

# Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services – A Reoriented Digital Marketing Approach

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to provide a new reoriented approach to the Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services for the survival of the libraries in the future. The paper tried to explore digital tools and techniques as a part of the reoriented approach. Libraries and information centers struggle mightily in the digital age to advertise their products and services to a wide variety of users. The digitally sophisticated audience cannot be reached or engaged with using traditional marketing techniques. This paper presents literature review of the available literature with a view on reorientation of Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services. Various digital marketing techniques are examined in the article along with their possible advantages and drawbacks. These include content marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimisation, email marketing, and analytics. This paper explores the way by which new products and services can be offered. The surveyed literature finds repetition of the work already done as well as the products and services on offer. There is hardly any new development or offerings. This paper presents original view of the author based on his experience and the surveyed literature. The paper is of extreme importance to the library professionals.

**Keywords:** marketing, library products and services, tools and techniques, reoriented approach.

## I. Introduction

Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services is an area which has drawn considerable attention due to various reasons like budget cuts and advancement in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) which has posed serious competition to the libraries from the commercial vendors [12] [17]. Most of the librarians are of the view that marketing of library products and services is not possible in the profession of librarianship but the Marketing Guru Philip Kotler expressed his opinion that marketing is not only applicable to large corporation which seeks profit. It can be equally applied to non-profit organizations as well as colleges, universities, charitable institutions, libraries, information centers and service organizations also [12]. The concept of library as a not-for-profit organization is fast changing. The concept of marketing for non-profit organization was first introduced by Kotler and Levy in 1969. Later in the year 1982, Philip Kotler in his book *Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations* the author has elaborated the marketing strategies for organizations like libraries [3]. There is a residual feeling

that marketing is somehow inappropriate for public service institution such as library [12]. The question often asked Do Libraries need to market their services and resources and the answer to this is of course yes, as because the library services, resources and products cannot sell or market themselves unless any marketing techniques do not apply on them, therefore there is a need to apply some marketing techniques to market the library services, resources and products to targeted users [5]. Libraries and information centers should first modify their marketing plans so as to effectively advertise their products and services in today's digital era. Brochures, flyers, and newspaper adverts, which were formerly used for marketing, needs to be changed for reaching and interacting with the audience, who are becoming computer literate and online-connected. To increase their exposure, draw in people, and promote the value of their services, libraries should adopt new strategies and make use of digital marketing technologies.

## II. Literature Review

In this section an attempt has been made to review those papers which discussed about the change in orientation of

Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services. Although there is no uniformity in the pattern of the papers included, it discussed about the disarray of the situation of Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services.

Obi (2023) in his paper done a study to investigate the effect of library marketing indicators on students patronage of information service in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The researcher developed the questionnaire for data collection from 783 students. In his paper the author done a study to determine the influence of awareness creation and branding on student patronage of information services in federal universities libraries in South-South Nigeria. The author mentioned about adopting marketing strategies for remaining relevant and the study is based on the hierarchy of effect theory of Russell Colley. The author advocates for adoption of marketing strategies like awareness creation and branding which has influenced the student's patronage of information services in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria [10].

Sewwandi and Suraweera (2022) in their paper had done study on Information Product and Information Service marketing in 15 state university libraries in Sri Lanka to understand the current situation of information product and information service marketing in university libraries of Sri Lanka, to identify the strategy used and to identify barriers and challenges in Information Product and Information Service marketing in Sri Lanka. The study finds that the current circumstances are such that the librarians have appropriate knowledge of information marketing, but they do not have a specific information marketing policy. The authors identified among major problems in marketing of information product and information service which include lack of trained manpower, a lack of public relation skill of university library staff, lack of needs assessment, less attention to promotion methods, and lack of clear picture of the library in society [13].

Gamit, Patel and Patel (2021) in their paper mentioned about the innovative digital marketing strategies for academic library services in global era and the paper had described and scrutinized digital marketing in academic libraries. The authors mentioned about the need of the libraries to escalate their presence in digital environment and the need on the part of the librarian and users to explore effective digital campaigning and promotional activities so as to get closer to the user community for offering better services and make them aware of the digital marketing services and resources of an academic library. The authors mention that users are more techno-savvy and due to this libraries needs to reorient themselves and library services.

