (1998) in his work are advising a client on matters within the expertise of the consultant, developing new skills or knowledge on behalf of a client, reviewing and evaluating technologies on behalf of clients and performing specific professional task based on consultants specialist knowledge, assisting in staff selection, education and development. On

to these lists, Foss (1998) added the following information brokerage and consultancy services:

- Bridging of gap between what is available and what customer want.
- Undertaking a global trawl (wide search) of potential information services and supplier and assessing the suitability of selection of information product for the customers.
- Building up service package for clients, customizing and integrating applications according to the client needs.
- Performing marketing and promotion services on behalf of its clients.
- Negotiating payment schedules for the services per performance, per usage of application and continually assessing the market, maintain awareness of future potential user requirement for info-ware.

From the list of services available for information brokers and consultants, it is clear that the service opportunities cut across the whole field of modern and traditional librarianship. These range of service extends as far as archival and museum institutions. It is important that a potential brokers or consultant should study his or her service environment to vividly understand the range of services that area available for information brokerage. And consultancy this is necessary before delving into the business.

Requirements for Brokerage and Consultancy Business in Nigeria

These have been divided into three categories:

a. Educational and Professional Requirements
b. Personal and General Requirements
c. Infrastructural Requirements

Details of these requirements are as follows:

a. **Educational Professional Requirements**: This is a person aspiring to be an information broker or information consultant must be graduate from a recognized university all over the world in any of the listed programmes: library and information science, library and information technology management, information and communication science, information

technology management and any other discipline. Attainment of higher degree in any of the listed field is an added advantage. He or she must also be a member of recognized professional bodies, particularly in the relevant fields.

b. **Personal and General Requirements**: This has to do with the personal traits, attributes or qualities of the potential broker or consultant. In his paper, introduction to Entrepreneurship. Nwosu (2014) identified eighteen attributes that could be found in almost all successful entrepreneurs. These are confidence (I.e. strong determination to succeed), snese of ownership (readiness to take full responsibility of problem), ability to communicate, passion to learn (curiosity): team spirit, system oriented: dedication, gratefulness, (those who are: grateful, appreciate what they are given: they respect it and nurture it): optimism; sociability; leaders by examples; not afraid of risk or success; hardworking; profit potentials; foresight; essential in every activity, patience, perseverance etc, other skills according to Nwosu (2014), Ekere & Ekere (2012), include economic skills, financial skills, social skills, political skills, and numerical skills, web navigation skills, proper comprehension of the business or business skills knowledge of potential clients.

c. **Infrastructural Requirements:** Information brokers and consultants must equip him/herself with resources relevant and accessible to answer his client requests. These includes in-house collections, computer terminal connectivity with database relevant to ones line of business, office accommodation, set of office furniture linkage with invisible colleges (link-in), photocopies, other information technology that are relevant to be chosen line of business, registration with relevant organizations including government agencies and parastatal for access to classified secrets and rear materials (Gupta, Kundra & Guota, 1998). other facilities include file cabinets, air conditioner, fridge, subscription to at least three important news-prints and so on. In addition to all this facilities mentioned, an information broker and consultant must know how to access initial capital to be able to start well. In the alternative he/she must have acquaintance that can assist him. Know-how to access to a person, organization or institution that can or are willing to assist him. Knowing-how to access YOU WIN facilities is an added advantage. This

is why a broker or a consultant must be sociable. Good economic skill is invaluable in this case.

Some Basic Facts to Know in Establishing Brokerage and Consultancy

First and foremost a prospective information broker and consultant must register with the Corporate Affairs Commission Division. This is a company registration and inspection organization established by the government to ensure that businesses are operated legally in this country. It is part of the responsibilities of the corporation to maintain proper records and addresses of such business outfits that have registered with it. Every registered company is is accountable to the corporation annually. Other facts include:

1. Learn about the business, brokerage and consultancy, by regularly patronizing website of other information professionals, reading trade journals, social networking like linkedIn, my space and so on, this will help the practitioner to have adequate knowledge of the emerging issues in business the new mode of running the business.
2. Endeavour to have a business location close to your real and potential audience. Proximity to the audience or client is an important consideration. However, this is preceded by selection of the nature of Information business you intend to embark upon and the clientele, real and potential.
3. Ensure your business is carried out in accordance with the law prevailing at the at the time and place. This appears that you should make yourself conversant with the prevailing business ethics and abide by them.
4. Transparency is an important business ethics, operate your business in a doubtless atmosphere. You should be trustworthy and responsible.
5. Emphasis promptness in services and keep to it religiously. Discuss with other consultants and information brokers for correct pricing of services. don't be too high and don't be too low, understand the whole issue about remuneration. That is payment for services.
6. In order to facilitate contact with or accessibility to your business or its office, it is necessary to get connected to internet or at least, have a postal address. You also need to open a business. If you do not have a reliable business account, many credible companies or individuals may have nothing to do with your brokerage and consultancy outfit. Personal account cannot be a substitute.

