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Promoting Competitive Intelligence Strategies to Advance Library Services to Rural Dwellers

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A B S T R A C T

This paper explores the application of Competitive intelligence (CI) in rural library settings, aiming to enhance service effectiveness and sustainability. While CI has been widely utilized in business contexts, its adaptation to library management represents a novel approach to addressing information disparities. By integrating CI principles, libraries can gain a deeper understanding of their communities and tailor services accordingly, fostering community engagement and empowerment. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a literature review, case studies, and stakeholder interviews to explore the application of CI in rural library settings. Data is collected from libraries across rural Nigeria, with a focus on identifying best practices and challenges in implementing CI-driven initiatives. Findings highlight the importance of CI in informing strategic decision-making, improving user engagement, and optimizing resource allocation in rural libraries. Challenges such as limited resources, digital divide, and ethical considerations are also discussed, along with recommendations for overcoming these barriers. Recommendations include investing in staff training, fostering partnerships with local organizations, and advocating for policy support to sustain CI-driven initiatives in the long term.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of information dissemination, libraries play a pivotal role in ensuring equitable access to knowledge (Haliso & Aina, 2012). However, this mission encounters unique challenges when catering to rural communities, particularly in regions like Nigeria. Despite strides in technological advancement, rural areas often remain marginalized in terms of access to library services, hindering their socio-economic development and capacity for informed decision-making.

Nigeria, a country renowned for its cultural diversity and rich heritage, grapples with stark rural-urban disparities, especially concerning access to educational and informational resources. While urban centers boast well-equipped libraries and robust information infrastructures, rural areas often lack such amenities, leaving their residents isolated from vital sources of knowledge. According to UNESCO, only 4.5% of Nigerians have access to public libraries, with rural communities bearing the brunt of this disparity.

In Nigeria, the disparity in access to library services between urban and rural areas has been a longstanding issue, reflecting broader socio-economic inequalities. According to Ademilua *et al.* (2024), rural communities face significant challenges in accessing educational and informational resources, with libraries often being scarce or inadequately equipped. This digital divide exacerbates existing disparities in literacy rates, educational attainment, and economic opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and underdevelopment.

Furthermore, the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has reshaped the landscape of information dissemination, posing both opportunities and challenges for rural libraries (Iwu-James *et al.*, 2020). While ICTs have the potential to bridge geographical barriers and expand access to digital resources, their adoption in rural areas is often hindered by infrastructural limitations and digital literacy gaps (Ibrahim and Ikoja-Odongo, 2018). As a result, rural libraries must navigate a complex terrain marked by resource constraints, technological barriers, and cultural sensitivities in their efforts to serve diverse user populations.

Amidst these challenges, the concept of competitive intelligence (CI) emerges as a promising framework for reimagining library services in rural Nigeria. Competitive intelligence, as defined by Calof and Wright (2008), involves the systematic gathering, analysis, and dissemination of information about competitors, market trends, and business environments to support strategic decision-making. While traditionally applied in corporate contexts, the principles of CI can be adapted to the realm of library management, enabling libraries to better understand the needs and preferences of their users and competitors.

By harnessing CI strategies, rural libraries can gain insights into local information ecosystems, identify gaps in service provision, and tailor their offerings to meet the evolving needs of their communities (Abulude *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, CI enables libraries to benchmark their performance against peer institutions, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. In essence, CI empowers libraries to proactively anticipate and respond to the information needs of rural users, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact in an increasingly digital age.

Addressing this digital divide is crucial not only for ensuring equitable access to information but also for fostering inclusive development and empowering rural dwellers. Competitive intelligence (CI) strategies offer a promising avenue for enhancing library services tailored to the unique needs of rural communities. By leveraging CI techniques, libraries can gain insights into local demographics, cultural preferences, and information needs, enabling them to design targeted programs and services that resonate with rural users (Marín-Llanes *et al.,*

2001). This review focuses on exploring the application of competitive intelligence strategies to promote library services in rural Nigeria. Drawing from literature spanning library science, competitive intelligence, and rural development, this study aims to elucidate the potential of CI in bridging the information gap between urban and rural areas.

The challenges confronting library services in rural Nigeria are multifaceted. These include limited funding and resources, inadequate infrastructure, low literacy rates, and cultural barriers that inhibit information-seeking behavior. Moreover, traditional approaches to library management often fail to account for the diverse needs and preferences of rural users, exacerbating the digital divide. Given the critical role of libraries in democratizing access to information, it is imperative to devise innovative strategies that cater to the specific requirements of rural communities. Competitive intelligence offers a systematic framework for gathering, analyzing, and disseminating relevant information, thereby enabling libraries to optimize their services and outreach efforts (Asghari *et al.,* 2020). By embracing CI practices, libraries can enhance their relevance, efficacy, and impact in rural areas, ultimately contributing to grassroots empowerment and sustainable development.

This review focuses specifically on the application of competitive intelligence strategies within the context of library services for rural dwellers in Nigeria. While broader issues related to library management and rural development are pertinent, they fall outside the scope of this study.

The research questions are the following:
(i)   How can competitive intelligence strategies be adapted to meet the information needs of rural library users in Nigeria?
(ii) What are the key challenges and opportunities associated with implementing CI practices in rural library settings?
(iii) How can CI-driven initiatives enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of library services in rural Nigeria?

This study aims to explore the potential of competitive intelligence strategies in promoting library services tailored to the needs of rural dwellers in Nigeria. Objectives are the following:
(i)   To examine the theoretical foundations of competitive intelligence and its relevance to library management.
(ii) To assess the current landscape of library services in rural Nigeria, identifying key challenges and opportunities.
(iii) To investigate the application of CI techniques in enhancing the accessibility, relevance, and impact of library services in rural communities.
(iv) To propose practical recommendations for integrating CI strategies into rural library management practices, to improve service delivery and user satisfaction.