The authors did a study of Gujarat's grant-in-aid and self-finance B.Ed. colleges and found some major challenges for effective digital marketing of academic library services in global era [2].

Deepthi and Tadasad (2020) in their paper had done a study of 51 universities of Karnataka state so as to find information products and services indigenously developed by university libraries. The study finds only 44 universities have functioning websites. The study finds university libraries do not provide advanced information services and information products beyond alerting level. The authors further mentions that in the context of academic libraries the information products can be education related material, instruction guide, reviews, reports, databases, technical writing, handbook, critical studies and request for specific services. Until and unless these products are indigenously developed by academic libraries (entrepreneur) one cannot expect the marketing of information products and services [1].

Weinstein and McFarlane (2016) in their paper discussed about implementing customer value mindset. The authors further mentioned about how implementing customer-centric marketing and the latest technology can help in increasing the perceived value of the library usage before, during and after service delivery. The authors have mentioned about how emergence of powerful competitors like search engine, technology-information and data storage or retrieval companies as well as social media sites with content, information portals and web pages are driving users away from libraries. The author's further mentions in order to create superior value and excel in the marketplace libraries must offer good service, excellent quality service, good image and efficient functioning [19].

### **III. Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services – An Orientation**

Different types of libraries vary to the degree to which they have completed the transition to a marketing orientation. There is evidence that many librarians have not yet fully accepted the marketing concept. There is a consensus that libraries have reached a crossroads, at which they must either change the way they do business, or become increasingly irrelevant in a competitive information marketplace. Library marketing has been limited to a reactive form of marketing which involves piecemeal use of various short-term tactical marketing activities, rather than implementation of a comprehensive strategic marketing perspective [11]. Libraries must keep up with the new needs created by their users, thereby creating an environment of up-to-date products and reliable information services [8].

Library needs to produce new products on a regular basis with new ideas in order to satisfy users and keep them in touch with the library for a long time. Such as the State of the Art Report, Digital Literacy, Research Trends, and so on [15]. While the many surveyed literature discussed about retaining the customers among diminishing value of the libraries in current scenario, there is a unique pattern in the type of library and information products and services. There is a need to offer new additional products and services which are useful to the users using innovative tools and techniques like student's placements and up skilling. Libraries should offer such products and services which are useful to its clients even if they are out of its scope, so as to retain its value intact. Leenaraj and Tuamsuk (2016) asserted that many academic libraries in Thailand now provides research support services as part of their reference services, such as seeking for research information, finding sources of research funding, instruction of research writing, plagiarism checking and reference writing [6]. There is no doubt that Marketing Orientation has become a necessity in modern competitive world due to innovation and emergence of many competitive products at consumer's disposal [9]. To market a library product and services there is a need to market orientation and ICT based library services [7]. Shaffer (2002) and Walters (2004) asserts that a library must still consider its target audience who can use the library either individually or in groups, and should create an environment that supports learning rather than relaxation [14] [18].

#### **IV. Digital Marketing Tools and Techniques for Marketing Reorientation**

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the modernization of digital marketing in the library sector. Consequently virtual events and services are here to stay. To stay ahead of the curve, techsoup has mentioned eight digital marketing trends for 2021 one need to watch out for planning and budget the campaign strategies in the changing times [4].

Digital marketing tools and techniques (DMTT) are a range of ICT technology-related methods, tools, procedures, etc., which can be used to place and promote a product or a brand to the target audiences. Such tools can include Search engine optimization (SEO), affiliated marketing, viral marketing, Content marketing, Social media platform, email marketing, PR tools etc [20].

Library Tech Trends for 2023 highlights tools for transforming library marketing using AI design tools like Midjourney and DALL-E, Canva has text-to-image feature, Gigapixel AI can upscale and enhance existing images. Digital collection can be promoted using smart speakers and

virtual assistants, AI audio book narration facility can be used, and Virtual reality and workforce development can be assisted by libraries [16].

