Marketing of Academic Library Products and Services in the Digital Era: A Current Approach

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In this Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown period, marketing of products and services is very essential in libraries. Different marketing techniques play a vital role in showcasing and increasing usage in libraries. In this pandemic situation marketing through online tools enabled the users to get in touch with the library services. This study examines how academic libraries of arts and science college of Kerala and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University marketed their library services through social media tools, and to know the various marketing strategies used by these libraries to bring effective services to their users, to assess the library professionals perception regarding marketing and the challenges faced by them.

Based on the objectives an online questionnaire was prepared in Google Form and was sent to 124 library professionals of the arts and science colleges of Kerala and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. Out of 124 respondents, 96 filled the questionnaires and were considered as the samples. The results of the study highlight that the majority of the respondents agreed that marketing techniques like OPAC, library orientation, and user education were the most effective techniques to promote library services and increase usage in academic libraries. The librarians faced various challenges in marketing the library products and services such as lack of technical skill in operating the various social media tools, library budget, and the rising cost of the printed and E-documents, during this pandemic marketing through social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, E-mail and WhatsApp help the users to know the services of the libraries and to get in touch with the librarians. It also plays an important role in increase the usage of library services. The study has recommended that the library professionals need to update their digital skills and the libraries need to adopt more digital marketing strategies to provide fingertip services to their users globally.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Disruptive Technology (DT) has influenced the academic libraries and changed the libraries into another computerized period, with the help of the DT, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Internet; the clients can get to the data sources readily available. These advances give choices to make the method of access simple and utilize the academic libraries, assets, and administrations. A portion of the academic libraries has moved a long way ahead in the new years. The academic libraries need to move as indicated by the indications of the time and receive inventive promoting techniques that fit the scholarly libraries to deliver exciting and speedy services and fulfill the clients.

Libraries are considered as the storage house of information and data focus, which all in all go about as the main thrust for the reformist improvement of the general public. Libraries are the information and data establishment of any country. A library gathers sorts out and makes information assets available to a wide range of clients paying little mind to their ages, foundation, and interests. The library is a learned foundation outfitted with fortunes of information, kept up coordinated and oversaw via prepared faculty to teach the kids, people consistently and aid their personal development through a compelling and brief spread of data.

Marketing is the way to acquire the objectives of any association and organization. The four components of promoting an idea are target market, fulfilling requirements and needs, co-ordinate advertising, and hierarchical objectives. Through the way toward promoting the administrations and items are made available to the supporters from their starting place. The cutting-edge method of showcasing is the advanced method of advertising the results of any foundation. Online media like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and so forth, are utilized for computerized advertising. Showcasing is the interaction by which items are made accessible to definitive clients from their starting place. It comprises each one of those exercises which are intended to guarantee the progression of labour and products from the maker to the client. The cutting edge idea of promoting is a social methodology that is client situated. It makes the client the focal point of all business exercises. It laid accentuation on consumer loyalty. The cutting-edge idea of promoting begins with a translation of consumer's needs and wants.

The new years have been seeing that showcasing the services has become an essential piece of academic libraries and Information focuses. Thus, these have become benefit-making associations, due to receiving current advances and developments there is a shift from the idea of information stockpiling, scattering and administrations. Rather than the client moving toward the academic libraries and information focuses, the required data should reach the client's work area, regardless of whether in-home, homeroom, office, workplace, or in any field of life.

2   MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Following are the some of the marketing opportunities which can be imbibed in the academic libraries

- Abstracting services
- Reference services
- Newspaper clippings
- Current Awareness Services
- Indexing services
- Notification of newly published research
- Selective Dissemination of research
- Circulation of periodical contents
- Literature search
- Notification about conference, seminars and workshop
- Photocopying of journal articles
- Repacking and consolidation services.

Marketing systems are the cycles that can assist the academic libraries with concentrating their restricted information assets and services to accomplish the best chances to advance and deliver their administrations to the clients. Showcasing procedures are the keys to fulfill the clients. They are the composed devices used to design out the information sources and results of the libraries and they can likewise uphold the approaches to expand data items and administrations, how to value data items and administrations and their circulations. They assist the academic libraries with accomplishing their set objectives and connect their administrations.