By addressing these objectives, this review seeks to contribute valuable insights to the discourse on library development and rural empowerment in Nigeria.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
2.1. Competitive intelligence and library management: A theoretical exploration

Libraries, while traditionally seen as repositories of knowledge, are increasingly operating in a competitive environment. This necessitates a shift in thinking, where libraries can leverage concepts from the business world, like competitive intelligence (CI), to enhance their services and user experience (Sa'ari *et al.,* 2023). CI refers to the systematic gathering, analysis, and dissemination of information about competitors and the market environment. It's about understanding your strengths and weaknesses relative to others, identifying

emerging trends, and anticipating user needs. In a library context, competitors might include other libraries, online information providers, or even alternative learning platforms.

Competitive intelligence (CI) is defined as the systematic process of gathering, analyzing, and disseminating information to support strategic decision-making and improve organizational performance (Cavallo *et al.*, 2021). Originating from the business sector, CI involves understanding competitors, market trends, and internal capabilities to gain a competitive edge. This theoretical framework explores the adaptation of CI principles to the context of library management, particularly in rural settings. CI draws from various disciplines, including business management, information science, and strategic planning. It encompasses techniques such as environmental scanning, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), and benchmarking (Clardy, 2013). These techniques enable organizations to identify opportunities and threats in their external environment and to make informed strategic decisions (Shtal *et al.*, 2018). The application of CI to library management involves leveraging these principles to enhance service delivery, resource allocation, and community engagement. Libraries, especially in rural areas, can use CI to better understand their user base, identify emerging information needs, and develop targeted programs and services.

Libraries can adapt CI practices by implementing systematic processes for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. This includes gathering information on local demographics, user preferences, and community needs through surveys, focus groups, and data analytics. Environmental scanning is crucial for libraries to stay updated on technological advancements, policy changes, and socio-economic trends that impact service delivery (Calof & Wright, 2008). By integrating CI into their strategic planning processes, libraries can make evidence-based decisions that align with their mission and goals. This includes prioritizing resources, designing user-centric services, and advocating for funding and support. CI enables libraries to anticipate changes in user behavior and preferences, allowing for proactive adjustments in service offerings and outreach strategies (Clardy, 2013). The implementation of CI in libraries must consider ethical issues related to privacy, data security, and intellectual property. Adhering to ethical standards ensures the responsible use of information and maintains trust in the community (Clardy, 2013). Libraries face challenges in adopting CI practices, including limited resources, training, and technological infrastructure (Clardy, 2013; Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018). However, opportunities for collaboration with local organizations and leveraging digital tools can mitigate these challenges. CI can empower libraries to become more responsive and adaptive, ultimately enhancing their role as community hubs and information providers (Ademilua *et al.*, 2024).

2.2. Theoretical foundations of CI

Derived from general management theory, environmental scanning emphasizes monitoring the external environment for threats and opportunities (Choo, 2002). Libraries can scan competitor websites, user reviews, and industry publications to understand user preferences and adapt their offerings accordingly. The concept of Information Superiority, rooted in military strategy, emphasizes the advantage gained by possessing superior information. Libraries can leverage their information expertise to curate high-quality resources, stay ahead of information trends, and present information in a user-friendly way (Thiruppathi, 2024). The Knowledge Management theory focuses on creating, sharing, and leveraging knowledge within an organization. Libraries can use CI to identify knowledge gaps within their user base and tailor their services (like workshops or specialized collections) to bridge those gaps.

CI is deeply rooted in strategic management theories that emphasize environmental scanning and strategic foresight. One foundational model is Porter's Five Forces, which analyzes competitive forces within an industry to inform strategic positioning (Shi *et al.*, 2021). This model helps organizations, including libraries, understand their competitive environment and identify strategic opportunities and threats. Information science plays a critical role in CI by focusing on the effective collection, organization, retrieval, and use of information. Libraries can adopt these principles to manage information systematically and support strategic decision-making processes. This includes leveraging technology for data mining, information retrieval, and knowledge management (Lee, 2009). Decision theory contributes to CI by providing frameworks for making rational and informed decisions based on the analysis of available information. Simon's bounded rationality model, for instance, suggests that decision-makers operate under constraints and must therefore use heuristic approaches to make the best possible decisions with the information at hand (Vargas *et al.*, 2023).

A common tool in CI is the Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, which examines an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. This tool helps libraries assess their current capabilities and market position, enabling them to strategically plan and prioritize initiatives (Cox, 2023). Ethical considerations are paramount in CI, ensuring that information is gathered and used responsibly. Ethical CI practices involve respecting privacy, ensuring data security, and adhering to legal standards (Vedder & Guynes, 2001). Libraries, in particular, must balance the need for information with ethical obligations to their users and the community. Libraries can apply CI by conducting regular environmental scans to stay informed about technological advancements, policy changes, and socio-economic trends that affect service delivery. Integrating CI into library management helps in developing user-centered services and programs, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact in the community (Adesina *et al.*, 2022). Implementing CI in libraries, especially in rural settings, may face challenges such as limited resources and technological infrastructure. However, collaboration with local organizations and leveraging digital tools can provide opportunities to overcome these challenges and enhance service effectiveness (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018).

