

Journal of Information Science

<http://jis.sagepub.com/>

Information consultancy and brokerage in Botswana

Dennis N. Ocholla

Journal of Information Science 1998 24: 83

DOI: 10.1177/016555159802400203

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://jis.sagepub.com/content/24/2/83>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

Additional services and information for *Journal of Information Science* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jis.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jis.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://jis.sagepub.com/content/24/2/83.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Apr 1, 1998

[What is This?](#)

Information consultancy and brokerage in Botswana

Dennis N. Ocholla

University of Zululand, South Africa

Received 28 May 1997

Revised 18 November 1997

Abstract.

Limited empirical research on information consultancy and brokerage is documented and almost nothing originates from authors in the developing countries despite the upsurge of reasons for involvement in the services provided in the region. However, in considering investment in consultancy and brokerage services in a unique and unknown consumer environment such as Africa, it would be foolhardy to ignore the complexities posed by the coexistence of an information-conscious population on the one hand and a semi-literate population on the other. This study investigates the need for information consultancy and brokerage services in Botswana for the advice, creation and development of information consultancy and brokerage services in the country. The study was conducted in Botswana and data was collected in Gaborone, which has 34.3% of the urban population, including 10% of the national population, and is also the capital city and seat for government and private agencies in the country. Data was collected by means of questionnaires and interviews with the public and private sectors as well as information consultants and brokers. The analysis of data and the subsequent results revealed that, while Botswana has information consultants and brokers, there is a need for their services in management mainly but also in information technology, information systems and informal training. Unexplored and less-exploited markets exist in both the private and public sector. So far, access to information used

by clients is mainly through private contacts (70.6%), office files (69.6%), mass media (60.3%) and information consultancy and brokerage (34%). The study recommends that coordination, marketing, promotion and publicity of information consultancy and brokerage activities are essential. The areas identified for consultancy services need to be developed and exploited, clients' awareness of the usefulness of information management be created and the consultants and brokers be readily available when needed. The study provides a basis for market analysis that can benefit training institutions in librarianship and information management in capacity building.

1. Introduction

The trend in global sociocultural and technological development is increasingly leaning towards the creation of an information society. African societies are part of this popular development and the issues and problems arising from the new trends are no longer Western problems alone. Information consultancy and brokerage seem to have become Africa's concern because of the reasons behind their origins. Among them are: unemployment; willingness of the information consumers to pay for consultancy services; the inability of existing information provision centres to cope with or provide the information services needed; the rising demand for complementary information services; cutbacks on public sector spending and unpromising donor spending on Africa. In addition, the growing interest in self-employment and additional incomes to compensate for inflation has been a major concern. Similarly, the increased use and exploitation of goods and services from the industrialised world also bring Africa closer to the rest of the world.

The terms 'information consultancy' and 'information brokerage', as was evidenced in this study, raise major confusion. Attempts to define information consultancy and brokerage reveal similarities other than differences between brokerage and consultancy [1, pp. 259–260]. Quite often, brokerage is given more

Correspondence to: Professor D. Ocholla, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Zululand X1001, KwaDlangezwa 3886, South Africa. Tel: +27 (0) 351 93911. Fax: +27 (0) 351 93420. E-mail: docholla@pan.uzulu.ac.za

prominence at the expense of consultancy [2, pp. 279 and 307–308]. Searches on the LISA database, by using key terms based on the two terms, tend to indicate that brokerage is a more popular search term than information consultancy in respect of recall. Should we view information brokerage to be part of the work done by information consultants? For instance, if a physician consultant does not charge a patient for the product/drug directly, he will, in most cases, charge for the service. Although most consultancy activities end up in providing intangible commodities – the service in itself amounts to the provision of a tangible commodity – the product as well.

The definition taken by this study is that which appears in the *South African Journal of Library and Information Science* [3], which defines an information consultant as 'a specialist who gives expert advice on information'. In the document referred to, the following activities are identified for the information consultant:

- (1) advising a client on matters within the expertise of the consultant;
- (2) developing new skills or knowledge on behalf of a client;
- (3) reviewing and evaluating technologies on behalf of a client; and
- (4) performing specific professional tasks based on a consultant's specialist knowledge, including staff selection, education and development.

The foregoing definition poses less semantic differences than that for information brokers, which views brokers as individuals or organisations who operate enterprises that charge fees for information-related services and products [2, p. 279]. Who are these individuals? Can they be consultants?

Judging from the functions of a consultant as highlighted above, there is no significant difference between a consultant and a broker.

1.1. Botswana

Botswana is a landlocked country in southern Africa. The territory of Botswana covers 582,000 square kilometres, while the country has a population of approximately 1.35 million people, of which 66.9% live in rural areas while 33.1% reside in urban areas. The level of literacy is estimated at 74%. Gaborone, the capital city, has a population of 133,468 people, which is 30.2% of the total urban population and 10% of the total national population [4].

