

# Marketing of Library Resources and Services: A Structured Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper reviews literature on marketing of library products and services, and discusses various ways and means for the same. Several marketing techniques to promote the usage of library resources and services have been highlighted in the literature. It is seen that majority of libraries do not have a marketing culture. It is recognised that libraries need to formulate marketing plan along with financial budget on a yearly basis so that library resources can be utilised optimally. Libraries in developing countries have been struggling to conduct outreach programmes to market their resources and services. Latest technologies such as, Web 2.0 and mobile services have opened up new avenues to do marketing in efficient and cost effective ways. Therefore, libraries should not leave any stone unturned to apply the latest technologies in promotion of resources and services amongst the stakeholders. The funding agencies must formulate guidelines for marketing the library resources and services so that the library resources can be utilised optimally.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Web 2.0, mobile services, guerrilla marketing, marketing culture, relationship marketing, library resources, library services

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is an approach to achieve users' satisfaction. The idea of applying the concept of marketing in academic libraries started taking momentum during 1969 to 1973 when a series of articles were published by eminent scholars in the field. Marketing and promotion is vital for libraries to enhance their reputation and usage. Library professionals' positive attitude towards marketing is a prerequisite for a successful plan and execution to market library products and services<sup>1</sup>. Maximum research published on marketing in library and information science describes the concept, and a few discuss the practical aspects of marketing in libraries. Surprisingly, a small number of studies have been published on the attitude of library professionals towards marketing<sup>2</sup>. The methods of marketing have changed from print media to social media. For example, Wiki, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, instant messaging, etc., can be used to foster the usage of library sources and services. Libraries are under tremendous pressure to cope with users' demands, and it is the need of the hour that the libraries adopt tools and techniques for marketing to satisfy the diverse user groups. Non-print materials are more prevalent and digitised material is the new trend. Tools and techniques have given an opportunity to promote effective use of library resources<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. MARKETING OF DIGITAL SERVICES

Libraries should have a clear plan to market their digital services. Several studies have been conducted

to look into this aspect. Libraries need to adopt a coherent approach instead of scattered ones. Further, it is of utmost importance to deliver the right service at the right time to appropriate users in the right place in a cost effective manner<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, libraries should try to formulate marketing strategies. It will also aim to satisfy the five laws of library science. Libraries must continue to evolve to respond to the digital, financial and societal changes.

If libraries do not come up to the expectations of the users, then commercial ventures may grab the opportunity. To counter the situation, the National library of Scotland (NLS) decided to introduce effective marketing relations to ensure the awareness of library sources and services among stakeholders<sup>5</sup>. Harrington & Li<sup>6</sup> found that marketing initiatives require thorough examination of competitors. They need to identify suitable methods of marketing, assigning the responsibility to the staff and assess the effective methods used on a periodic basis. Adoyoyin<sup>7</sup> stated that marketing library services is also important because of its scope and also since major portion of the organisations' expenditure goes to services. Major sector of employment is in service sector worldwide. The demand for the service is fluctuating. Hence, marketing of products or services have several implications. The author defined marketing in relation to library services as follows:

- Marketing is user-centered.
- Marketing is profit centered.
- Marketing anticipates the changes through time.

### 3. PLANNING AND STRATEGIES OF MARKETING

Libraries do not have competitors in an academic organisation; even then, libraries should avoid complacency. Therefore, a well structured written plan should be the part of library strategies to promote the usage of resources<sup>8</sup>. The purpose of any marketing plan in the library is to increase the number of users, develop favourable mindsets, and convincing the users about the benefits of accepting the library services and products. Therefore, in such an environment, user-centric approach in delivering the information becomes market driven. However, library professionals have been slow in adopting a marketing attitude. Hence, an urgent need is felt to get rid of complacency to face the challenges assertively<sup>9</sup>. Kanaujia<sup>10</sup> postulated that each library should have marketing plan which involves contextualization of process, objective defined on yearly basis, 4P (product, price, place and promotion), training of the staff and allocation of funds to execute the plan. Each library should follow the defined marketing strategies so that expectations of the users can be matched with library products and services. She recommended that, to increase user awareness about library sources and services, the financial support of the respective organisation is essential. Librarians must be careful in deciding charges of selective services to recover the cost so that services can be popular among the user group. A wrong decision to recover the cost of service may fade the reputation of the library<sup>11</sup>.

