

Students' Perception for Adopting Marketing Tools in University Libraries on the Basis of their Backgrounds: A Study of North Western India

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the perception range of students belonging to different backgrounds viz. urban, semi-urban and rural, for implementing various tools for marketing library resources and services. It attempts to investigate those marketing tools which according to the users could be most suitable for marketing library resources and services. This is a survey based research study conducted by administering a structured questionnaire designed for the users. The data from eight state university libraries of North Western India was collected from users belonging to different residential backgrounds. The major findings illustrated three types of marketing strategies i.e. ICT/ Web, Web 2.0 and traditional tools may be adopted for making the students aware about library resources and services. The study also revealed the fact that libraries must employ Web 2.0 technologies usually as a great majority of respondents are Web 2.0 savvy and leant towards this form of promotion. Further it was also found that despite varying backgrounds except a few marketing tools there did not exist any major difference in the opinion of the users with regard to adoption of various marketing tools.

Keywords: Library promotional tools; Marketing techniques; Marketing tools; User opinions; User perceptions; Web 2.0 technologies; Web based marketing; University libraries.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information is being accessed for various purposes by cross-sections of populations across the world. Internet applications are consistently playing a pivotal role in the academic area and especially in institutions of higher education. Most information resources are available in electronic format either online or offline according to Kumar and Vohra¹. To make the users aware of the various library resources are not unknown for most Indian libraries. According to a study by Kim², a large budget outlay is planned and invested for libraries to subscribe to the latest electronic and other technological inputs by the university libraries. However, the value of this investment is perceived to outweigh its usefulness when examined against the lack of its promotion of its resources for the end users. It was Potter³ who defined library marketing to be the process of "making people aware of what we can do for them, in a language they can understand. Currently, most of the users are ICT oriented and they expect the applicability of a similar ease of approach in the libraries. Users need to be made aware of the library resources and services to facilitate their usage through developed library marketing strategies. Further, the efforts need to be made to embed the Web 2.0 tools even though the traditional tools continue to be equally important. In a study conducted by Jones and Harvey⁴, it was observed that the users are willing to engage themselves with the library resources

using marketing techniques like social media. A recent study by Stvilia and Gibradze⁵ taken up in the Florida State University, the users showed that they strongly perceived the social media postings as a promotional tool related to library updates in spite of their academic role differences. The findings showed that the online resources usage was low for all the users' groups.

Presently, marketing strategies in place for university libraries in India is still at its infancy and steadily gaining momentum to help users become familiar with the library resources and services. Studies on users' perception about marketing strategies have been taken up quite rarely. The present study has been, therefore, focused on examining the perception of users, keeping their backgrounds in focus, which is whether they belong to the urban, semi-urban or rural habitations, towards the available marketing tools which could be used for making the users aware of the library resources and services against the backdrop of the rapidly changing technological progress. It would also assist libraries in planning for appropriate marketing tools to adequately inform the users about the library resources and services. No such study has probably been conducted in India on this topic that has included the feedback of the users to know about their perceptions regarding various promotional tools in relation to their residential background.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relevant studies conducted during the last two decades on marketing of library resources and services with users' point

