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Marketing of Library and Information Services in Medical College Libraries in the Punjab Pakistan

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Abstract

Aim: This study was intended to investigate the marketing of library and information services in medical college libraries in the province of Punjab, Pakistan.

Research Methodology: The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 55 medical library in-charges, irrespective of their administrative set-up (public and private). A self-administrated questionnaire comprising five-point Likert scale was prepared. Which was pilot-tested and revised. The questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection consisted of seven main research questions with 72 items. The descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the data were analyzed by using IBM SPSS-23.

Results: All the targeted respondents participated in the survey. Administratively, 18 medical colleges were functioning under the public sector domain, while 37 medical colleges were run by the private sector. The finding demonstrated the necessity of marketing library and information services in order fulfill the objectives of the library and inform patrons of the value of library use. Most of the medical libraries marketed themselves by providing valuable library services to their clientele. The competencies required for librarians in marketing library services are the ability to answer the user's query and evaluate, improve as well as introduce value-added services in the libraries. Furthermore, study's finding revealed that lack of funds, lack of the latest facilities to market library services and unsupportive attitude of administrations were the leading factors militating against marketing library services.

Conclusion: Based on the findings it was concluded that more funds should be allocated, workshops and seminars should also be organized for librarians to train them on how to market their library services effectively. The curriculum of Library and Information Science/Information Management should be redesigned to accommodate marketing courses. Finally, librarians must be committed to improve their competencies and market their services in befitting manner.

Keywords: Marketing of medical libraries, Library services, Medical libraries, Punjab, Pakistan.

Introduction

Marketing is an integral part of the planning process in a dynamic organization, which involves the evaluation of services, products and programs as per the requirement of potentials clienteles as well as strengthening the relationship between the organization and its customers. (Armstrong & Kotler, 2006; Garoufallou et al., 2013; Cheng et al., 2020). Marketing has abundant descriptions, as a whole, it is an arrangement of networking for commercial accomplishment; endorsing the additional need for resources and

facilities to the current and possible user (Owens 2003; Kumar 2014). Marketing is identical to “promotion” and it covers varied types of activities such as marketing research, advertising and publicity. The client’s satisfaction is the prime objective of marketing, so it helps to improve the standard of services and the quality of products (Ojiambo, 1994). Kotler and Levy (1969) emphasized applying the concept of marketing to non-profit organizations covering the tangible as well as intangible things. Libraries and information resource centers are also considered non-profit organisms. Kotler and Armstrong (2010) argued that marketing is kind of a societal plus administrative process from explicit groups to find their need and produce, suggest, and replace amenities.

The prime purpose of a library is to fulfillment of the educational, research and other related needs for its targeted users/customers, as well as to assist the organization in achieving its objectives (Cole et al., 2010; Veeramani & Vinayagamoorthy 2010). The clients or library users must be cognizant of available library resources and services. The concept of marketing in the library scenario means, library resources and services have been aligned carefully and well-in-tuned as per of needs of its customer (Gupta & Savard 2008; Ameen 2007). Some studies proposed that library marketing should function in the swift growth of relationships and corporation between the library clients and the whole library team from management to staff (Thaha and Purnamasari 2021; Germano 2010). The purpose of marketing in the library is to deliver accurate information to the user at the right time, and if satisfied, one he would visit the library again and serve as an ambassador of the library (Das & Karn, 2008). The marketing process in libraries intends to improve the standard of awareness and to educate the user about the available resources as well as their utilization (Adeyoyin, 2005). The philosophy of marketing in medical libraries is also the same as other academic libraries, but the contrary of social sciences, clients of medical libraries are demanding up-to-date accessibility of databases and other electronic resources (Weldon 2005; Delawaska-Elliott et al., 2015).

Information professionals/librarians need to market their services and resources for their current and possible clients and create awareness of the worth of medical libraries in the contemporary era. In most of the libraries in developing countries, the concept of modern marketing has not been applied properly due to a lack of training and insufficient of realization of the value of marketing. Excellent library services rendered by the library staff and well-stocked, as well as, properly organized libraries have good opportunities to market which may achieve the library objectives and present the significance of the libraries (Lamba 2018; Delawaska-Elliott et al., 2015; Kennedy 2011). This study aimed to explore the marketing of library and information services in medical college libraries located in the province of Punjab, Pakistan.