#### **V. Digital Marketing Landscape**

Libraries may advertise their services using a variety of tools and tactics available in the digital marketing environment. These technologies include social media marketing, email marketing, analytics, search engine optimisation (SEO), and content marketing. To draw in and keep consumers interested, content marketing requires producing and sharing useful, pertinent material. Social media marketing connects with people, shares updates, and creates communities through websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The goal of SEO is to make library websites more visible in search engine results, resulting in an increase in organic traffic. Email marketing entails sending people personalised messaging through targeted email campaigns. Analytics sheds light on user behaviour and aids libraries in assessing the success of their marketing initiatives [16].

#### **VI. Relevance of Digital Marketing in Libraries**

For libraries to remain relevant and successfully compete in the digital era, digital marketing is essential. It helps libraries to engage consumers through multiple digital channels, reach a larger audience outside of their physical locations, and establish a solid online presence. Additionally, libraries may employ digital marketing to highlight their distinctive offerings in terms of collections, services, and events, which raises user awareness and involvement. Libraries may provide more individualised and user-centric services by using digital marketing tactics that help them better understand the requirements, preferences, and behaviour of their users.

#### **VII. Challenges in Adopting Digital Marketing Tools**

Although adopting digital marketing in the context of libraries has many advantages, there are also difficulties. Resources including funds, manpower, and technical equipment are frequently restricted at libraries. Technology, education, and skill investments are necessary for integrating digital marketing tools. When implementing digital marketing tactics, libraries also need to take privacy and data security concerns into account. Additionally, libraries must make sure that their digital marketing initiatives are inclusive and accessible while taking into account the varied requirements and capabilities of their user population.

## **VIII. Benefits of Digital Marketing Tools in Libraries**

Despite the difficulties, libraries may gain greatly from using digital marketing tools. They make it possible for libraries to communicate with users in real-time, expand their audience, and promote deep connections. Libraries may promote their distinctive collections, services, and expertise through digital marketing to draw in new customers and keep hold of current ones. By tracking and analysing user involvement, libraries may make data-driven decisions for specialised marketing initiatives. Digital marketing also makes it easier for stakeholders to communicate and work together, which results in partnerships and the sharing of resources [20].

## **IX. Reoriented approach to digital marketing in libraries**

### **9.1 User-centric Approach**

The user is emphasised as the focal point of marketing initiatives in a reoriented approach to digital marketing in libraries. To design relevant and individualised experiences, libraries must comprehend the requirements, interests, and behaviours of their target audience. User research, surveys, and feedback methods can offer insightful information about user expectations and aid in the development of marketing plans. Delivering relevant information, individualised suggestions, and seamless user interfaces across digital platforms should be the main goals of libraries. Libraries may improve connections, raise user happiness, and boost user engagement by taking a user-centric strategy.

### **9.2 Collaboration and Partnerships**

To increase reach and maximise the effect of digital marketing initiatives, collaboration with other institutions, organisations, and stakeholders is essential. Libraries can collaborate with nearby colleges, community centres, companies, and other organisations to co-create material, hold events together, and cross-promote services. Collaborations with bloggers, subject matter experts, and influencers may help libraries reach new audiences and establish reputation. Libraries may boost their marketing messaging, get access to new networks, and create a feeling of community around their offers by utilising collaborations and partnerships.

### **9.3 Personalization and Customization**

Personalization is essential in library digital marketing. Libraries may provide specialised experiences, personalised suggestions, and targeted messages by utilising user data and cutting-edge technology. User segmentation, recommendation algorithms, and specialised email

campaigns may all be used to personalise content. Libraries may create personalised reading lists, propose related events, and offer resources using user information such as borrowing history, interests, and demographics. The functionality and style of digital platforms may also be customised, resulting in a more individualised and user-friendly experience.

## **9.4 Continuous Evaluation and Improvement**

The success of digital marketing initiatives in libraries should be regularly assessed in order to pinpoint areas for development. To evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing initiatives, libraries should monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) such website traffic, engagement metrics, conversion rates, and user feedback. A data-driven strategy enables libraries to deploy resources wisely, improve marketing strategies, and make educated decisions. Along with trying out new tactics, remaining current on digital marketing trends and technology, and responding to shifting user tastes and behaviours, continuous assessment also entails keeping up with developing digital marketing techniques.