The country's socio-economic condition includes sophisticated information consumers alongside some

of the least information-conscious people. Information provision centres and services, such as libraries, are minimal and still underdeveloped and underutilised. In addition, services are less market-driven and adapt to change very slowly. On the other hand, Botswana is at the crossroads between developed and underdeveloped economies. This is what Briquet de Lemos calls '... developing economy characterised by, among other things, a dualistic type where archaic forms of economic organisation coexist side by side with modern forms' [5, p. 32]. Ironically, Botswana increasingly uses modern technology, maintains economic stability and high income *per capita*, upholds a low mortality rate, maintains an above-average literacy rate, and invests heavily in modern management styles for the production and distribution of goods and services [6]. It is evident that concerted efforts are being made to improve the underdeveloped areas in the socio-economic infrastructure. Unfortunately, these efforts are inadequate, particularly with regard to information services required for rapid national development. The major questions arising and which this study addresses are: does information consultancy and brokerage contribute to information provision in Botswana? Is there a need for information consultancy and brokerage services? In which fields is there a need for consultancy and brokerage services and what are the requirements and problems encountered in the provision of such services?

1.2. Purpose

The aim of this study is to establish the need and requirements for information consultancy and brokerage services in Botswana, with the hope that the findings can be used for creating and developing information consultancy and brokerage services in the country.

There are five objectives. First, to determine whether there are information consultants and brokers in Botswana, who they are and what they do. Secondly, to establish the nature, type and range of information consultancy and brokerage services and activities being provided in the country. Thirdly, to investigate whether there is a need for information consultancy and brokerage in the country in the private and public sectors. Fourthly, to determine the requirements and problems for the consultancy and brokerage services and, finally, based on a large part of the findings and observations, to suggest ways and means for the establishment, coordination and operation of information consultancy and brokerage systems and services in Botswana.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in Gaborone, which is the centre for much of the public and private sectors in Botswana. The targets for the study were the private and public sector organisations as well as information consultants and brokers in Botswana located in Gaborone. Drawing a sample population from Gaborone was considered to provide reliable data in view of the nature of the study, because information consultancy and brokerage is generally, but not exclusively, urban-centric, as it relies on urban clientele for its main market.

Surveys seem to be the dominant research method in information and library studies, according to a recent report on the nature of UK research literature [7]. Through a survey, the target population was sampled to include 38 government ministries, departments and parastatals. The *Botswana Post Office Directory* provided a list of government ministries and departments in its blue pages and was used to draw up the list of government ministries and departments. The National Development Plan Seven (NDP7) provided information on major parastatals in Botswana. Only parastatals located in Gaborone were chosen. Private sector organisations comprised registered firms and businesses in Botswana, located in Gaborone. As it was impossible to reach all of them, the respondents were sampled randomly from the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM) members' directory [8]. In total, 160 organisations were identified and at least three picked from 30 categories, ranging from agriculture to women's organisations. In some cases, where there was doubt as to whether responses would be received, up to five subjects were picked from the strata.

A total of 30 information consultants and brokers was also targeted. The limitation to 30 was reached on the assumption that the number of information consultants and brokers in Botswana would be insignificant. Arguably, expert opinions can be adequately obtained from at least 20 responses, as this normally happens in studies using the Critical Incidence Method, Critical Success Factors and even in the Delphi Method for scientific investigation. The identification of the information consultants and brokers proved difficult because of lack of documented information about their existence and the study therefore had to rely on informal information sources to trace them. Eventually, 23 consultants were traced and interviewed. (See Table 1.)

Table 1
Distribution of responses according to target segments
(N = 228)

Responses	Expected	Received	% of total expected
Private sector	160	39	24.0
Public sector	38	29	76.3
Ministries and Departments	24	15	62.5
Parastatals	14	14	100.0
Information consultants/ brokers	30	23	76.6
Overall total	228	91	40.0

The responses in Table 1 were also analysed according to distributions by sectors and sub-sectors. The sub-sectors in Table 2 were identified.

The data collection was effected by means of questionnaires that had to be completed by respondents, interviews and analysis of secondary documents. 'Thinking aloud' or verbal argumentation (see [7, p. 10]) was also exploited. Questionnaires were distributed to 160 private sector firms and organisations and 38 government ministries, departments and parastatals. The questionnaire sought information on background data of respondents, information usage, information consultancy and brokerage activities. The return-rate of the questionnaires by the clients was low, mainly because of negative attitudes encountered in providing information for research that was perceived to be a waste of time. The respondents also felt that the outcome would not benefit them directly. Successful interviews were conducted with information consultants and brokers. This enabled the study to gain insight and knowledge about the activities and problems of the consultants and brokers. The major items recorded during the interview were: personal data of the interviewee; areas and fields of consultancy and brokerage activity; clients' information needs and the interviewee's evaluation of information consultancy and brokerage services in Botswana.

Initial plans to access the records of the Register of Companies in Botswana were hampered by the poor state of the records. This study has also accessed several relevant records, including publications by the Government of Botswana.