Literature Review

The personal attitude and perceptions of library and information professionals are very important for the application of marketing practices to promote their available resources and quality services (Parker et al., 2007). There are few studies conducted on the application of marketing in the libraries of Pakistan (Soroya & Ameen, 2013). Waheed et al., (2017) stated that marketing strategies were used to some extent in the public libraries of Punjab, without knowing the perception of marketing. The study suggested that librarians should use their public relations, advertise their resources and services, and employ information technologies to create a positive image of the library in the respective community.

Ameen (2007) evaluated the status of marketing in LIS education in the universities of Pakistan. All LIS schools offered marketing subject but she emphasized the practical implementation of theoretical knowledge in the workplace. Ameen and Warraich (2007) recorded the perception of students on marketing and observed the students had perceived limited scope of marketing. Seminars and workshops would help to

educate the professionals on the effective use of marketing in libraries. Rehman and Ahmed (2007) argued that LIS marketing as a subject has been going through the initial phase although it has become an integral component of library services for survival and quality in the contemporary era.

Waheed et al., (2017) explored the marketing perspectives of 29 public libraries of the Punjab. The accessibility of digital libraries was a weak area in information products, only four libraries had the services of the digital library. In other services, about 80% of libraries rendered the reference service and 55% of the libraries provided internet/Wi-Fi service. Almost all libraries used various channels to market their services. All the respondents agreed that front-line staff must acquire social and communication skills. The majority of the respondents agreed that they didn't have marketing knowledge. Public libraries required adequate funding and proper training for LIS marketing.

Soroya and Ameen (2016) examined the perception of librarians about the application of LIS marketing in the departmental libraries of the University of the Punjab, Pakistan. The study was limited to the 3Ps (Product, Place and Promotion) of Marketing Mix. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents had a basic knowledge of marketing but the application of marketing tactics was not on an appropriate level. Some of the respondents were not fully aware of the strengths of their resources, so these resources were not fully utilized by the users. The study suggested that librarians should learn marketing strategies, utilize information communication technologies, conduct users survey to improve the quality and build the collection accordingly.

Kaba (2011) assessed the website of 29 academic libraries of the United Arab Emirates in LIS marketing perspective and found that majority of the websites were not effusively utilized for marketing library services and resources. Few libraries provided library usage protocols, copyright regulations, and news bulletins about library resources.

Gupta (2007) examined the literature on LIS marketing published from 1970 to 2005. A significant increase in literature has been observed after 1990. International and regional library associations produced commendable work and it has also been included in the LIS curriculum.

Block and Edzan (2002) investigated the marketing strategies of five academic libraries in Sri Lanka. All the libraries had a considerable amount of learning resources to fulfill the teaching and research requirements of the users. The study concluded that the majority of libraries were unaware of the importance of marketing but they were applying these techniques unconsciously.

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. In-charges of medical college libraries in the province of Punjab, Pakistan made up the population of the study. There were found to be 55 medical colleges in all. In terms of administration, 18 were run by the public sector, while 37 were by the private sector. A Likert scale with five points was designed. It was afterwards pilot-tested and tweaked as necessary. Seven core research topics and 72 items made up the questionnaire. The survey was managed through WhatsApp, email, telephone and personal visits to the medical college libraries. Due to consistent follow-up, all the targeted respondents participated in the survey. The data were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage count, mean, and standard deviation by using IBM SPSS-23.

Objectives

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To assess the need for the marketing of library services.
2. To review the available services for marketing.
3. To examine the opportunity for marketing library services
4. What are the current marketing techniques used for library services?
5. Which competencies are required by librarians for marketing library services?
6. To highlight the problems affecting the marketing of library services
7. To develop strategies for improving the marketing of library services.

Results

Demographic information

A total of 55 questionnaires were distributed to respondents belonging to the 17 public sectors and 38 private medical colleges in Punjab, Pakistan. All of the respondents participated and recorded their responses. The analysis of respondents by gender shows that two-thirds of the respondents (n=37; 67.3%) were male, while the rest of the respondents were female (n=18; 32.7%). Thirty-five respondents obtained a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) as the highest degree, whereas 20 respondents obtained a Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) in LIS. The majority of respondents (n=33; 60%) have working experience ranging from 1-10 years, followed by 11-15 years (n=12; 21.8%) and only 10 respondents have 16 years and above experience.