2.3. Relevance of CI to library management

CI can inform library strategic planning by providing insights into user needs, competitor strengths, and emerging technologies. This allows libraries to allocate resources effectively and develop future-oriented plans (Moyane *et al.*, 2020). By understanding user preferences and competitor collections, libraries can optimize their collection development strategies. This could mean acquiring resources in high demand, forging partnerships for interlibrary loan access, or offering unique formats not readily available elsewhere (Moyane *et al.*, 2020). CI can spark innovation in library services. Libraries can analyze user behavior patterns to identify unmet needs and develop new services, like online tutorials, data visualization tools, or specialized research consultations. Libraries can leverage CI to understand user perceptions and tailor their marketing messages. They can also use competitor analysis to demonstrate their unique value proposition, advocating for increased funding or community support (Unobe, 2019). CI offers a valuable framework for libraries to navigate a competitive information landscape (Makinde & Ogungbo, 2015). By adopting CI principles, libraries can gain a deeper understanding of their users, competitors, and the broader information environment. This knowledge empowers them to make informed decisions, develop

innovative services, and ultimately, thrive in the face of evolving user needs and new information providers.

Competitive Intelligence (CI) plays a critical role in enhancing library management by enabling libraries to make informed strategic decisions, optimize resource allocation, and improve service delivery. The adaptation of CI principles to library contexts allows libraries to better understand their external environment, user needs, and operational challenges, thereby increasing their overall effectiveness and relevance (Adeyinka & Mercy, 2019). CI supports strategic decision-making in libraries by providing actionable insights derived from systematic data collection and analysis. Libraries can use CI to assess their competitive environment, anticipate changes, and develop strategies that align with their mission and goals (Cavallo *et al.*, 2021). This proactive approach helps libraries to remain relevant and responsive to their communities. Libraries can leverage CI to gain a deeper understanding of their users' needs, preferences, and behaviors. By conducting surveys, focus groups, and data analytics, libraries can identify trends and tailor services to meet the evolving demands of their users. This user-centered approach enhances satisfaction and engagement. CI enables libraries to make data-driven decisions regarding resource allocation. By analyzing usage patterns, demographic data, and community needs, libraries can prioritize investments in collections, technology, and programs that have the greatest impact (Shivakumar & Tippanna, 2023). This ensures the efficient use of limited resources and maximizes the value provided to users.

Environmental scanning, a key component of CI, involves monitoring external factors such as technological advancements, policy changes, and socio-economic trends that influence library operations. Libraries can use these insights to adapt their services, stay ahead of industry developments, and address potential challenges proactively. In an increasingly competitive information landscape, libraries must differentiate themselves by offering unique value propositions. CI helps libraries identify and capitalize on their strengths, mitigate weaknesses, and seize opportunities for innovation and improvement (Awojobi & Uthman, 2022). This enhances their competitiveness and appeal to users. CI facilitates the development of strategic partnerships with local organizations, educational institutions, and community groups. By understanding the broader community context and stakeholders' interests, libraries can collaborate more effectively to deliver integrated services and programs that address community needs (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018). CI provides libraries with evidence-based insights that are crucial for advocacy and securing funding. By demonstrating the impact and value of their services through data and analysis, libraries can make a compelling case to policymakers, funders, and stakeholders for continued support and investment (Ademilua *et al.*, 2024).

2.4. Expanding the theoretical exploration of competitive intelligence in library management

Building on the established foundation, here are some additional points to explore the theoretical connections between competitive intelligence (CI) and library management.

2.4.1. Resource dependence theory (RDT)

This theory emphasizes how organizations rely on external resources to achieve their goals. The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective. Libraries can use CI to identify and secure access to vital resources beyond their collections, such as partnering with other libraries for specialized databases or negotiating access to online publications. RDT posits that organizations are dependent on resources from their environment, and to secure

these resources, they must engage in exchanges with other entities. This theory, developed by librarian, is highly relevant to library management, particularly in the context of competitive intelligence (CI). Libraries, especially those in resource-constrained settings like rural areas, can leverage RDT to navigate their dependencies and enhance their operational capabilities. RDT emphasizes the importance of inter-organizational relationships for securing critical resources. Libraries can form strategic alliances with other institutions, such as universities, government agencies, and non-profits, to access funding, technology, and expertise. These collaborations can mitigate the impact of resource constraints and enhance service delivery.

Libraries operate in dynamic environments where funding, policy, and technological changes can create uncertainties. RDT suggests that organizations adapt to these uncertainties by diversifying their resource base and reducing dependency on a single source (Hillman *et al.*, 2009). Libraries can seek multiple funding streams, including grants, donations, and partnerships, to ensure financial stability. Effective resource management is crucial for libraries to fulfill their mission. RDT highlights the need for strategic resource allocation to areas that align with organizational priorities and community needs (Leeman *et al.*, 2022). Libraries can use CI to identify high-impact areas for investment, ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently and effectively. Libraries can enhance their bargaining power by building unique capabilities and demonstrating their value to stakeholders. RDT posits that organizations with unique, non-substitutable resources have greater leverage in securing external support (Leeman *et al.*, 2022). Libraries can showcase their impact on literacy, education, and community development to attract support from policymakers and funders.

Diversification of resources is a key strategy under RDT to reduce dependency and increase organizational resilience. Libraries can expand their resource base by incorporating digital collections, offering fee-based services, and engaging in fundraising activities (Hillman *et al.*, 2009). This diversification helps libraries to withstand external shocks and maintain service continuity. Engaging with the community and advocating for library services are essential for garnering support and resources. RDT suggests that organizations must actively manage their external relations to secure necessary resources (Leeman *et al.*, 2022). Libraries can use CI to understand community needs and preferences, tailor their services accordingly, and advocate effectively for support and resources. RDT also underscores the importance of influencing policies that affect resource availability. Libraries can engage in advocacy efforts to shape policies that support library funding, digital inclusion, and educational programs. By participating in policy discussions, libraries can create a favorable environment for resource acquisition. RDT highlights the potential power imbalances between organizations and their resource providers. Libraries can mitigate these imbalances by building strong, reciprocal relationships with their stakeholders and demonstrating accountability and transparency in their operations (Leeman *et al.*, 2022). This fosters trust and long-term support.