While waiting for the questionnaires to be returned, interviews were conducted with the identified information consultants/brokers. Data was analysed without

Table 2
Distribution of responses by sectors/sub-sectors

Sectors/Sub-sectors	Responses
Agriculture	3
Archives and records management	1
Banking	5
Bookstores/Bookshops	2
Commerce and industry	1
Companies, registration of	1
Computer: hardware, software, training, Gaborone Computer Bureau	4
Conservation, societies	1
Construction, road	1
Consultancy:	14
Engineering	2
Survey	1
Accounting	2
Business support	1
Logistics	1
Immigration and labour	1
Property	1
Legal	2
Architecture	2
Management	1
Development:	5
Finance	1
Performance improvement	1
Training	1
Education:	5
Ministry of	1
Primary and secondary	1
Tertiary	2
Vocational	1
Elections	1
Energy/Electricity	1
Finance	2
Foreign affairs	1
Health	1
Hospitals	2
Housing	1
Insurance	4
Libraries	2
Labour	2
Non-governmental organisations	6
Parliament	1
Publishing	3
Statistics, bureau	1
Supermarkets/Department stores	2
Telecommunications	1
Water utilities	1
Wholesale	1
Women's affairs	4

the use of a computerised statistical package. Integrated software programs such as Microsoft Office were modestly applied to quantitative data analysis and presentation. This author has tried to 'think aloud' to vibrate and digest the findings and issues raised through talking to people and by observation during the many short visits to the institutions where the respondents worked.

The identification of information consultants and brokers, not knowing their whereabouts, proved cumbersome. Respondents to the questionnaires, particularly from the private sector, were less enthusiastic, slow and unwilling to cooperate, which reduced the number of returned questionnaires and resulted in a 24.3% return rate. Conversely, there was significant interest from the public sector in responding to the questionnaires, but, in most cases, there was a lack of dedicated units, departments or persons responsible for information coordination and clearance. The questionnaire was tossed from pillar to post as a result. Although public relations officers in parastatals mainly fulfil this function, there was evidence that their activities and competency did not embrace the entire scope of information services in the organisation and, more particularly, with regard to information sought for the study. On the whole, interviews were more rewarding than questionnaires.

3. Results

The results are in two parts. Section 3.1 is a report on interviews with information consultants and brokers, while section 3.2 reports on findings derived from responses to the questionnaires by the information clients.

3.1. Responses from information consultants and brokers

Respondents were expected to provide information on personal details, highlight their information consultancy and brokerage activities, describe clients' information needs and, finally, evaluate information consultancy and brokerage activities in Botswana.

3.1.1. Personal data

Information gathered included the name of respondent, profession/occupation, qualification, designation, gender and, finally, contact address (postal, telephone, fax, e-mail). This information was important in establishing

Table 3
Distribution of respondents according to field, professions and occupations

Field	Profession	No.	Occupation
Photography	Photographer	1	Creative photography and design/slide librarian
Advertising	–	2	Advertising consultant
Publishing	Publisher	1	Publishing consultant/designer
Librarianship	Librarian	4	Librarian consultant – IT Documentalist Librarian
Management	Management/Operations	2	IT consultant Management information systems consultant
Social science	Social scientist	1	Management consultant/IT
Information studies	LIS	8	Lecturer Archives and records management – 1
Languages	English teaching	1	Teacher training consultancy/proof-reading/editing
Education	Educator/sociology	1	Education/training/sociologist/consultant
Environment/Energy	Energy and environment	1	Energy and environmental consult – CDs
Marketing	–	1	Marketing/Public relations/Advertising
Public relations	–	1	Marketing/Public relations/Advertising
Law	Lawyer	1	Attorney/indexing (JTD services)
Archives and records management (ARM)	Teacher/educator	1	ARM

contact with the respondents and also in verifying their competence to conduct consultancy activities in the information profession. The results obtained from this section made the development of a directory of information consultants and brokers in Botswana attainable. In addition, the data on profession, occupation, qualification, designation and gender could be correlated to the nature and type of information consultancy and brokerage activities and services. Table 3 provides information on the professions and occupations of the respondents.

Table 3 shows the variety of backgrounds held by those consulting/brokering in the information services and answers the question 'who are they?' to a certain extent. The information displayed in Table 3 demonstrates, to some extent, that information consultants do not necessarily belong to the information profession, neither do they practice mainly in a traditional information field such as librarianship.

With regard to qualifications, the majority of the respondents had relevant qualifications in library and information studies, archives and records management and management with information technology (IT) specialisation. For example, out of the 23 respondents, five had Doctorate qualifications, ten had a Masters degree, three had a Bachelors degree, one had a diploma and four had unspecified qualifications. It seems that a good qualification, academic or experiential, is a

factor in information consultancy and brokerage activity.

It was assumed that designation plays a significant role in determining the qualification and, quite often, the competence of an individual in an organisation. Under normal circumstances, a high designation in an organisation comes with good qualifications, experience, special skills and knowledge, which are all important factors for consultancy work. In addition, designation helped to provide authority to the responses. The majority of the respondents were senior staff. For example, 47% were occupied at director levels.

Equally important was the issue of gender representation. Are there female information consultants and brokers? The data gathered from the respondents established that sixteen (69.6%) were male, while seven (30.4%) were female. Even in Botswana, information consultancy and brokerage is not entirely male-dominated.