Need for the marketing of library services

All statements mentioned in Table-1 got a mean score of more than 4.00 and this demonstrates that the majority of the respondents agreed on the need for the marketing of library services. The provision of a conducive environment for users to study and work got the highest score (mean=4.49; SD=0.635), followed by encouraging the users to use of the library (mean=4.40; SD=0.627), achieving a high level of customer satisfaction (mean=4.35), and to identify the information need of library user (Mean=4.35). The statement "To attract donors and funding bodies to the library" got the lowest score.

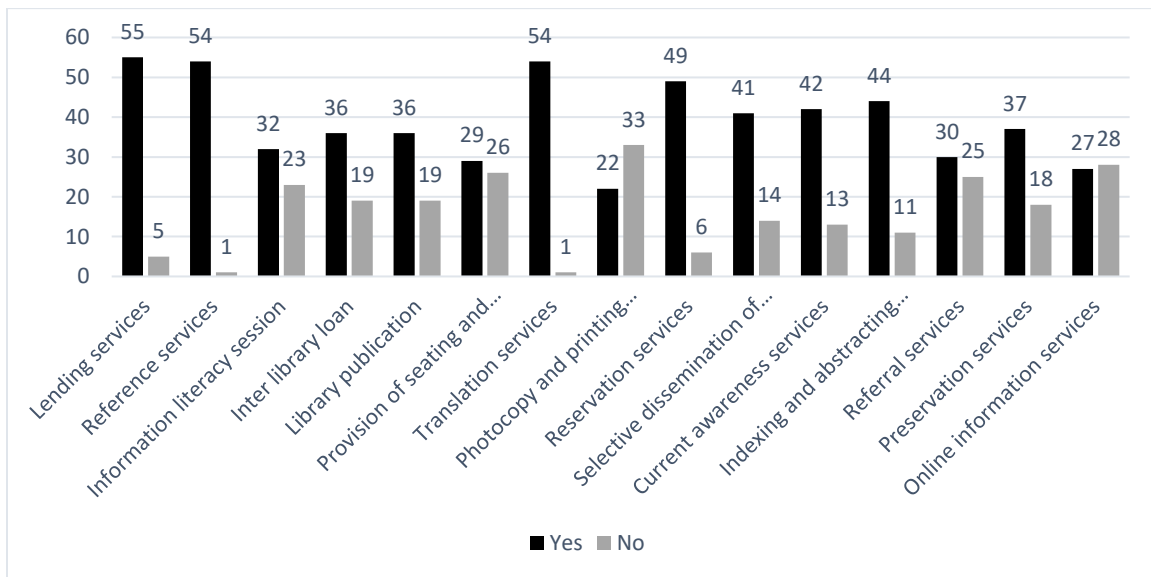
Table 1: Need for the marketing of library services (N=55)

Serial No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	To help provide a conducive environment for users to study and work.	4.49	0.635
2.	To encourages the use of library	4.40	0.627
3.	To achieve a high level of customer satisfaction	4.35	0.726
4.	To identify the information need of library user	4.35	0.700
5.	To help the user develop skills to acquire information from various sources.	4.31	0.690
6.	To enlighten the users on the relevance of library use.	4.20	0.678
7.	To compete favorably with other information providers	4.18	0.669
8.	To attract donors and funding bodies to the library.	4.09	0.775

Available library services for marketing

Figure-1 indicates that in charge of medical libraries shows their positive response to market library services including lending services (n=55; 90.9%), reference services (n=54; 98.8%), translation services (n=54; 98.8%), reservation services (n=49; 89.1%). The result against the statements of indexing and abstracting services, current awareness services, and selective dissemination of information for marketing got comparatively low response but the lowest response has been recorded in photocopy and printing services as 60% libraries have no photocopy and printing facilities in their libraries.

Figure-1: Available library services for marketing (N=55)



Opportunity for marketing library services

The findings in Table 2 indicate that out of 15 statements, 13 got a mean score of more than 4.00 while three statements gained a mean score of less than 4.00. The majority of the respondents agreed that there is an opportunity for marketing of library services including online information services (mean=4.45, SD=0.689), reference services (mean=4.40, SD=0.627), lending services (mean=4.36, SD=0.677), and current awareness services (mean=4.24, SD=0.677). The findings also show that services of the provision of seating and study facility (mean=4.22, SD=0.738) and photocopy and printing services (Mean=4.22, SD=0.762) also have marketing opportunities. The responses of other statements are mentioned in Table 3.