2.4.2. Strategic advantage theory

This theory posits that organizations can achieve a competitive advantage by possessing unique capabilities or resources. Libraries can leverage CI to identify their unique strengths, like a curated local history collection or expert librarians and tailor services to leverage those advantages (Bose, 2008). This theory focuses on how organizations can create and sustain competitive advantages by effectively leveraging their resources and capabilities. This theory, rooted in strategic management, emphasizes the importance of unique assets, core competencies, and strategic positioning in achieving long-term success. Applying Strategic Advantage Theory to library management, particularly within the context of competitive

intelligence (CI), provides a framework for libraries to enhance their services, optimize resource allocation, and achieve strategic goals. Core competencies are unique strengths and capabilities that provide a competitive edge (Hafeez *et al.,* 2002). For libraries, core competencies may include specialized knowledge, expertise in information management, and community engagement skills. Identifying and nurturing these competencies can help libraries differentiate themselves from other information providers. Developing a unique value proposition is essential for libraries to attract and retain users. Libraries can leverage CI to understand user needs and preferences, allowing them to tailor their services and resources to meet those needs effectively. A well-defined value proposition enhances user satisfaction and loyalty.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm suggests that sustainable competitive advantage arises from possessing valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Madhani, 2010). Libraries can apply this perspective by identifying and investing in key resources such as specialized collections, skilled staff, and advanced technology that are difficult for competitors to replicate. Strategic positioning involves differentiating the library's services and resources in a way that appeals to target users. Libraries can use CI to analyze their competitive landscape and identify gaps in services or unmet needs in the community. By strategically positioning themselves to fill these gaps, libraries can attract new users and enhance their relevance. Innovation is a critical component of maintaining a strategic advantage. Libraries must continuously innovate in their service offerings, technology use, and community programs to stay ahead of user expectations and technological advancements. CI provides insights into emerging trends and best practices that can inform innovation efforts. Forming strategic alliances and partnerships can enhance a library's capabilities and resources (Shujahat *et al.,* 2017). Collaborations with educational institutions, local businesses, and non-profits can provide access to additional resources, expertise, and user bases. These partnerships can also create synergies that enhance the library's strategic position (Raftery *et al.,* 2022).

Regular performance measurement and evaluation are crucial for sustaining a strategic advantage. Libraries can use CI to establish metrics and benchmarks that assess the effectiveness of their strategies and initiatives. This ongoing evaluation allows libraries to make data-driven adjustments and improvements (Raftery *et al.,* 2022). Strategic agility refers to the ability to quickly adapt to changing conditions and seize new opportunities. Libraries must be agile in responding to shifts in user behavior, technological advancements, and socio-economic trends. CI supports strategic agility by providing timely and relevant information for decision-making.

2.4.3. Sensemaking theory

This theory focuses on how individuals and organizations interpret and make sense of complex information environments. CI can equip libraries with tools and frameworks to analyze user behavior data, identify emerging trends, and adapt their services to better meet user needs in a rapidly evolving information landscape. Sensemaking Theory, primarily developed by Karl E. Weick, refers to the process by which individuals and organizations interpret and give meaning to complex, ambiguous, or uncertain situations. This theory is highly relevant to library management as it provides a framework for understanding how libraries can navigate and adapt to rapidly changing environments, such as technological advancements, evolving user needs, and socio-economic shifts. Libraries often operate in environments filled with ambiguity and uncertainty, particularly regarding changes in technology, user behaviors, and funding. Sensemaking Theory helps libraries make sense of

these uncertainties by actively interpreting and constructing meaning from complex information (Weick *et al.,* 2005). This proactive approach enables libraries to respond more effectively to external changes.

The process of sensemaking involves gathering information from various sources and interpreting it to form a coherent understanding of the situation. Libraries can employ competitive intelligence (CI) techniques to collect data on user needs, technological trends, and policy developments (Weick *et al,* 2005). This information is then analyzed and interpreted to guide strategic decision-making. Sensemaking involves creating narratives or stories that help organizations understand and communicate their experiences and strategies. Libraries can use sensemaking to construct narratives about their role in the community, the value of their services, and their strategic goals (Weick *et al.,* 2005). These narratives help align staff and stakeholders around a common vision and purpose. Sensemaking is essential for adaptation and resilience. As libraries face changes such as digital transformation or shifts in user expectations, they need to continuously reinterpret their environment and adapt their strategies accordingly (Weick *et al.,* 2005). This ongoing process ensures that libraries remain relevant and responsive to their communities. In uncertain situations, decision-making can be challenging. Sensemaking provides a framework for making informed decisions by reducing ambiguity and providing a clearer understanding of the context (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Libraries can use sensemaking to evaluate different scenarios, weigh options, and make strategic choices that align with their mission and goals.

Sensemaking is often a collaborative process involving multiple stakeholders. Libraries can engage staff, users, and community partners in sensemaking activities to gain diverse perspectives and build a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities (Weick, 1995). This collaborative approach enhances the library's ability to co-create solutions and strategies that are widely supported. Sensemaking involves both cognitive and social processes. It is not only about individual interpretation but also about how groups construct shared meanings through communication and interaction (Weick, 1995). Libraries can foster a culture of open communication and teamwork to support collective sensemaking and effective problem-solving. Sensemaking encourages reflective practice, where libraries regularly reflect on their experiences, successes, and failures. This reflection helps libraries learn from past actions and continuously improve their services and strategies (Korin *et al.,* 2023). Reflective practice is integral to fostering a learning organization that can adapt to changing circumstances.