Kaur & Rani<sup>12</sup> advocated that library and information centres ought to have the mission to do marketing of library products and services. Researchers expressed their disappointment, during surveys in Punjab and Chandigarh regions in India that no library is found with own logo, mission statement and a professional designated to perform the marketing of resources. A successful marketing plan should include librarians, faculty members, and students.

### 4. MARKETING CULTURE

In his study, Singh<sup>13</sup>, while examining the Finnish research libraries, found three kinds of marketing cultures—(i) strong, (ii) medium, and (iii) weak. Germano<sup>14</sup> advocated the development of service with a valuable plan. The marketing activities must have their own narrative to patrons while reflecting their specific needs at appropriate times. In this way, libraries can establish a strong sense of value among its users to create loyalty. Singh<sup>15</sup> advised in his study that organisations ought to know their marketing culture prior to the move for branding information sources and services.

Robinson<sup>16</sup> communicated that, to remain relevant in this fast changing world, libraries must adopt a marketing orientation. Libraries must try to understand who their users are and what they do. Garoufallou<sup>17</sup> conducted a survey in 151 central and departmental libraries in Greece and found that majority of libraries recognised

the concept of marketing but had not adopted very well. Operational problems are identified as the main hindrance in application of the marketing concept in these academic libraries. These libraries need to go a long way to implement marketing efficiently.

### 5. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

Relationship marketing (RM) is the approach to build relationships with users. Broadly, RM cultivates the relationships among users and staff. Thus, it helps in retaining the existing users and enhances loyalty among staff. The RM uses ICT to contact and communicate more easily with library users and potential users in the society. David & Sagun,<sup>18</sup> in a study conducted at Rizal Library of the Ateneo de Manila University, suggested that libraries ought to start relationship marketing strategies with students, faculty, to make the library resources and services visible, and open lines of communication. Henderson<sup>19</sup> stated that RM approach be adopted by library professionals while marketing digital collections. Further, he described the reason of adopting this approach as follows:

- No cost involved;
- Less need to offer incentives to users;
- Less price sensitive;
- Satisfied customers will recommend the service to others users. Thus, library visibility will be enhanced among the user groups.

### 6. USERS-CENTRIC APPROACH

Library personnel need to formulate a proactive approach of marketing to promote the usage of library sources and services<sup>20</sup>. Users of the library need personal attention and recognition, apart from satisfying their information needs. To make the library products and services user-centric, library personnel must remember the 4Ps, i.e., products, price, place and promotion. To satisfy the user groups, librarians must evaluate the services on a regular basis so that libraries can give best products and services.

Mu<sup>21</sup> found that academic libraries ought to market the services actively. Apart from this, reference librarians must keep in mind the language aptitude, learning style and subject of interest of users while marketing library resources. Library should provide a comfortable environment of interaction so that users feel free to ask questions to the reference librarians. Moreover, university libraries should adapt more systematic technique in users' needs assessment so that libraries can provide the best services<sup>22</sup>.

### 7. MARKETING VIA WEBSITE

Website of library is a vital tool to share the vision and mission. It is a handy tool to announce the yearly plan, new additions and new initiatives of the library. The resources subscribed by the library can be delivered

to users in a systematic way by building a website of the library. Schmidt<sup>23</sup> stated that libraries can adopt new mode of promotional strategies to access the books and journals in print and digital format to make sure every book has its reader in the new age. Study suggested that librarians must adopt the change by enhancing their skills, attitude and aptitude so that the needs of the users can be understood and resources can be utilised optimally. Kaur & Rani<sup>24</sup> postulated that libraries must organise orientation programmes, publicity of resources, and personal contacts on a frequent basis. Besides this, library should have a website which can be used for advertising library products and services and to distribute and disseminate library products and services.

Islam & Hossain<sup>25</sup> examined 57 university libraries in Bangladesh and found the websites are not fully utilised for marketing of library resources and services. Majority of websites do not provide online literacy, online help, and copyright documents. Besides this, no library conducts online survey or networking using the website. Similar study was conducted by Kaur<sup>26</sup> in Malaysian libraries and found that libraries are not using the websites properly to do promotional activities among the user groups. Gardner<sup>27</sup>, *et al.*, conducted a study on 69 academic library websites to learn how they promote library resources and services among faculty members. The study found that faculty webpages are most significant to promote library services for research and teaching. Further, the study revealed that libraries have not utilised the opportunities in contributing scholarly communication through creating institutional repositories and open access measures. Libraries need to take such initiatives to remain relevant and visible among the users.