3   OBJECTIVES

1. To know the effectiveness of the marketing strategies in the academic libraries

2. To identify the current strategies used for marketing the library products and services

3. To evaluate the perception on marketing the library resources and services

4. To find out the importance of Social Networking Sites in promoting the library services

5. To define the Challenges faced by the librarians in promoting the library services

4   METHODOLOGY

According to the objectives of the study, an online questionnaire was prepared in Google form and send to 124 library professionals of the Arts and Science Colleges of Kerala and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. Out of 124 librarians, 96 of them responded and their responses were taken as the data for the study. The data collected were coded, analyzed, classified, and tabulated by Excel. Out of 96 respondents, there were 42 male and 54 female.

4   ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 GENDER WISE PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The chart reveals the gender-wise break-up of the respondents, out of the total respondents, respondents as per their 43.75% were male and 56.25% were female.

4.2 PROFILE OF THE WORKING EXPERIENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The chart depicts the profile of the working experiences of the respondents, out of total respondents 9.38% have below five years of experience, 18.75 % of the respondents have 5-10 year of experience, 21.88% have 10-15 years of experience, 23.96% have 15-20 years of experience, 16.67% respondents have 20-25 years of experience and only 9.38%have more than 25 years of experience.

4.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN THE LIBRARIES

The table shows the effectiveness of the marketing strategies in the libraries 69(71.87%) of the respondents agreed that word to mouth is an extremely

effective marketing strategy and no one has the opinion that this strategy is not effective for marketing the library products and services. The majority of the respondents that is 86(89.58%) library orientation is an extremely effective marketing strategy, no one has the opinion that this strategy is not effective. 76(79.17%) have the opinion that user education is one of the extremely effective marketing strategies and no one has the opinion that this strategy is not effective.56(58.33%) library tour is an extremely effective marketing strategy and 4(4.17%) not effective.72(75%) of the Exhibition of the new arrivals in the library is an extremely effective and 2(2.08%) is not effective for marketing strategy. 54(56.25%) of the bulletin board services is an extremely effective marketing strategy and 6(6.25%) not effective. The majority of the respondents 91(94.79%) said that OPAC and Web OPAC is an extremely effective marketing strategy and none of them have the opinion on effective, somewhat, and not effective. Only 35(36.46%) have the opinion that user statistics is an extremely effective marketing strategy and 6(6.25%) is not effective for marketing. 53(55.21%) of them agreed that the notice board is an extremely effective marketing strategy and 2(2.08%) have the opinion that not effective for marketing the products and services in the academic library.

4.4 CURRENT STRATEGIES USED FOR MARKETING

The table shows the current strategies used for marketing library products and services. Out of the total respondents, 55.21% of the respondents used library websites and 44.79% did not use the same.47.92% used the current strategies of asking a librarian through Emails, WhatsApp and other mediums of communications and 52.08% did not use the same. 59.38% used online instructions and 40.63% did not use the same. 40.63% used exhibition and display of new arrivals on the library website and blog exhibition and display of new arrivals on the library website and blog and 59.38% did not use the same. 42.71% of the respondents used organizing the library week and updating the activities in Social Media Sites and 57.29% did use it, 26.04% of the respondents used sending out flyers or brochures through E-mail and Web 2.0 applications and 73.96% did not use the same. 9.38% of the respondents used marketing through audios and videos 90.63% did not use the same. 44.79% used regular updating in the library websites and other applications and 55.21% did not use it. 8.33% of the respondents advertising through electronic media with the latest updates of the library, and 91.67% did not use it. 16.67% of the respondents' used the provision of electronic access to information and 83.33% did not use it, 25% of the respondents used requesting for user's assistance while making acquisitions and 75% did not use it. 47.92% of the respondents used Wi-Fi connectivity round the clock and 52.08% did not use the same.

35.42% of the respondents used rewarding the active library users in the library and 64.58% did not use the same. 38.54% of them used library clubs and 61.46% did not use them. 15.63% of them used sending personal letters to users through text messages and email and 84.38% did not use it. 86.46% the librarians have good rapo with the users. 13.54% of the respondents used Institutional Repository and 67.71% did not use it.