3.1.2. Activities

The study sought to determine the information consultancy and brokerage activities of the respondents. Respondents were asked whether they operated registered consultancy/brokerage businesses in Botswana. Registration of a business is a sign of commitment to

consultancy work. It was learned that sixteen (69.5%) had not registered, while only seven (30.4%) had done so. Of the seven, four had registered businesses in such remote areas as publishing, advertising, marketing, public relations and photography. Three were registered in businesses other than information consultancy and brokerage, but did business in that area as well. There were possibilities of the registered businesses being located all over Botswana, but those contacted were all situated in Gaborone.

Respondents who had not registered their information consultancy and brokerage businesses and activities gave a variety of reasons for this. The major reason stated by most respondents (fifteen: 70%) was that current permanent/contractual jobs prohibited engagement in private consultancy work.

Areas and fields of consultancy and brokerage were of major interest to this study. Respondents were asked to state areas/fields of information consultancy and brokerage. The areas suggested appear in Table 4.

The areas of consultancy were further subdivided into the 43 specific sub-fields that were mentioned by the respondents. In all these cases, information management featured prominently.

Respondents were asked to specify the format in which information is normally provided to clients. Table 5 presents a summary of the responses.

The responses in Table 5, more or less produced a similar response pattern to those given by the clients. The responses in this Table and those in Table 7 suggest that there is no significant difference in using

Table 4
Distribution of responses according to fields/areas of consultancy (N = 23)

Field/Area of consultancy	Frequency	%
Information management	13	56.5
Personnel development and training	13	56.5
Librarianship	10	43.5
Information technology	8	34.8
Information systems	8	34.8
Publishing	5	21.7
Research and data analysis	5	21.7
Records management	4	17.4
Systems analysis	4	17.4
Search and retrieval	4	17.4
Book trade	2	8.7
Others:		
Advertising, Marketing and Public relations	2	8.7
Photography (slide library)	1	4.3

Table 5
Distribution of responses according to the format of information provision (N = 23)

Format	Responses	%
Advice and information materials	14	60.9
Advice and do the job	11	47.8
Advice (verbal and written)	9	39.0
On-the-job training/In-service training	8	34.8
Provision of information materials only	1	4.3

any of the listed formats for information provision, except, perhaps, offering information materials only.

Charging for information services normally raises a great deal of controversy, because clients are reluctant to pay for information services. When asked if they normally charge for their services, the majority (fourteen: 61%) said that they do, while nine (39%) did not. As a commercial undertaking, information consultancy activity will depend on revenue to be viable. Respondents were asked to state whether charges prevented them from getting clients in any way. In this case, eight (34.8%) said it did not, three (13%) said it did, while two (8.7%) mentioned 'sometimes'. Almost half (ten: 43.5%) did not respond to this question. Information provided by those who responded indicate that information clients show some willingness to pay for information services, as expressed by eight (34.8%).

Respondents were in a position to explain the reasons for most clients being in favour of charging. These reasons were: appreciation of quality service; willingness to pay; budgetary allocation for consultancy services, particularly by corporate clients, and convenience.

Even the respondents who did not charge for the services directly received moral and material remuneration in various ways. They were asked, however, why they did not charge for services rendered and several reasons were given. The major reason was that most identified consultants/brokers were engaged in formal employment and quite often did the work as part of their services. Other reasons cited were: their expenses were normally paid for by the clients; flexible arrangements with clients (e.g. some gave an honorarium for services); their services formed part of service for career development, particularly to market oneself and gain promotion. In addition, they also said that they did it for public relations purposes and to promote the culture for information use, which is

still underdeveloped in the country. Several arguments against fee-paid information services raised by Cartmill [9] and Tilson [10], among other authors, portray the danger of charging for information services. These arguments might be taken note of, particularly if information consultancy services are not viewed as a peripheral service. Although the concern raised by the two authors relate to public library services, they provide a paradigm for explaining why information clients might not prefer consulting information consultants and brokers with regard to their information needs.

It was also noted that information consultants and brokers in Botswana offer their services to other African countries, in the areas of library automation, IT, training of information personnel, archives and records management, management training, indexing, marketing, public relations and advertising, resource-sharing and networking and information policy.

3.1.3. Information needs

Information gathered for this item focused on information needs of clients, the nature of information required, the format, satisfaction of the needs and the existing gaps or areas of deficiency which need attention.

Respondents were asked to name organisations or individuals who seek their services. They were encouraged to name as many organisations as they could. Out of 66 organisations named in this process, the private sector was leading, followed by government agencies and foreign institutions.

In areas of information demand, several aspects were identified: management information systems; library management; library automation; management; archives and records management (private sector); rural information systems and services; research and data analysis (evaluative and feasibility studies); information policy studies and implementation; human resource development and training; selection of hardware and software; indexing; film production; advertising; public relations and marketing; library resource-sharing and networking; setting up a library; IT, including training in the field, and publishing – development of corporate videos and complementary materials.

It was observed that areas of information need matched the areas covered by information consultancy services. Information obtained has helped to verify the authenticity of both responses. Even in this case, management led, followed by librarianship; particu-

larly its automation, IT and publishing. The format of information need followed the pattern illustrated in Table 7.