Table 2: The opportunity of marketing library services (N=55)

Serial No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Online information services	4.45	0.689
2.	Reference services	4.40	0.627
3.	Lending services	4.36	0.677
4.	Current awareness services	4.24	0.793
5.	Provision of seating and study facility	4.22	0.738
6.	Photocopy and printing services	4.22	0.762

7.	Library publication	4.18	0.748
8.	Selective dissemination of information	4.13	0.795
9.	Referral services	4.11	0.712
10.	Reservation services	4.05	0.826
11.	Preservation services	4.05	0.780
12.	Indexing and abstracting services	4.04	0.793
13.	Translation services	3.96	0.793
14.	Information literacy session	3.93	0.813
15.	Interlibrary loan	3.93	0.836

Current marketing techniques for library services

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents approved that excellent library services can be used as marketing techniques. Creating of library web page got the highest mean value (mean=4.35, SD=0.907), followed by the outlook, appearance and dressing of librarians (mean=4.29). The librarian has always been thought of as the beating heart of the educational institution. He serves as the organization's spokesman and ambassador. Exhibitions and displays of new arrivals are also well-known effective marketing strategies.

Table 3: Current marketing techniques for library services (N=55)

Serial No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Creating a library web page	4.35	0.907
2.	Librarians should be properly dressed.	4.29	0.896
3.	Having a representative in institutional functions	4.20	0.730
4.	Advertising in print and electronic media	4.16	0.856
5.	Exhibitions and display of new arrivals	4.16	0.938
6.	Organizing user education	4.16	0.918
7.	Sending personal letters to users through e-mail and text messages	4.11	0.786
8.	Use of leaflets and posters	4.09	0.823
9.	Increase interpersonal relationship between staff and users	4.05	0.870
10.	Staff friendliness with users	4.04	0.942
11.	One discussion with users	3.96	0.860
12.	Organizing library week	3.87	0.883
13.	Sending out brochure or files	3.80	0.911

Competencies required by librarians for marketing of library services

Table 4 indicates that competencies required by medical librarians for marketing library services. The competency of good communication skills got the highest scale (mean=4.65, SD=0.673), followed by the ability to question and evaluate library services, ability to sell idea/library services, and information technology skills.

Table 4: **Competencies required by librarians for the marketing of library services**

Serial No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Good Communication Skills	4.65	0.673
2.	Ability to question and evaluate library services	4.38	0.805
3.	Ability to sell idea/library services	4.36	0.704
4.	Information technology skills	4.36	0.825
5.	Ability to answer the user query	4.36	0.704
6.	Interpersonal skills	4.27	0.912
7.	Ability to conduct research	4.13	0.944

Problems affecting marketing of library services

Table 5 quantifies that the majority of the respondents opines that the management of the medical college does not have a marketing policy (mean=4.07, SD=0.920), followed by the poor access to information technology (mean=4.02, SD=0.913), and lack of facilities to market library services (mean=4.02, SD=0.782). The other problems include, lack of training in marketing and lack of effective communication between librarians and users. The statement, “management does not understand the concept of marketing” acquired the lowest scale.

Table 5: **The problem affecting the marketing of library services (N=55)**

Serial No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Management does not have a marketing policy.	4.07	0.920
2.	Poor access to information technology	4.02	0.913
3.	Lack of facilities to market library services	4.02	0.782
4.	Lack of training in marketing	3.98	0.933
5.	Lack of effective communication between librarians and users.	3.93	0.920
6.	Lack of media access to the marketing of medical college libraries	3.93	0.858
7.	Librarians do not know how to market library services	3.78	0.956
8.	Management does not understand the concept of marketing	3.75	0.985

Strategies for improving the marketing of library services

Table 6 shows that all seven statements about the strategies of improving the marketing tactics in medical college libraries got a mean score of more than 4.00. The strategies “management should have a marketing policy” (mean=4.27, SD=0.781), gained the highest rate followed by “marketing should be included in the library school’s curriculum” (mean=4.25, SD=0.673). Library in charge also agreed that organizing training, seminars, and workshop to educate the librarians on the marketing of library services would be beneficial, provision of adequate facilities from management for marketing are also vital, and most importantly the librarians should be willing to market library services.