Table 1. Perceptions on Web 2.0 marketing tools

| Statement | | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | X ² results |
|--|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|---|
| Social Networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram would be helpful for you to know about the library, notices, news, upcoming events, new subscription to e-resources, new services, library tour, online orientation/user education program, new arrivals and table of content service, alerting services, new issues of periodicals received. | Urban | 274 (54.26) | 200 (39.60) | 21 (4.16) | 10 (1.98) | 0 (0) | X ² value = 3.035 df = 3 p = 0.386 |
| | Semi Urban | 150 (59.06) | 95 (37.40) | 9 (3.54) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | |
| | Rural | 222 (51.63) | 188 (43.72) | 17 (3.95) | 3 (0.70) | 0 (0) | |
| RSS feeds would be useful to make you aware of new arrivals, Table of contents, and subscription to new e-resources, new issues of periodicals received, news, events and notices. | Urban | 78 (15.45) | 245 (48.51) | 157 (31.09) | 24 (4.75) | 1 (0.20) | X ² value = 2.101 df = 4 p = 0.717 |
| | Semi Urban | 27 (10.63) | 145 (57.09) | 72 (28.35) | 6 (2.36) | 4 (1.57) | |
| | Rural | 63 (14.65) | 210 (48.84) | 143 (33.26) | 11 (2.56) | 3 (0.70) | |
| Podcast/Vodcast would help you in giving the Web based library tour about library/orientation to the users/ user education programs/information on literacy program. | Urban | 63 (12.48) | 195 (38.61) | 210 (41.58) | 34 (6.73) | 3 (0.59) | X ² value = 3.555 df = 4 p = 0.470 |
| | Semi Urban | 34 (13.39) | 94 (37.01) | 112 (44.09) | 10 (3.94) | 4 (1.57) | |
| | Rural | 53 (12.33) | 188 (43.72) | 172 (40) | 14 (3.26) | 3 (0.70) | |
| Wikis would help you to know about new arrivals, Table of contents, general information about the library, upcoming news, events and notices. | Urban | 151 (29.90) | 225 (44.55) | 111 (21.98) | 16 (3.17) | 2 (0.40) | X ² value = 7.201 df = 4 p = 0.126 |
| | Semi Urban | 52 (20.47) | 137 (53.94) | 55 (21.65) | 7 (2.76) | 3 (1.18) | |
| | Rural | 100 (23.26) | 210 (48.84) | 98 (22.79) | 19 (4.42) | 3 (0.70) | |
| Mobile applications (library application) would help you to know the books issued/returned in account, re-issue of books, reservation of books and fines overdue, upcoming news, events and notices. | Urban | 281 (55.64) | 176 (34.85) | 41 (8.12) | 5 (0.99) | 2 (0.40) | X ² value = 1.612 df = 4 p = 0.807 |
| | Semi Urban | 133 (52.36) | 106 (41.73) | 13 (5.12) | 2 (0.79) | 0 (0) | |
| | Rural | 218 (50.70) | 184 (42.79) | 24 (5.58) | 3 (0.70) | 1 (0.23) | |

Notes - Source: Field data compiled by author, n=1189 and Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

of view are presented in the following even though there have not been many studies found in this paper's focus area.

Kanaujia⁶ reported that library professionals showed a positive attitude towards the different aspects of the marketing and promotion of the library resources and services. Bhatt⁷, *et al.* found in their study that librarians stated they did not follow any specific marketing plan. Siwach and Malik⁸ also revealed that the university libraries should employ ICT and Web 2.0 technologies, social media and networking sites for promoting electronic resources. Manik⁹ investigated 48 NBA accredited Engineering College libraries across Maharashtra. The findings showed that interestingly less than 50 per cent of the institutions knew about using marketing methods for promoting the information sources and services of their libraries. Koontz and Rockwood¹⁰ introduced the significance of marketing and social media to practitioners and students of professional educational courses. Beese¹¹ highlighted the use of

social media as a marketing outlet for libraries as generating user awareness. Siddike and Kaur¹² studied perceptions and feasibility for marketing activities like eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) and SNS (Social Networking sites). In a similar study by Yi¹³ examined the librarians' attitude for better understanding of the effective use of Web 2.0 tools and revealed a need for employing effective marketing tools in their respective libraries.

3. OBJECTIVES

The present study examines the perception of students of various universities belonging to different backgrounds (urban, semi urban and rural) for adopting Web2.0 based marketing tools. The Web/ICT based marketing tools as well as traditional marketing operations were queried upon to make them aware about the library resources and services.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research is based on a survey conducted using a structured questionnaire designed for the students including post graduates and research scholars studying in 8 North Indian universities. Before finalizing the questionnaire, a pilot study was taken on 25 users of Panjab University, Chandigarh to the questionnaire. The necessary amendments were made to the questions as required. However, informal interviews and observations were also used as additional tools to supplement the data. The universities taken up for the study included the University of Jammu (Jammu), Maharishi Dayanand University (Rohtak), Panjab University (Chandigarh), Punjabi University (Patiala), Kurukshetra University (Kurukshetra), Himachal Pradesh University (Shimla), Guru Nanak Dev

University (Amritsar) and University of Kashmir (Kashmir). The stratified sampling technique was applied to collect data from users belonging to the rural, urban and semi-urban areas. A total of 1350 questionnaires were distributed of which 1189 (88.07 per cent) returned duly filled in. The data was analysed statistically using SPSS. The cross-tabulations were also prepared on SPSS to present the data. The Chi-square test was employed to determine if there existed any differences among urban, semi-urban and rural background students with regard to their perception towards various marketing tools which could be used for promoting the library resources and services. A level of statistical significance (p) of less than 0.05 was adopted.