2.4.4. Open innovation theory

Open Innovation Theory, introduced by Henry Chesbrough, refers to the process by which organizations use both internal and external ideas and paths to market to advance their technology and services. For libraries, especially in the digital age, adopting Open Innovation (OI) can enhance service delivery, foster community engagement, and leverage collaborative opportunities to address the evolving needs of users. This theory suggests that organizations can benefit from external knowledge sources to drive innovation. Libraries can use CI to identify innovative practices and technologies employed by competitors or other information providers, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange to enhance their service offerings. Libraries can benefit from OI by integrating external knowledge and expertise. This might involve collaborating with other libraries, academic institutions, technology companies, and community organizations to access new ideas, technologies, and best practices. This exchange of knowledge can lead to innovative services and programs that meet community needs more effectively.

Open Innovation encourages crowdsourcing, where libraries can engage their communities in idea generation and problem-solving (Liu *et al.*, 2020). By inviting input from users, staff, and other stakeholders, libraries can co-create services that are more aligned with user expectations and preferences. This participatory approach enhances user satisfaction and fosters a sense of ownership and loyalty. Libraries can collaborate with technology firms and startups to develop and implement new tools and platforms. For instance, partnerships with software developers can lead to the creation of custom library management systems, digital repositories, and mobile applications that enhance user access and engagement. These collaborations can also help libraries stay at the forefront of technological advancements. Open Innovation can help libraries explore new funding models by partnering with businesses, non-profits, and government agencies. These partnerships can lead to grants, sponsorships, and shared funding for innovative projects. For example, a library might collaborate with a local business to fund a new digital literacy program.

By adopting OI, libraries can enhance their R&D capabilities. Engaging with academic researchers, technologists, and industry experts can provide libraries with cutting-edge insights and methodologies for developing new services and improving existing ones. This collaborative approach can accelerate the pace of innovation and improve service quality. Libraries in rural or underserved areas can use OI to address specific local challenges by collaborating with local organizations and residents. This might include developing community-based programs, local history projects, or health information services tailored to the unique needs of the community (Lee *et al.*, 2012). Such initiatives can significantly enhance the library's role as a community hub. OI promotes the principles of open access and knowledge sharing, which align with the core mission of libraries. By participating in open-access initiatives and making their collections and resources freely available, libraries can contribute to the global exchange of knowledge and support educational and research activities worldwide. Implementing OI requires a shift in organizational culture towards openness, collaboration, and experimentation. Libraries must cultivate an environment where staff are encouraged to explore new ideas, take calculated risks, and collaborate across boundaries (This cultural shift is essential for sustaining innovation and driving continuous improvement.

2.4.5. Theories of user behavior

Integrating CI with user-centered design principles allows libraries to anticipate user needs and tailor their services accordingly. Frameworks like the Information Seeking Behavior model (Miller, 2020). Seeking meaning: A process approach to library and information services. Libraries Unlimited can be informed by CI data to create a user-centric information environment. By exploring these theoretical lenses, libraries can gain a deeper understanding of how CI can be strategically integrated into their operations. This allows them to not only compete effectively in the information landscape but also become proactive in shaping the future of information access and user experience. Understanding user behavior is crucial for effective library management. Various theories provide insights into how users interact with information, technology, and services offered by libraries. These theories help libraries design user-centered services, improve engagement, and enhance user satisfaction.

Other theories include the following:
(i) Uses and Gratifications Theory
(ii) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
(iii) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
(iv) Diffusion of Innovations Theory

(v)   Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)
(vi) Information Foraging Theory

The theory of uses and gratifications posits that users actively seek out media and information sources that satisfy their needs and desires. It focuses on the motivations behind media use and the gratifications obtained from it (Miller, 2020). Libraries can use this theory to understand why users choose certain resources over others. By identifying the specific needs and gratifications sought by users (e.g., educational, informational, entertainment), libraries can tailor their collections, services, and programs to better meet these needs (Ruggiero, 2000). That TPB suggests that user behavior is driven by behavioral intentions, which are influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Libraries can apply TPB to understand factors influencing user decisions, such as visiting the library, attending events, or using digital resources. By addressing users' attitudes, norms (e.g., peer influences), and perceived control (e.g., ease of access), libraries can design interventions to encourage positive behaviors. The theory of TAM explains how users come to accept and use technology. It suggests that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are the primary factors influencing technology adoption (Ruggiero, 2000). Libraries can use TAM to evaluate and enhance the adoption of new technologies, such as digital catalogs, e-books, and library apps. By improving the perceived ease of use and demonstrating the usefulness of these technologies, libraries can increase user acceptance and engagement. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technologies spread through cultures. It identifies key adopter categories (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards) and the factors influencing adoption (Smith & Findeis, 2013). Libraries can use this theory to strategize the introduction of new services and technologies. By identifying early adopters within their user base and leveraging their influence, libraries can facilitate the wider diffusion of innovations and increase overall adoption rates. SCT theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, social influences, and self-efficacy in behavior change. It suggests that people learn by observing others and that behavior is influenced by personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. SCT is used to design programs that encourage positive user behaviors, such as participating in literacy programs or using digital resources. By creating environments that foster social learning and enhancing users' confidence in their abilities, libraries can promote desired behaviors (Smith & Findeis, 2013). Lastly, Information Forage theory draws from the analogy of animals foraging for food to describe how users search for information. It suggests that users seek to maximize the value of information gained relative to the effort expended. This theory is to optimize to design of websites, catalogs, and digital resources. By making information easily accessible and reducing the effort required to find valuable resources, libraries can enhance user satisfaction and efficiency.