In response to a question whether consultants usually satisfied the information needs of their clients, the answer was, generally, in the affirmative, apart from one respondent who said 'No' and two who were uncertain. The reasons provided for the answers included feedback received from clients after the services, evaluation reports, a demand by clients for further services and compliments received. However, it was also pointed out that donor-led objectives changed and that service provided becomes irrelevant. The respondent who said 'No' suggested that several organisational units need to be put in place to facilitate and supplement the work. In addition, it was also mentioned that, in order for consultancy to be effective and rewarding, it requires flexibility and full-time involvement and commitment. The study also established that clients sometimes preferred other sources for their information requirements besides information consultancy and brokerage services.

Areas of information deficiency were noted in the following:

- short courses for continuing education;
- information systems;
- information management;
- integration of information systems into management;
- records creation, maintenance and use;
- training in information handling by IT;
- legal information;
- selection of hardware and software;
- disposal of records;
- development of records centres;
- electronic networking;
- management training: service culture, productivity, automation;
- marketing training;
- printing;
- user education;
- streamlining the manual systems;
- application of research findings;
- journalism.

It is worth observing that areas of information deficiencies and areas of information need referred to are closely related and should be closely attended to. These areas fall within the broad areas such as information management, IT and training.

3.1.4. Evaluation

Views of respondents were sought in order to recommend information providers, to comment on information consultancy and brokerage in Botswana, and to indicate whether it is appropriate to develop a directory of information consultants and brokers in Botswana and include their names.

Between one to three respondents named the information providers in Botswana. These were information consultancy firms, management consultancies, Botswana National Archives, University of Botswana Library, National Institute for Research and Development (NIR), Botswana National Productivity Centre (BNPC) Library, Radio Botswana, BNPC, Women and Law in South Africa, staff at the University of Botswana (UB) Law Department, Attorney-Generals, courts, *Motswana Women* magazine and the Department of Library and Information Studies.

Asked to comment on information consultancy and brokerage services, activities and problems in Botswana, respondents, uniformly, reaffirmed the need for information consultancy/brokerage services in Botswana. The following comments were made:

- need centre for information management;
- client-based service;
- market promising in archives and records management;
- need forum or association of information consultants;
- need directory of information consultants in Botswana;
- need coordination;
- need central agency to act as clearing house;
- need assurance that all consultancies by foreigners are accounted for and any reports arising from such activities, where appropriate, are safely deposited in Botswana;
- attitude to information like information culture and consciousness affect market for consultancy;
- lack of knowledge on consultants;
- expensive;
- clients occasionally do not appreciate the job;
- financial problems;
- training required;
- lack of consultancy culture in the country, as well as ethics of efficiency and effectiveness;
- market information consultants.

The comments indicate a need for information consultancy and brokerage services which are well coordinated and marketed, and also the need for user/client education in order to be able to appreciate

and utilise the services. All supported the creation of a directory of information consultants and brokers in Botswana.

3.2. Responses by the information clients

Information was sought in three areas. These were background data on the respondent, information related to accessibility to information and, lastly, usage of information consultants and brokers.

3.2.1. Background data

Information was sought in five areas, i.e. name of organisation, nature of business/operation, contact address, name of respondent and designation of respondent.

Information obtained from this section was used to categorise the sectors, whether private or public, and also to subdivide them according to sectors or sub-sectors of operation as in Tables 1 and 2. This exercise helped to determine the level of representation of the data collected. Information related to names and designation of respondents was merely used to validate the authority of the source and sincerity of the answers.

3.2.2. Information sources and use

The focus was on information use, access to information, sufficiency of the information received, nature of information required and the format of information required.

All the respondents conceded that they make use of information. Access to information is achieved as summarised in Table 6.

It was observed that information consultancy services were generally utilised by clients whenever they looked for information. Among other sources

Table 6
Accessibility to information used by clients (N = 68)

Source	Use	%
Private contacts	48	70.6
Office files	47	69.1
Mass media	45	60.3
Libraries	36	53.0
Archives and records centres	26	38.2
Information consultancy and brokerage	23	34.0
University of Botswana	19	28.0
Botswana Press Agency	18	26.5
International networks	18	26.5
Others: e.g. clients, visits, etc	10	14.7

identified which were not included in the list were clients, field visits, government ministries and departments – particularly for grey literature and various professional and corporate networks. Specialised sources such as patent information, law reports and database subscriptions were also cited.

In order to clarify the answers provided (Table 6), respondents were further asked to indicate whether information received from the sources was adequate, by answering 'Yes' or 'No'. The responses received showed that 38 (55.8%) responded 'Yes', while 21 (33.8%) said 'No'. A small number (seven: 10.3%) was uncertain. When asked to give the reasons for their answers, the two groups provided different views.

Respondents who found the information that they used was inadequate provided these reasons:

- lack of proper in-house information provision systems;
- specialised information required;
- not up to date;
- irregular supply;
- not timely;
- lack of information;
- lack of computerisation for networking;
- need for the Internet;
- need for complementary information from different sources;
- regular verification of news;
- need for reliable information;
- keeping organisation informed;
- need to share information with associates and get information from government and public institutions;
- more sources of information required;
- information access centralised;
- isolation from access to information services;
- less marketing information available.