Wenhong<sup>28</sup> stated that library marketing is a matching process between library resources and expectations of the users. Using marketing techniques libraries can enhance their visibility and make users more successful in using the library resources and services. The author suggested that exhibitions are a good marketing idea in academic institutions. Libraries have been demanding inclusion of marketing links on their websites. Therefore, library professionals must grab this opportunity in the digital environment<sup>29</sup>.

## 8. MARKETING VIA WEB 2.0 TOOLS

A proliferation of information is reaching the society after development in information technology. Web 2.0 has changed the delivery and marketing methods of information sources and services. Commercial agencies have come forward to do this work for big commercial ventures to promote their products. Similarly, libraries have adopted the Web 2.0 tools. In the last ten years, several studies have been conducted on the use of Web 2.0 tools in libraries. Landis<sup>30</sup> stated that using the social networking tools such as Facebook can be handy to market the resources and events. The social networking sites can also be useful to remove the barriers in dissemination

of information. Xia<sup>31</sup> found in his study that use of Web 2.0 tools to market the library resources and service builds a positive connection between the library and users. Ekart<sup>32</sup> explained in his study that using Twitter, libraries not only get feedback about library services but also get valuable information about the library users. This valuable information can be used in planning library resources and services.

Mamatha<sup>33</sup> concluded in a study that Twitter was used as an interaction and communication tool as libraries had a large number of followers, which can be helpful. She suggested that professional staff members be used for regularly updating and maintaining the library Twitter feeds to attract more users. Yi<sup>34</sup> conducted a study on 400 librarians in 37 academic libraries in Australia to know their perception on Web 2.0 tools. The study found that librarians are using a variety of Web 2.0 tools such as, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Wiki, and You Tube. Vucovich<sup>35</sup> *et al.*, pointed out that YouTube can be successfully used in imparting instructions to promote library use. In addition, reference services can be provided successfully using YouTube.

Hendrix<sup>36</sup>, *et al.*, conducted a study on 70 librarians to know the use of Facebook and found that majority of libraries use the social networking sites (SNSs) to predominately market library services. Besides this, several studies have been conducted to know the application of rich site summary (RSS) feeds applications in libraries. It was found that the RSS feeds updates are being used by academic libraries to market new library services and new additions of print and electronic collections. It is well established that proper use of these feeds services can be useful tools in promotion of library resources and services<sup>37, 38</sup>. Breeding<sup>39</sup> advised the libraries to use the RSS feeds to attract potential users to the library and found the key challenges in the use of Web 2.0 technologies are applications of these tools in marketing and promotion. Xia<sup>40</sup> revealed in his study that by active participation of librarians on Facebook Groups they can always keep the discussion alive by responding to the queries of students. Therefore, these tools can be a crucial medium to promote the library and help the users in study and research.

## 9. MARKETING VIA MOBILE PHONE

Goh & Liew<sup>41</sup> states that mobile-based services have been adopted by many users. These services have become extremely popular among the users. The technology has been used to start a library alerts service. A study was conducted by Anbu & Mavuso<sup>42</sup> at University of Swaziland in collaboration with Emerald Group Publishing Limited and a need was identified to create a prototype model for SMS-based service to do marketing of the library resources. Study also found that longer SMSs need to split up to shorter messages. The SMS service is found effective for timely delivery of information resources to the users in an economic way. Rheingold<sup>43</sup> found the

use of mobile phone in marketing library services and resources as economic. Further, it also provides instant response and contacts with users. Modern tools and technology are versatile and SMS-based services are cost effective. These SMS-based services can be used as a tool to cater to the information desire of users.

Five gaps have been identified which are responsible for unsuccessful delivery of service and affect the quality of service<sup>44, 45</sup>. First gap is between users and perception of the management. The major reason is that managements do not understand what exactly the users need. The other reason of this gap is that most libraries don't conduct user's survey prior to the start of any service for the users. Second gap is between management perception and service quality specifications. The reason is, most of the time specifications prescribed by the management do not adhere to service quality specifications. The third is quality specifications and service delivery. The fourth is between delivery and promises to the users. The fifth and last gap is between perceived service and likely service.