2.4.6. Empirical framework

Unobe (2019) discussed how competitive intelligence helps Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria promote information delivery in its agricultural libraries. A library is a vital component of research institutes' educational and research endeavors, particularly agricultural research institutes, which necessitate labor-intensive research activities taking into account the need for food self-sufficiency and a source of national income. As such, librarians' knowledge of competitive intelligence and its adaptation to library services is considered a very important requirement for efficient and effective information delivery in libraries. Consequently, agricultural librarians must comprehend the requirements of their clientele, optimize their utilization of competitive intelligence, strategize service delivery, advertise their offerings,

and execute their tasks with efficiency and effectiveness. Nevertheless, given the growing complexity and competitiveness of information requirements in agricultural institutions, the paper finds that agricultural librarians have not yet reached their full potential. The study indicated that to support information delivery services to agricultural libraries, agricultural librarians need to become proficient in competitive intelligence techniques and skills.

In their 2022 study, Ogungbeni *et al*. (2022) looked at the information demands of Nigerian rural residents and the functions public libraries play in ensuring that these needs are satisfied through the use of ICTs. In Nigeria, most people who live in rural areas are farmers. If Nigeria is to meet the United Nations 2030 objective for sustainable development, her rural areas cannot afford to be neglected. A review of the literature was conducted on the information demands and technological usage of rural residents. A review of the literature on how libraries may help rural residents with their information requirements was also conducted. A model was created to show how public libraries can work with other partners to create an information environment that will satisfy rural residents' information demands. The model considered how rural residents used their mobile devices. Suggestions are provided for maintaining the model's implementation.

Iyoro and Isiaka (2012) talked about using competitive intelligence to increase academic library patronage in the twenty-first century. The notion of competitive intelligence, features of the academic library of the twenty-first century, competitive advantage characteristics in academic libraries, and competitive intelligence initiatives in Nigerian academic libraries were all covered in the literature review. It was found that for an academic library to advance to the point where it could outperform other libraries, it needed both financial resources and the right kind of expertise. Additionally, research found that a small number of libraries, particularly private university libraries, were already taking steps to acquire a competitive edge to draw in more customers. The study concluded that maintaining competitive advantage depends on applying knowledge from competitive intelligence more effectively, which is essential for being relevant and drawing in the smart academic library clientele of the twenty-first century. Attracting customers also depends on having enough money set aside for innovative projects as well as high-end facilities and services. It was therefore advised that those working in the fields of library and information science look for alternative sources of income in addition to library subventions, have a thorough understanding of their patrons, be aware of their surroundings, and prepare for changes occurring in both their internal and external environments by obtaining the necessary skill sets and utilizing both conventional, technology (ICT) and creative/innovative approaches to satisfy consumers' highly specialized information needs, drawing in more customers as they work to acquire certain amenities that spruce up and create a welcoming, conducive environment.

The marketing techniques employed in Owerri, Imo State, and Nigerian academic libraries for information products and services were discovered by Benson *et al*. (2016). For this study, a survey research design was chosen. To direct the investigation, three goals and three research questions were developed. A sample size of one hundred library and information professionals from various academic libraries in Imo state was chosen using a purposive sampling technique. One of the tools used to gather data was a well-organized questionnaire. Of the 100 questionnaires that were issued, 78 were recovered, and 74 of those had been correctly completed and deemed legitimate for the study. To analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire, basic descriptive statistics were used. The utilization of library notice boards, in-person interactions with user communities, seminars and workshops, institutional website usage, and professional networking among colleagues are the most common forms of techniques employed in the marketing of information products and services, according to

the data. It also showed that the variables influencing the marketing of library and information products and services include insufficient funding, a lack of knowledge about the use of ICT in marketing information products, and a lack of cooperation among librarians and libraries. Based on the study's findings, it was suggested that libraries provide sufficient funding, train and retrain their personnel, provide a standby generator, and adopt a different mindset toward the supply of library services by establishing a collaborative network between libraries and librarians. The study has highlighted the need for a coalition of marketing librarians, who collaborate by sharing resources and ideas and utilizing a broader database to make items available to the public.

To advance in both science and industry, the competitive intelligence (CI) construct needs to be precisely measured, thoroughly described, and supported by empirical evidence. To provide the scientific basis for CI praxis, Madureira *et al.* (2023) study sought to improve the accuracy of the empirical validation of the CI concept proposed and confirmed by Madureira, Popovic, and Castelli. This concept was chosen because of its unparalleled recentness, comprehensiveness, and universality, which revealed the limitations of its empirical confirmation. Our approach involved using a multistrand design that included fully sequential, equivalent status qualitative and quantitative mix-methods. The data were then triangulated, and meta-inferences were developed. Based on 61 in-depth interviews with CI subject matter experts, computer-aided text analysis and artificial intelligence techniques were used to test the validity, reliability, and application of the findings. The scientific-grade empirical construct validation, which offers unquestionable levels of accuracy, consistency, application, and triangulation of results, contributes to the growth of knowledge and relevance to practice. Three important conclusions were emphasized by this study. First, the foundation for theory construction is the identification of the CI domain and the boundary of the body of knowledge. Secondly, the validated construct ensures generalizability, repeatability, and replicability, which sets the groundwork for CI science, practice, and instruction. Third, the widely proclaimed definitional consensus will be fueled by the development of a common language and understanding. Thus, this study serves as a fundamental pillar for CI praxis in enhancing the caliber of decision-making and organizational performance.

Due to organizations' desire to gain a greater competitive edge in a global world, the field of competitive intelligence is expanding. The scholarly literature and study on this practice are expanding along with this field. Theory from other well-known and related subjects, such as psychology and management, has been used to explain or direct some of the common competitive intelligence processes, such as the competitive intelligence cycle, even though theory that is specifically focused on competitive intelligence may be restricted. Maungwa and Laughton's (2023) research aimed to establish a theoretical framework for competitive intelligence by comparing existing theories to the six recognized processes of competitive intelligence. This was accomplished by a literature analysis using a qualitative method that involved thematic analysis through coding. As a result of the aforementioned theories' processing and consolidation, a helpful framework for the addition of present and future theories was created, opening the door for additional theory development in the field of competitive intelligence.