The following answers were given by respondents who found the information received was adequate:

- self-sufficiency with in-house information services;
- adequate information on banking;
- clients provide information needed;
- nature of business;
- personal networking efficient;
- adequate information from *Government Gazette*.

It was pointed out by respondents from the banking and insurance sectors that they have well-established information networks and systems to go to for information.

Focusing on information consultancy and brokerage suppliers, respondents who had chosen their services

were asked to say why they found them suitable information providers. It was interesting to discover the uniqueness of the services rendered and also to compare views of information clients in Botswana with views on why people or organisations prefer information consultancy services. The reasons given by the respondents were:

- lack of expertise in-house;
- services normally better established;
- they are innovative and competitive;
- they fill an information gap;
- they develop specialised information service effectively;
- the international networks like Reuters provide current information;
- they provide timely information;
- their information is tailor-made for clients;
- they are cost-effective;
- they are efficient;
- they can be hired and fired when no longer needed, therefore cheaper;
- confidentiality and reliability;
- centralised access to information consultancy and brokerage in government.

Respondents were asked to state the areas of information needs in which they sought advice from consultancy and brokerage services. Eleven fields were suggested for them to choose from. Table 7 provides a summary of the fields and the responses.

When asked to specify the fields of consultancy and brokerage more concretely, the following areas were identified:

- identification of opportunities and threats;
- selection of hardware and software;
- notebook audit software skills;
- desk research;

Table 7
Fields/areas of information need for consultancy/brokerage services (N = 68)

Field/Area	Responses	%
Information systems	31	45.6
Information technology	31	45.6
Staff training	23	33.8
Information management	18	26.5
Records management	17	25.0
Research in information studies	10	14.7
Librarianship	9	13.2
Mass media	6	8.8
Book trade	2	2.9
Legal information	1	1.5

- market research;
- proof-reading;
- desktop publishing;
- publishing;
- networking;
- property networking and multi-listing;
- portfolio management;
- banking information;
- technical information;
- indexing and filing;
- current international events;
- database development;
- computerisation of operations (registries);
- market reports;
- industrial standards;
- upgrading of current computer hardware and software systems;
- legal information;
- information on gender issues;
- human rights information;
- precedents available from Botswana courts;
- bibliographic information;
- business information;
- design of records;
- production of booklets and brochures;
- statistical information;
- building – law reports;
- storage and retrieval of records.

Respondents were asked to state the format of information required and were given four choices, including their own alternatives. The responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 indicates that clients prefer information in all of the four formats. Among those who selected other sources, one identified short courses, while the other argued that decisions on format of information are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

3.2.3. Information consultants/brokers

The focus in this item was on the use of information consultants by clients. The purpose was to find out whether the clients used services provided by infor-

Table 8
Format of information need (N = 68)

Format	Responses	%
Expert advice (verbal or written) only	24	35.2
Consultant to do the job	24	35.2
Expert advice and information materials	23	33.8
Information materials only	20	29.4

mation consultants; where/how they located consultants; areas of need lacking in consultant services; whether payment prevented clients from hiring information consultants, and views on the demand for information consultancy services.

The views on whether the organisation used information consultants/brokers for information services were varied. To begin with, 25 (36.7%) said 'Yes', 30 (44.1%) said 'No', while thirteen (19.1%) did not respond. Those who said 'No' were asked to state why they did not consult consultants/brokers. Among the reasons given were: the Government Computer Bureau coordinates their needs; adequate information provided internally; high consultancy fees; limited need; they are too slow; not aware of them, and not available in Botswana. These were responses from one or two respondents. The nature of the responses are closely related to those reasons, mentioned earlier, for organisations not using information consultancy services.

The access to information consultants and brokers by those who said 'Yes' was curious. A reasonable number, 20 (29.4%), preferred private contacts, fourteen (20.6%) found them through advertisements, six (8.8%) used a directory of information consultants/brokers, while the rest (28: 41.2%) either did not answer or named agencies and embassies, donor agencies, business contacts, global databases and international networks (health, etc).

Respondents indicated that their consultants come from South Africa, a few from the UK and USA as well as countries in Europe, including international organisations.

Respondents were further asked to provide the study with contact addresses of information consultants who have served the organisation during the last five years and their areas of consultancy. This information was required in order to help to trace information consultants in the study. Most respondents did not complete this part. A few did name organisations, some of which were approached for information.

Respondents were asked to state the areas and fields of information demand in which they failed to obtain suitable information consultants. The following areas were mentioned:

- software support;
- library automation;
- business information services;
- gender analysis information;
- market data;
- staff training.

However, more areas of need and deficiency have been identified, as evidenced in the previous findings.

In this part, respondents were asked whether charges for information services by information consultants prevent them from using the services in any way. The majority of those who responded said 'No' (26: 38.2%), while thirteen (19.1%) said 'Yes'. The rest (29:42.6%) never responded. In addition to the answer given, respondents were asked to give reasons for their answers. Those who said 'Yes' cited financial constraints, while those who said 'No' pointed to budgetary provisions and indicated acceptance of the fact that expert and valuable advice/services must be paid for.