4.5 PERCEPTION ON MARKETING THE LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The table depicts the perception of marketing the library resources and services. The perception of marketing was tested with the help of a 5-point scale. 84.38% of the respondents strongly agreed that marketing leads the use of resources and services at maximum, 11.46% of the agreed, 4.17% have the opinion of neutral and none of them have the opinion of disagreeing and strongly disagree.14.58% of them strongly agreed that marketing of library service poses additional workload, 9.38% of them agreed, 46.88% have the opinion of neutral, 15.63% disagreed and 13.54% strongly disagreed. 58.33% of the respondents strongly agreed that marketing of library resources and services help to fulfill user expectation, 12.50% of them agreed, 17.71% neutral, 6.25% disagree and 5.21% strongly disagree. 50% of the respondents strongly agreed to adopt innovative marketing strategies require planning and investment in ICT, 12.5% agreed, 16.67% neutral, 14.58% disagree and 6.25% disagreed.27.08% of them strongly agreed the marketing leads the library services from the library to the end-users of the academic library, 13.54% agreed, 41.67% agreed, 8.33% disagreed and 9.38% strongly disagreed. 13.54% of the respondents strongly agreed the additional manpower and materials are required, 15.63% agreed, 23.96% neutral and 32.29% disagree and 14.58% strongly disagreed.

4.6 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN PROMOTING THE LIBRARY SERVICES

The table shows the importance of Social Networking Sites in promoting library services, majority of the respondents 85.42% agreed that marketing enables library users in locating library resources is very important followed by 9.38% important, 5.21% moderately important, none of them has the opinion of slightly and not important.71.88% agreed that Social networking sites are essential to market library and services, none of them has the opinion of slightly and not important.58.33% responded that marketing helps in knowledge sharing

is very important none of them has the opinion of not important.65.63% agreed that marketing enables the librarians to get closer to the users and 3.13% said that not important.79.17% agreed that marketing facilitates students, faculty and researchers to use the library and its resources none of them has the opinion of not important. 43.75% of the respondents agreed that process of exchanging knowledge and information is very important and 7.29% not important. 40.63% said that marketing helps the library professionals to create, converse, connect, contribute and share information to other libraries and 13.54% not important. 71.88% agreed that marketing helps to feed users with information about new arrivals and events of the library and 2.08% not important.

4.7 CHALLENGES FACED BY THE LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTING THE LIBRARY SERVICES

The table displays the challenges faced by the librarians in promoting the library services. 66.67% responded yes to insufficiency in library budget 33.33% said no to the same. 58.33% said yes to change in user's mode of satisfaction and 41.67% did not for the same. 63.54% of them said yes to new updates and 36.46% were not. 44.79% said yes to widely available information services 55.21% said no to the same. 51.04% of them agreed that an increase in the cost of documents and 48.96% were not. 60.42% of them said yes to rising new services and technologies and 39.58% were not.

5 FINDINGS

- Out of total respondents, there were 43.75% male and 56.25% female
- 23 of the respondents have 10 – 25 years of experiences as library professionals
- Only 9 of the respondents have below 5 years of experiences
- Majority of them agreed that word to mouth is an effective way of marketing the library resources
- No one responded that word to mouth is not an effective method to market
- Most of the respondents said that library orientation, Library Website, and Web OPAC are the current techniques used in many libraries to market the services.
- Very few 15(15.63%) of them used to send personal letters to users through text messages and email.
- Majority of the respondents have a good rapo with their staff and users.

- Only a few libraries have Institutional Repository
- Majority of the respondents 81(84.38%) strongly agreed marketing leads to the use of resources and services at maximum.
- Only a few of them 26(27.08%) agreed that marketing leads the library services from the library to the end-users of the academic library.
- 85.42% of the respondents agreed that marketing enables library users in locating library resources are very important.
- No one has the opinion of marketing enables library users in locating library resources slightly and not important.
- Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that Social networking sites are essential to market libraries and services.
- Most of the respondents said that there is a lack of library budget
- 51.04% agreed that there is an increase in the cost of documents

6 SUGGESTIONS

- The libraries should link with Social Networking Sites such as Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp
- The library professionals need to use the latest strategies to make visible the library services
- Adequate knowledge about different computer applications should be compulsory
- The librarians can do additionally concentrate on creative innovations received by the libraries for the showcasing library products and services.

7 CONCLUSION

The study highlighted that the library professionals of the Arts and Science Colleges of Kerala and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University have excellent experiences in their profession. They used different marketing strategies to showcase the library services. Web OPAC was the noted strategy they used. They too used the latest techniques to make visible the products and services. All most all the library professionals believed that marketing leads to an increase the usage in physical as well as digital usage. They too faced various challenges in marketing the academic library products and services. Once the library is properly positioned, with specific marketing strategies for each target group, the college libraries can market their information products and services efficiently and effectively.

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