CHALLENGES OF BROKERAGE AND CONSULTANCY IN NIGERIA

Challenges are inevitable, often negative occurrences in any human undertaking, no matter the degree of proactive attempts or measures taken to ensure they do not occur. What then are the challenges of brokerage and consultancy in Nigeria?

a. Absence of culture of getting information through orthodox or formal sources. In Nigeria either because of large number of illiterate population or share ignorance among even the cities, people in Nigeria prefer unorthodox or informal sources of getting information for one reason or the other. Majority of people in Nigeria prefer interpersonal or primordial sources of getting information. Among the rural and even some urban populations, friends, acquaintances, imams, pastors, or even reverend fathers are often the most consulted sources of information (Bello, 2006). according to this author relevance, timelessness and reliability are the reasons often posited for the patronage of there unorthodox sources of information.
b. Paradigm shift in information provision and delivery services. Until the era of information and communication technology, information identification, provision, organization, storage and delivery services were almost the sole prerogative of the librarians. This is no longer the case in this era of ICT. Competing seriously with librarians and almost threatening and question the continuous relevance of librarianship in operators, search engines, web masters to mention a few. These new entrants into information business really pose a challenge to librarians.
c. Large number of traditional librarians. Almost 65% of librarians in Nigeria have traditional orientation. They have little or no knowledge of computer which is the most crucial infrastructure in the era of information. This orientation does efficient, reliable, responsible, and preparing information broker and consultant, one must possess or endeavour to equip oneself with adequate knowledge of computer and other telecommunication gadgets.
d. High poverty level in Nigeria. As we have earlier observed in this paper, information brokerage and consultancy require heavy initial capital. Although, it is possible to be moderate in this kind of business. One may decide not to have an office or basic infrastructural facilities, one may decide to depend on hiring these facilities. One should be not lose touch with the fact that one's vulnerability to control of others will be extremely slow and this can be discouraging. In Nigeria,

the surest but not easy source of getting such capital are the banks. The interest rate loans in Nigeria is so high that sustainability in the business becomes impossible. So also is the process of applying for the bank for loan, which is long complex and often frustrating.

e. The family structure in Nigeria hardly leads to prosperity in any business. Average Nigerians are polygamous in nature. They often maintain and nurture large family, majority of whom are complete liability.it is usually difficult to sustain this kind of family from ones salary, however big. The business capital often provides the quickest alternative source of sustaining the family. A broker who wants to grow in his/her living structure. Do not bite more than they can chew. Maintain a maintainable family.

WAY FORWARD FOR INFORMATION BROKERAGE AND CONSULTANCY IN NIGERIA

Information brokerage and consultancy, like any other business cannot survive if there is no steady customers or buyers; if the material and financial requirements of the business are not met; if the requisite skills and discipline are all not available; if the business ethics are frequently neglected; if the broker or the consultant failed to recognize the fact that he/she is operating in competitive business environment; if the broker or the consultant lack vital personal qualities such as good human relations, perseverance, sociability, that are invaluable for the success in business, there is certainly no way forward for business to succeed. The reverse of all these are the way forward for information brokers and consultants in Nigeria. An aspiring broker and consultant should not all these critical requirements and endeavour to possess or to be in touch with them.

CONCLUSION

The aspiring brokers and consultants must note very seriously that the enable social infrastructure such as electricity is either unavailable or is very poor in Nigeria. They should also note that the patronage for commercial information is partially equally on the very low level in Nigeria. This is because of poor reading culture and over dependence on primordial information sources. The implication of all these alternative source of social infrastructure as well as the need to embark on such preliminary services such as aggressive information marketing, use all means possible to persuade

people to embrace formal information sources as they contain most reliable, valid, objective, balanced, sieved and confirmation than informal sources.

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