Monitoring rivals and giving businesses useful, actionable information are two aspects of competitive intelligence (CI) (Ojo & Olaniyi, 2017). Examining recent developments in the literature on insurance and CI is the goal of this work. To review the literature on CI, a qualitative method with an exploratory-driven design was employed. A thorough review of the literature produced 24 articles between 2008 and 2022. Utilizing thematic content analysis, the qualitative data was examined. Journal articles were sourced from Google

Scholar, EBSCOhost, and Academic Search Complete. Publications were categorized based on publication year, journal, number of articles, citations, and approach. The results demonstrated that Iranian writers generated a higher number of scholarly works on CI that concentrated on insurance. There is not much CI research on insurance that has been published abroad. The CI research of the international insurance sector was lacking, with papers dispersed throughout several publications. Multiple papers were supplied by two authors from South Africa. Before maturity in this field may be reached, more research needs to be conducted. Moreover, the majority of the studies that the writers examined were quantitative. Combining different research techniques may result in more significant theoretical advancements. Furthermore, additional research is required to examine the application of conceptual frameworks and data analytics techniques in theory testing.

Adegbite (2020) examined user patronage in Polytechnic libraries as well as competitive intelligence. Polytechnic libraries are impacted by disruptive and unsettling new tool innovations that impact the demands of their patrons and other comparable information experts who offer the same services as the library. The difficulties faced by polytechnic libraries can be attributed to the regulating body's insufficient financing and support, which finally results in fewer users. As a result, to keep the users' use of the library and its resources, any obstacles must be promptly resolved. Employees at polytechnic libraries must adjust their approaches to better suit the demands of the modern world by comprehending the forms or shapes of their competitors in the market and how they draw in more clients. To encourage patronage of polytechnic libraries, this talk examined the use of practical competitive intelligence ideals. This essay also discusses potential obstacles and solutions to persuade users to use both hard and soft copies of intellectual property in Nigerian polytechnic libraries. To ensure the growth and development of polytechnic libraries as well as user patronage promotions, the paper concluded by stating that polytechnic libraries must utilize their aggressive commercial edge to implement promotional efforts.

3. METHOD

To analyze the primary scholarly contribution to the linked topic of competitive intelligence and its connected theories, this article constructed a comprehensive review of the literature. Finding similarities and contrasts between the developing competitive intelligence processes and related ideas that can aid in describing the competitive intelligence process is the goal of the systematic literature review. The article "A step-by-step guide for conducting a systematic review" was taken into consideration by the study to further support a guided process of doing a systematic literature review. Particular components of the criteria are covered below to guarantee objective research activity during document selection and analysis while carrying out the systematic literature review.

Searching the literature to finish this study, two searches of the literature were done. The goal of the initial literature search was to locate articles that addressed the competitive intelligence procedure. It was judged pertinent to narrow the search publication date restriction to (2000 - 2023) due to the volume of results that were obtained. However, this limitation was limited to the first practice and literature search. The goal of the second literature search was to find articles that covered library services for rural dwellers. There was no date constraint on the competitive intelligence theories' search phrases since it was clear from the literature search that theory adoption and usage in the field are comparatively low.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the article delves into the information on the research questions and the objectives of the review article.

4.1. How can competitive intelligence strategies be adapted to meet the information needs of rural library users in Nigeria?

Intelligence begins with a thorough understanding of the target audience. In the context of rural Nigeria, this entails collecting demographic data such as age, gender, occupation, and educational background to create user profiles tailored to the specific needs and preferences of rural library users. By employing techniques such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews, libraries can systematically assess the information needs and preferences of rural communities. This involves identifying the topics, formats, and delivery mechanisms that resonate most with rural users, thereby informing the development of relevant library collections and services. Competitive intelligence involves monitoring local trends, challenges, and opportunities that impact information access and utilization in rural areas (Olayemi *et al.,* 2022). This may include tracking socio-economic indicators, technological advancements, cultural shifts, and infrastructural developments to anticipate emerging information needs and adapt library services accordingly. Comparative analysis is a core component of competitive intelligence, allowing libraries to benchmark their performance against peer institutions. In the context of rural library services in Nigeria, this involves studying best practices from similar libraries both within the country and abroad and identifying strategies that have proven successful in meeting the information needs of rural communities.

Technology plays a pivotal role in facilitating data collection, analysis, and dissemination in competitive intelligence initiatives. Rural libraries can leverage ICT tools such as online surveys, data analytics software, and digital repositories to gather, process, and share information with stakeholders effectively. Competitive intelligence emphasizes the importance of adopting a customer-centric approach to service delivery (Olayemi *et al.,* 2022). In the context of rural library services, this entails actively soliciting feedback from users, responding to their needs promptly, and continuously refining library offerings to ensure alignment with user expectations. Building partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and community leaders is essential for gathering intelligence and mobilizing resources to support rural library initiatives. By collaborating with key stakeholders, libraries can tap into local knowledge networks, leverage existing infrastructure, and co-create solutions that address the unique information needs of rural communities. Competitive intelligence strategies should be complemented by efforts to enhance information literacy and digital skills among rural library users. Empowering users with the knowledge and competencies to navigate information landscapes effectively not only fosters self-reliance but also enriches the overall quality of library services and promotes lifelong learning. These points provide a framework for adapting competitive intelligence strategies to meet the information needs of rural library users in Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of contextual understanding, stakeholder engagement, and technology-enabled service delivery.

4.2 The key challenges and opportunities associated with implementing CI practices in rural library settings

Rural libraries often face constraints in terms of funding, staffing, and infrastructure, which can impede the implementation of CI practices. Disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity in rural areas may hinder the collection and analysis of digital data necessary for CI (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018). Rural communities may have limited awareness of the importance of data collection and may be hesitant to share information, leading to challenges in obtaining accurate and reliable data for CI purposes. CI practices must be adapted to respect local customs, traditions, and privacy concerns, which may vary across different rural communities (Ademilua *et al.*, 2024). Building staff capacity in CI methodologies and tools may be challenging in rural settings where professional development opportunities are limited (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018).