The final question put to information clients elicited their views on the demand for information services as well as activities and problems encountered in information consultancy as a source for information services in Botswana.

Most respondents lamented the lack of information on information consultants/brokers, while some suggested coordination of their services and the creation of a directory of information consultants. Respondents noted that, while there was a shortage of consultants, their services were in great demand.

5. Discussions and conclusions

The documented information on information consultancy and brokerage is growing in quantity and, perhaps, also in quality, as reflected in the standard bibliographic databases on information and library studies. However, limited empirical research reports come from this large quantity of the literature and almost nothing originates from authors in the developing countries, despite the upsurge of reasons for involvement in consultancy and brokerage. In considering investment in consultancy and brokerage services in a unique and unknown consumer environment such as Africa, it would be foolhardy to ignore the complexities posed by the coexistence of an information-conscious population on the one hand and a semi-literate population on the other.

This study has tried to assess the existence, and the activities, of information consultants and brokers in Botswana; the type of consultancy services; the clients' needs and requirements for information consultancy services and offered some solutions to consultancy requirements in Botswana. The findings show that:

- (1) Botswana has information consultants and brokers. Ironically, most of the identified consultants and brokers have no registered businesses in the field. In addition, the majority is occupied in formal

employment that restricts their activities and inconveniences the client. The domination of information consultancy activities and services by foreigners signifies lack of a permanent base for the activity. Arguably, engagement in consultancy and brokerage services on a part-time basis creates the potential for the establishment of permanent structures in the future. The present situation, however, reveals that consultancy and brokerage services in Botswana are very loosely structured and that there is a definite need for more formally structured services.

- (2) The nature of organisations and persons involved in information consultancy and brokerage activities in Table 3 appears to suggest that information consultancy and brokerage activity and services employ people from various professional backgrounds who are not necessarily graduates from the traditional library and information management schools. This tendency brings to the market a high degree of competition in information work. Competition, for the market, among library and information studies (LIS) graduates and other specialists, is likely to be stiff if the professional work of LIS graduates can easily be done by those without professional qualifications in the field. This trend might challenge LIS schools and graduates to develop quality control structures and to embark upon a meaningful search for identity in order to secure future survival. As long as there is a need for information consultancy and brokerage, the need for quality services will persist.
- (3) There is great need for consultation in areas such as management, information technology, information systems and staff training, as reflected in Tables 4 and 7, among several other areas. The willingness by clients to pay for information consultancy services may also attest to this. Management is an area of real need that must be accorded special attention. The areas of need for information consultancy services reflect specialised market requirements that may be addressed through manpower training and development, forming part of capacity building, in information studies. The information received on areas of need for consultancy services should assist in the selection of suitable information products and services and also the packages or formats for information provision. Since there are insignificant differences among the formats for information services, all the formats (Tables 5 and 8) suggested for consultancy services could be exploited for consultancy and brokerage work.

- (4) Most people/users still gain access to information through private contacts, office files and mass media (Table 6). This information-seeking behaviour is not new. People prefer convenience and tend to use information resources closest to them. This is a market orientation that profit-making organisations and highly competitive and creative information providers exploit. Those who have brought Internet terminals and cable TV to homes and offices, perhaps, have observed and understood this consumer behaviour much better. This might not be a threat to consultants and brokers in Africa at the moment. However, with Africa increasingly consuming Western products and services, the consumption trend will force information consultants and brokers to exploit the new technology.
- (5) Unexplored and less-exploited markets exist in both the private and public sectors. In addition, a market for information consultancy exists within other African countries. Such markets may be explored and exploited through publicity of information consultancy and brokerage activities, products and services. The best way to achieve publicity, confirmed by the respondents, is to compile a directory of information consultants and brokers in Botswana. Similarly, an association of information brokers and consultants, to create a forum for discussions and exchange of views, could be established.
- (6) Whereas it is obvious that information consultancy services require resources and clients and consultants in order to succeed, there are other factors which could just as well be considered. Firstly, there is a need for qualified and highly competitive manpower to conduct the consultancy services. The manpower, as was established by responses from clients, must be readily available to take up information consultancy work whenever there is a need. Combining information consultancy work and formal employment is cumbersome for the consultant and impractical for the clients.

Secondly, information users need to be taught good information management. The market for information consultancy depends on a positive information culture and attitude by the users. Some methods that can be explored include workshops, displays and exhibitions, including effective use of the annual Gaborone Trade Fair, radio and television broadcasting, short courses, conferences and seminars.

Thirdly, there is a need to know the legal procedures for the registration of a business or company. Such procedures exist in the statutes of the laws of Botswana and can be obtained from the attorneys. The Company Act explains the procedures for registration of a business or company in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Fourthly, in order to be responsive to special market information needs, a study of market behaviour towards information consultants needs to be given special attention. A regular study of information consultancy activities can keep information providers and producers aware of market behaviour. Studies can be conducted on aspects of information consultancy and brokerage services to be used for strategic planning for capacity building and information provision by dedicated centres and systems.