Table 6: **Strategies for Improving the Marketing of Library Services (N=55)**

Serial No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	Management should have a marketing policy	4.27	0.781
2.	Marketing should be included in the library school's curriculum.	4.25	0.673
3.	Organizing training, seminars, and workshop to educate the librarians on the marketing of library services	4.22	0.875
4.	Provision of adequate marketing facilities.	4.18	0.772
5.	Librarians should be willing to market library services	4.16	0.739
6.	A unit should be established for marketing library services.	4.07	0.879
7.	Library management should have a separate budget for marketing	4.02	1.045

Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that the majority of the in-charges/heads of medical college libraries have agreed on the need/importance of marketing to improve the standard of library services. All the targeted medical libraries have reasonable print and electronic resources to accomplish the educational and research requirements of their respective communities. The main aim of marketing library services and products is to draw attention to the usage of the library and provide a suitable environment in libraries. Medical libraries have been providing valuable services to support the teaching and learning process in their institutions. The outcome of our study proved that the conducive environment of the library is one of the top-ranked services. The library administration and staff both are responsible to develop and maintain a favorable atmosphere in the library. Oyewumi et al., (2017) emphasized that although it is important to develop the library collection especially, in digital format, thus users could utilize the resources even from off-campus. Further, necessary arrangements to upgrade the physical structure and aesthetic outlook of the library should be done to attract the users. The attractive and comfortable setting motivates the users to read and work in the library. Further, the results showed that good marketing strategies can inspire the students and faculty to use and visit the library extensively.

In response to opportunities for marketing library services in medical colleges, the majority of the respondents opined that the adequate provision of online information services has great potential as this indicator gained the highest mean ratio followed by reference services. Giving users accurate information when they need it could save them time and improve the library's reputation. Moreover, the timely delivery of required information in the healthcare setup would assist the treatment plan of the patients. Altaf et al., (2021) argued that the lifestyle of contemporary society has been influenced immensely by the use of the internet, now librarians and users are connected virtually and web 2.0 technology has proficiently been employed to fulfill the information needs of users.

The most effective marketing strategy currently used has been discovered to be the creation of library pages on various social media sites. The library page depicts the announcement of freshly acquired learning resources, library services, usage protocols, search guides and other activities. Khan and Bhatti (2012) stated that the usage of social media allowed to connect, generate, converse, share information and assist libraries to get closer to the community, further, libraries can support the users in distance learning education, knowledge-sharing practices and teaching information literacy through various podiums of social media.

As far as the required competencies for library marketing are concerned, effective communication skill has been recognized as top competency. Oral and written communication skills are the key to success in any

organization. Wood (2010) described that appropriate communication helps to formulate connectivity with the community (colleagues and users) to achieve the anticipated objectives of the organization, whereas Percy and Rossiter (1980) stated that ineffective communication led to the negativity that creates the situation of violence.

The lack of proper marketing policy has been found a gigantic problem that hinders the effective marketing plan in libraries. There is a dire need to be for collaboration amongst all stakeholders, including the key members of the library association, senior LIS faculty members and seasoned medical librarians to sit together and prepare the practicable marketing policy for the medical college libraries. This document would further serve as a basic guiding force and would be reviewed periodically according to the requirements.

Library marketing policy helps to execute the marketing plan and further it should be the part of the LIS curriculum as compulsory subject. Workshop and training are also required, but more important is the modification of the attitude of library staff. The polite and service-oriented behavior of the front desk staff would make a big difference. The high-rated problem which is affecting the marketing of library services is poor access to information technology, followed by the lack of effective communication between librarians and users, and the lack of facilities to market library services. The study identified that librarians should be willing to market library services. Library management should have a separate budget for marketing, training, seminars, and workshop.

Conclusion

The feedback of head librarians towards the use of marketing strategies in medical college libraries of the Punjab were positive. They endorsed that by applying modern marketing techniques, medical libraries could promote the standard of services, learning resources, activities and healthy communication with the users. The findings of the study strongly recommended that according to the contemporary requirements of library users and the rapidly changing academic scenario, medical college libraries need to transform their services and resources accordingly.

Medical libraries have to be facilitated with the latest information communication technologies and update their web pages as well as social media platforms. In order to be well-verse with the latest marketing trends, librarians should be given opportunities to attend continuing professional development training and adequate financial support to market the library resources and services in befitting manner. Medical library associations and library science schools should work together to develop the standards for marketing, keeping in mind the nature of medical college libraries and supporting the libraries to resolve the problems that hinder in the usage of marketing.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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