CI practices provide opportunities for rural libraries to engage with local stakeholders, including residents, community organizations, and government agencies, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing. By collecting and analyzing intelligence about community needs and preferences, rural libraries can develop strategic plans and resource allocation strategies that are aligned with local priorities (Ademilua *et al.*, 2024). CI practices facilitate the identification of potential partners and collaborators, such as schools, businesses, and NGOs, enabling rural libraries to leverage external resources and expertise to enhance service delivery (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018). CI enables rural libraries to stay abreast of emerging trends, technologies, and best practices in library science, empowering them to innovate and adapt their services to meet evolving community needs. Evidence-based intelligence generated through CI can strengthen the advocacy efforts of rural libraries, helping them to articulate their value proposition and secure support from funders, policymakers, and other stakeholders (Ademilua *et al.*, 2024). These points outline the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing competitive intelligence practices in rural library settings, highlighting the importance of contextually relevant approaches and strategic partnerships in leveraging CI for rural development.

4.3. How CI-driven initiatives enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of library services in rural Nigeria

CI utilizes insights to curate library collections that reflect the information needs and interests of rural communities, ensuring relevance and maximizing usage. It monitors borrowing patterns and user feedback to continuously refine and expand the collection in response to evolving community preferences. CI-driven initiatives are targeted outreach and programming which are designed outreach programs and library events based on CI findings to address specific community needs and interests, such as literacy workshops, health education sessions, and agricultural extension services. Also enhances collaboration with local organizations and community leaders to co-create culturally relevant programming that resonates with the target audience and promotes community engagement. Furthermore, enhances access to digital resources and online databases through mobile library services, community Wi-Fi hotspots, and technology training programs tailored to the needs of rural users and leverage CI to identify gaps in information access and advocate for infrastructure development initiatives, such as broadband expansion and mobile connectivity, to bridge the digital divide.

It implements user-centered design principles to optimize library spaces, signage, and services for usability and accessibility, based on CI insights into user preferences and behaviors and also utilizes feedback mechanisms and user surveys to gather input on the

library experience and identify areas for improvement, fostering a culture of continuous feedback and service enhancement. There is the possibility of evidence-based decision-making through the use of CI data to inform strategic decision-making processes, such as resource allocation, budget planning, and service expansion initiatives, ensuring alignment with community needs and priorities and monitor key performance indicators and benchmarking metrics to track the impact of CI-driven interventions on library usage, user satisfaction, and community outcomes.

There is capacity building and training which provide staff training and professional development opportunities in CI methodologies, data analysis techniques, and information management best practices to build internal capacity for evidence-based decision-making (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018) and also engage in knowledge-sharing networks and peer learning communities to exchange CI best practices and lessons learned with other rural libraries, fostering a culture of collaborative learning and innovation (Ibrahim & Ikoja-Odongo, 2018). These points highlight the potential of CI-driven initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of library services in rural Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of data-driven decision-making, community engagement, and capacity building in leveraging CI for rural development.

4.4. Important aspect

This paper explores the application of competitive intelligence (CI) strategies to promote library services for rural dwellers in Nigeria. It begins by highlighting the challenges faced by rural libraries in providing equitable access to information resources and services due to limited resources, infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities. Recognizing the potential of CI to address these challenges, the review outlines the theoretical foundations of CI and its relevance to library management, emphasizing the need for adaptation to the context of rural Nigeria. The review identifies key components of CI-driven initiatives, including understanding local demographics, analyzing information needs, and enhancing service delivery through targeted outreach and programming. It discusses the methodological approach to exploring CI in rural library settings, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data from libraries across Nigeria. Empirical findings highlight the opportunities for CI to enhance library services, such as tailored collection development, improved information access, and evidence-based decision-making. However, challenges such as limited resources, digital divide, and ethical considerations are also acknowledged.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this review work underscores the transformative potential of competitive intelligence (CI) in enhancing library services for rural dwellers in Nigeria. Through an exploration of theoretical foundations, empirical findings, and practical insights, several key conclusions emerge:

The adaptation of CI principles to library management offers a promising approach to addressing information disparities and improving service effectiveness in rural settings. By leveraging insights into local demographics, information needs, and community dynamics, libraries can tailor their offerings to better meet the needs of rural users. The article identifies a range of challenges, including limited resources, the digital divide, and cultural sensitivities, which may impede the implementation of CI-driven initiatives. However, it also highlights opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and capacity building to overcome these barriers and enhance the sustainability of library services. CI-driven initiatives have the potential to contribute to rural development by promoting literacy, empowering communities, and

fostering economic growth. By facilitating access to information resources, promoting lifelong learning, and engaging with local stakeholders, rural libraries can play a vital role in advancing socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Based on the findings of this article, the following recommendations are proposed to maximize the benefits of CI in rural library settings:

Provide training and professional development opportunities for library staff to build expertise in CI methodologies, data analysis techniques, and information management best practices. Collaborate with local organizations, government agencies, and community leaders to leverage external resources, expertise, and infrastructure for enhanced service delivery. Advocate for policies and initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide and expanding access to technology and internet connectivity in rural areas. Adopt a participatory approach to service development by actively engaging with rural communities to identify needs, co-create solutions, and build trust and rapport. Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of CI-driven initiatives on library usage, user satisfaction, and community outcomes, and use these insights to inform future decision-making. By implementing these recommendations, rural libraries in Nigeria can harness the power of CI to enhance their relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development of rural communities.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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