## 10. MARKETING VIA VIDEO

Library instructional video can be used in promotion and marketing the library resources to save the time of users and library personnel. Martin<sup>46</sup> shared his experience of using a video in the promotion of the library at California State University, Northridge. Videos of library resources and services were posted on the library website. The videos were shared using YouTube. 2744 people viewed the videos between September 9, 2010 and July 26, 2012. The campaign received positive feedback from faculty members. Using the video the library increased the users' awareness about resources and services, and communicated well. Similar attempt was made at Dartmouth College and results were satisfactory in promotion of library activities and services<sup>47</sup>.

## 11. MAJOR REASONS OF MARKETING

Okon & Umoh<sup>48</sup> conducted a study at Nigerian university libraries and described the major reasons of adopting marketing strategies for library services:

- Attracting funding agencies;
- Showcase the potential of libraries and attract users;
- Image enhancement;
- Relevancy in digital age;
- Recognition of library and library professionals in society.

A study by Patil & Pradhan<sup>49</sup> described the needs of adopting marketing of library resources and services as:

- Promotion of resources
- User awareness
- Improving the library's reputation
- Marketing the services to generate corpus

## 12. COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Several collaborative efforts have been identified which can be used as a model in promoting library resources and services. Duke<sup>50</sup>, *et al.*, highlighted a collaboration among students and library to promote the library's reference service. In this project, library reference service and sources were promoted using the students' ideas and feedbacks.

Besides this, collaboration has been done between libraries and information aggregators. Betz<sup>51</sup>, *et al.*, reported a peer-to-peer outreach programme in marketing the citation databases namely, Scopus and Web of Science. They named the programme as student ambassador program (SAm). The programme imparts training, and instructional and marketing material to the participants. Fourie & Ball<sup>52</sup> revealed that librarian, faculty members and students should be part of the promotional programmes to promote the use of newly subscribed resources and services. Competition programmes can be organised for active participation.

## 13. LIBRARIANS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS MARKETING

Marketing concept is not well adopted by librarians. Shontz<sup>53</sup>, *et al.*, surveyed 623 library professionals in public libraries in New Jersey to understand their attitudes on marketing library resources and services. The study found that library administrators and library professionals who have done a course in marketing or attended any workshop on marketing have a high priority to apply the marketing concept in their respective libraries. Grunenwald, Felicetti & Stewart<sup>54</sup> postulated that several library professionals are unwilling to adopt and implement marketing in the library and information centres. Majority of them believe that marketing of library resources and services is unnecessary and unsuitable for libraries. Hence, the adoption of the concept is subject to and varies from professional to professional. Librarians with good knowledge of marketing prefer to apply the concept to promote the library resources among users. Besides this, they market the library resources to enhance the reputation of library.

### 13.1 Guerrilla Marketing

This type of marketing explains untraditional marketing campaigns and/or strategies which are very effective to promote products and services. The major highlight of this marketing is that it can be achieved with minimum budget<sup>55</sup>. Ries & Trout<sup>56</sup> explained the term in a book as 'Marketing Warfare' and depicted marketing activities as a combat to surmount the user's mind. The basic principles of this marketing, Mao-Tse Tung's guerrilla warfare, have seven rules that describe the principles of this technique<sup>57-59</sup> as:

- Concentrate your resources
- Sell the ideology along with the product

- Identify established patterns, analyse them and overcome these patterns
- Search for synergies
- Try to outsmart any perception filters established
- Avoid the direct way
- Be flexible and agile

#### 14. CONCLUSIONS

The select review study concludes that librarians have shown a positive attitude towards the adoption of marketing. However, libraries have not adopted marketing as a working culture. Research on library marketing is also slow compared to other emerging areas in the field. The syllabi of Master programmes in Library and Information Science do not have provision to discuss case studies to promote the marketing culture in libraries. Developing countries' libraries are struggling to conduct outreach programmes to promote their resources and services. Therefore, libraries ought to formulate a marketing plan along with yearly budget so that every book can get its reader and every reader can have his or her book. The recent study of Nelson Edewor also revealed the low level use of social media such as, Facebook, blogs, Twitter, e-mail alerts, for marketing. The author expressed that absence of marketing plan, ignorance on the content, i.e., what to market, lack of related facilities and lack of sufficient funds are some of the major barriers in marketing library and information services<sup>60</sup>. Further, open access and search engines have created new challenges and at the same time opened a new frontier to deliver the services to clients. Therefore, promoting and marketing of the resources have become essential for libraries. Accreditation agencies of academic institutions ought to consider the library marketing plan in grading and evaluation. At the same time, funding agencies of institution must formulate guidelines for marketing the library resources and services so that resources and services can be used optimally.

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