Table 2. Perceptions on Web/ICT marketing techniques

| Statement | | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | X ² results |
|--|------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|--|
| Web OPAC would be helpful in knowing the library, availability of books, checking the status of books, whether issued or on shelf, new arrivals, expected list of books, lending policies, user account/login and online reservation of books. | Urban | 201 (39.80) | 251 (49.70) | 43 (8.51) | 10 (1.98) | 0 (0) | X ² value = 11.335 df= 4 p = 0.023* |
| | Semi-Urban | 99 (38.98) | 135 (53.15) | 17 (6.69) | 2 (0.79) | 1 (0.39) | |
| | Rural | 155 (36.05) | 229 (53.26) | 40 (9.30) | 6 (1.40) | 0 (0) | |
| Library website (Creating various menu/icons) would be helpful in generating awareness about the library/library services like general information regarding library, library tour, user education program and orientation programs by uploading videos on website, new arrivals of books, list of periodical issues received, news, events and notices, Table of contents, inter library loan, new subscription to e-resources, online databases. | Urban | 185 (36.63) | 249 (49.31) | 62 (12.28) | 8 (1.58) | 1 (0.20) | X ² value = 1.987 df = 4 p = 0.738 |
| | Semi-Urban | 99 (38.98) | 136 (53.54) | 18 (7.09) | 1 (0.39) | 0 (0) | |
| | Rural | 129 (30) | 259 (60.23) | 40 (9.30) | 2 (0.47) | 0 (0) | |
| Website integrating various Web 2.0 tools like instant messaging, Podcast/Vodcast, or SNS tools like Youtube, Facebook, blog, Twitter would be good platforms or / interface for marketing | Urban | 146 (28.91) | 255 (50.50) | 86 (17.03) | 11 (2.18) | 7 (1.39) | X ² value = 3.617 df = 4 p = 0.460 |
| | Semi-Urban | 98 (38.58) | 126 (49.61) | 26 (10.24) | 2 (0.79) | 2 (0.79) | |
| | Rural | 109 (25.35) | 248 (57.67) | 65 (15.12) | 8 (1.86) | 0 (0) | |
| SMS alerts can help making users aware about library resources/services like new arrival of books or journals, subscription to new e-resources, Table of contents, library membership, news, events and notices. | Urban | 220 (43.56) | 199 (39.41) | 67 (13.27) | 14 (2.77) | 5 (0.99) | X ² value = 10.482 df = 4 p = 0.033* |
| | Semi-Urban | 108 (42.52) | 114 (44.88) | 28 (11.02) | 3 (1.18) | 1 (0.39) | |
| | Rural | 178 (41.40) | 208 (48.37) | 35 (8.14) | 7 (1.63) | 2 (0.47) | |
| E-mails would be helpful in knowing the new arrivals of the books/journals, table of contents, subscription of new electronic resources, news, events and important notices. | Urban | 219 (43.37) | 222 (43.96) | 54 (10.69) | 8 (1.58) | 2 (0.40) | X ² value = 11.189 df = 4 p = 0.025* |
| | Semi-Urban | 98 (38.58) | 135 (53.15) | 18 (7.09) | 2 (0.79) | 1 (0.39) | |
| | Rural | 185 (43.02) | 214 (49.77) | 25 (5.81) | 4 (0.93) | 2 (0.47) | |

Notes - Source: Field data compiled by author, n=1189 and Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Response Categorisation

Out of the 1189 respondents, 708 (59.50 per cent) were post graduates and 481 (40.50 per cent) were research scholars. Of the total number of respondents there were 430 (36.20 per cent) who belonged to a rural background, 254 (21.40 per cent) were from semi-urban areas and 505 (42.40 per cent) were from an urban background.

5.2 Perceptions on Web 2.0 Marketing Tools

The results showed that most of respondents to all three backgrounds agreed that social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram would be helpful for familiarizing themselves about library news, upcoming events, new subscriptions to e-resources, library orientations, new arrivals, table of contents besides other services. Two third of the users belonging to three backdrops supported the use of RSS feeds for awareness on new arrivals, table of contents, news, events and notices, new issues of periodicals etc. The users were asked about the use of Vodcast and Podcast as a marketing tool for library tour, orientation, educational and literacy programs, on which almost half of three backgrounds were unanimous. There were more 72.00 per cent belonging to the three categories, who agreed that Wikis could help them know of new arrivals, table of contents, general information about the library, upcoming news, events and notices. **Table 1** also illustrates that most of the respondents from three groups widely accepted the use of mobile applications for knowing about circulation, reservation and re-issue of books, fines overdue, upcoming news, events and notices. The Chi-square test results indicated that p-values were statistically insignificant (>0.05). It can be inferred that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of students belonging to different backgrounds on the use of various Web 2.0 based marketing tools for knowing about library resources and services.