Also noted during the interviews with consultants and some clients is that access to public sector or government consultancy requirements can be achieved through the tendering boards within ministries and departments. Government tenders are normally gazetted or advertised and the contracts are awarded to the cheapest and, sometimes, most reliable tenders. The Government Computer Bureau coordinates tenders for consultancy services on behalf of the government in the areas of information management, including management information systems, IT and information systems. Access to information consultancy services in the private sector is through private contacts, mass media, advertisements and occasionally by tenders. Parastatals use both government connections and private sector approaches. Besides those identified, regular scanning through *Government Gazette* and mass media advertisements can lead consultants to obtaining the jobs, not forgetting private contacts as well.

- (7) Information management systems and services are lacking in the government ministries. This research targeted the government ministries as respondents for its data. However, lack of ministerial information focal-points, excluding the Ministry of Agriculture, made it difficult to gain sufficient information on information consultancy requirements. Whereas public relations officers were able to coordinate or provide information required for the research in parastatals and the private sector, this service was lacking at the government ministries. The creation of information management departments in all ministries to

develop and coordinate information activities and to act as information clearing houses on matters related to information, is essential.

- (8) The following information centres could be approached for information besides information consultancy firms and individuals. They should, however, also be watched as competitors:
- management consultancy firms and individuals;
 - Botswana National Archives;
 - University of Botswana Library;
 - National Institute for Research;
 - Botswana National Productivity Centre;
 - Radio Botswana;
 - Women and Law in Botswana;
 - University of Botswana staff and departments;
 - Government ministries and departments (e.g. Registrar of Companies, Government Bureau of Standards, etc);
 - Botswana National Library Services.

In conclusion, it should be noted that what exists in this area is inadequate in terms of scope and origination [11, 12, 13, 14]. Although the trend is changing slightly, a large part of the literature still dwells on librarianship and descriptions on how consultancies were conducted for the developing countries. What has been written on information consultancy and brokerage services is, also, Eurocentric and American oriented. Although this trend is not unusual, it poses several questions worth being addressed. Are the causes for information consultancy and brokerage not experienced in the developing countries? Can information consultancy and brokerage be part of the agenda for information services in the developing countries?

Ignorance of the local potential in information consultancy and brokerage is viewed by this author as the cause of stagnation in this alternative area of information service. However, going by what Vickers [1] presents on information consultancy in the UK, a great deal is desired in terms of the market and of the selection and use of consultants. The global agenda, in my view, is to explore how to link information consultancy and brokerage with LIS education on the one hand and market analysis for information needs on the other. Documented information suggests that not enough has been done in that direction. We should, however, acknowledge that good consultancy and brokerage matches extensive knowledge, experience, attitude and exposure to the subject.

Acknowledgements

This survey was conducted from January to May 1996 while the author was on sabbatical leave at the University of Botswana. The following organisations and individuals are acknowledged for their support: Moi University, Kenya, for funding the sabbatical leave, the University of Botswana and the Department of Library and Information Studies for the hospitality, the late Professor Peter Havard-Williams for facilitating the visit and the Botswana Government for granting the research permit.

References

- [1] P. Vickers, Information consultancy in the UK, *Journal of Information Science* 18(4) (1992) 259–267.
- [2] A.S. Warner, Information brokering: the state of the art. In: B. Cronin (ed.), *Marketing of Library and Information Services 2* (Aslib, London, 1992), pp. 279–310.
- [3] S. Marita *et al*, Library and information consultancy: logical development or revolutionary new trend? (Bibliotek on inlighting konsultansie: logiese ontwikkeling of revolusionere tendens?) *South African Journal of Library and Information Science* 54(4) (1986) 142.
- [4] Republic of Botswana, *1991 Population and Housing Census* (Government Printer, Gaborone, 1994).
- [5] A.A. Lemos de Briquet, A portrait of librarianship in developing societies. In: S.J. Parker (ed.), *Information Consultants in Action* (Mansell, London, 1986), pp. 25–74.
- [6] *Seventh National Development Plan 1991–1997: Gaborone* (Government Printer, Gaborone, 1994).
- [7] P. Layzell-Ward, The nature of UK research literature: some thoughts arising from a bibliometric study. In: *63rd IFLA General Conference, 31 August–6 September 1997, Copenhagen, Denmark* (Booklets 7, 9–10). Available at: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/iv/ifla63/63layp.htm>
- [8] *Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM) 1995–1996 Business Directory* (Gaborone, 1996).
- [9] D. Cartmill, Charging for public library services, *Library Management* 13(6) (1992) 55–61.
- [10] Y. Tilson, Income generation and pricing in libraries, *Library Management* 15(2) (1994) 5–17.
- [11] S.J. Parker (ed.), *Information Consultants in Action* (Mansell, London, 1986).
- [12] S.J. Parker, *Asking the Right Questions: Case Studies in Library Development Consultancy* (Mansell, London, 1988).
- [13] E.D. Garten (ed.), *Using Consultants in Libraries and Information Centres: A Management Handbook* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1992).
- [14] M.S. White, *Profit from Information: A guide to the Establishment, Operation and Use of an Information Consultancy* (Andre Deutsch, London, 1981).