5.3 Perceptions on Web/ICT Based Marketing Tools

The results obtained on the query of whether Web OPAC would be helpful in library introduction, availability of a book and its status, expected list of books, lending policies, users' account, reservation of books, etc., was affirmed by most of respondents from the three groups (89.00 per cent to 92.00 per cent). Almost similar results were seen in the case of websites. The response for library websites integrated with Web 2.0 tools as a marketing technique was also welcomed by 79.41 to 88.19 per cent. More than 80.0 per cent from three groups felt that SMS alerts could be used as a marketing strategy for informing about arrival of new books or journals, subscription to new e-resources, table of contents, library membership, news, events and notices. For using e-mail as a marketing tool, most of the users from all the backgrounds were strongly supportive. The Chi square analysis pertaining to Web and ICT based marketing tools revealed significant differences in the opinion of users belonging to different backgrounds for certain marketing tools such as Web OPAC, SMS and e-mail because the p-values were found to be significant i.e., less than 0.05. However, no significant differences were observed for other marketing tools (showing p-values insignificant i.e.

more than 0.05) among respondents from varying backgrounds (**Table 2**).

5.4 Perceptions on Traditional Marketing Tools

Annexure I illustrates that more than 85.00 per cent belonging to all three backdrops favoured user literacy, orientation and education programs as a marketing technique acquainting them with the library resources and services, e-resources, searching for books/journals and online resources. A similar percentage from the three groups reported that book exhibitions could make them aware of the new/old, important and relevant books in the library. A huge majority from all three backgrounds (more than 70.00 per cent) said that library quizzes and workshops might be helpful in promoting library resources and services. Almost similar results were found for guide maps/floor plans. Media campaigns as a traditional marketing technique was popular as 76.64 per cent urban, 88.58 per cent semi-urban and 68.84 per cent rural users favored them for knowing about library resources, services, new arrivals, events, book exhibitions, news and important notices etc.

A great majority (79.30 to 87.41 per cent) opined that word-of-mouth or personal interaction could be a method of promotion to know about the resources, services, collection, etc. of the entire library. There were 68.11 per cent from urban area, 55.51 per cent from semi-urban and 66.04 per cent from rural areas who felt flyers/brochures or users' guides could be useful for obtaining general information about the library resources and services like books, journals, electronic resources, reference material, reference service, reprographic service, circulation service, inter-library loan services etc. The Chi-square test results are shown in **Annexure I** which clearly illustrate that there is no significant difference exists in the perceptions on traditional library marketing tools among respondents belonging to urban, semi-urban and rural backgrounds ($p > 0.05$).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicated that three types of marketing strategies i.e. ICT/ Web, Web 2.0 and traditional tools may be adopted for optimum use of library resources. Marketing tools like Social Networking sites, mobile applications, Web OPAC, library websites, SMS, e-mails, library orientation/users' instruction programs, book exhibitions, guide maps/floor plans and word of mouth were the most acceptable among the respondents irrespective of their residential location. However, Podcast/Vodcast, flyers/ brochures and media campaigns were least acceptable. When the respondents were made aware of certain least preferred Web 2.0 tools namely Podcast and Vodcast, a majority accepted them as marketing tools/techniques for the future. In the current era of Web 2.0, traditional tools are still relevant for providing more visibility to library resources and its optimum utilisation. The Chi Square results showed significant differences in perceptions of students from rural, urban and semi-urban backgrounds for using certain marketing tools such as Web OPAC, SMS and e-mail. There were no significant differences observed for perceptions of students from varying backgrounds for using other marketing tools based on Web 2.0, ICT/Web and traditional methods.

The study also highlights the fact that libraries must use Web 2.0 tools commonly as most users are Web 2.0 savvy and inclined towards this form of marketing. This study provides applicability of information obtained from users pertaining to the use of modern as well as traditional marketing tools in university libraries for generating awareness among users about resources and services of their libraries. The study had its limitations as only eight State universities of North Western India had been covered. Other institutions of higher learning like the private and central universities could not be taken up due to constraints of comparability of resources, services, facilities and funding of their libraries.

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