By adopting this reoriented approach to digital marketing, libraries can create meaningful connections with users, enhance visibility, and effectively promote their products and services. Emphasizing user-centricity, collaboration, personalization, and continuous evaluation ensures that libraries remain relevant, responsive, and successful in the digital age. In the following section, we will discuss the challenges associated with implementing digital marketing strategies in libraries and provide recommendations for overcoming these challenges.

## **X. Challenges**

### **10.1 Challenges in implementing digital marketing strategies**

**5.1.1 Resource Constraints:** Budget, personnel, and technology infrastructure issues are common in libraries. Investments in technology, education, and experience are necessary for putting digital marketing tactics into practise. Libraries should look for innovative solutions, such using open-source software, working with other organisations to share resources, and giving staff training in digital marketing a high priority.

**10.1.2 Privacy and Data Security:** In order to protect user privacy and data security, libraries must handle sensitive user information. Libraries must create strong data protection policies and adhere to all applicable laws. Users should be informed openly about data collection and usage so that they may have control over their privacy settings.

**10.1.3 Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Digital marketing initiatives should be inclusive and accessible to all users, especially those with impairments or restricted technical access. When creating marketing materials, libraries should take into account the requirements and abilities of a varied user base, follow online accessibility guidelines, and offer alternate formats for information [2] [20].

## XI. Recommendations

### 11.1 Recommendations for overcoming challenges

**6.1.1 Strategic Planning:** Libraries should create a thorough digital marketing plan that is in line with their organisational objectives. Objectives, target audiences, intended outcomes, and key performance indicators should all be listed in this plan. A clearly defined plan aids libraries in setting priorities, allocating funds wisely, and gauging the effectiveness of their digital marketing initiatives.

**11.1.2 Training and Skill Development:** Libraries should fund staff training to advance their understanding of digital marketing. Employees must keep current on the newest methods, technologies, and trends in digital marketing. In order to upskill their personnel and provide them the tools they need to apply digital marketing strategies successfully, libraries can offer seminars, online courses, and access to professional development resources.

**11.1.3 Collaboration and Partnerships:** By encouraging partnerships and cooperation with other institutions, organisations, and stakeholders, libraries can overcome resource limitations. Collaboration may help spread expenses, use skills, and engage a larger audience. To maximise the effect of their digital marketing efforts, libraries can collaborate on collaborative marketing initiatives, exchange material, and cross-promote services.

**11.1.4 User Feedback and Evaluation:** Libraries should actively solicit user input and assess the success of their digital marketing initiatives. Users' preferences, behaviours, and levels of satisfaction are revealed via user surveys, focus groups, and analytics data. This input may help libraries enhance user experiences, hone their strategy, and make data-driven choices.

**11.1.5 Agile Implementation:** To be flexible and adaptable in response to user input and shifting trends, libraries should adopt an agile strategy to digital marketing. Libraries may improve the effectiveness of their digital marketing strategy and get better results by implementing small-scale experiments, evaluating the outcomes, and iterating depending on the results. Libraries may overcome obstacles and successfully execute digital marketing strategies by addressing these issues and putting the suggested tactics into

practise. Increased user engagement, improved exposure, and greater success in marketing library and information services will result from this [2] [20].

## XII. Conclusion

Due to the ongoing current circumstances libraries need to change drastically. The traditional library products and services discussed in literature should be supplemented with new sets of products and services. Previous studies show that many of the library products and services have become obsolete over the time, so there is a need of reorientation of the marketing approach of the library and information products and services. Digital marketing tools can play an important role of reorientation in marketing of library and information products and services. The importance of reorienting library digital marketing towards user-centricity, cooperation, personalisation, and ongoing assessment has been examined in this research article. The literature review emphasised the development of library marketing as well as the applicability of digital marketing tactics in the contemporary digital environment. Content marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), email marketing, and analytics are just a few examples of the various digital marketing strategies that were covered.

For libraries to successfully connect and engage with their target audience, enhance exposure, and promote their products and services, a reoriented approach to digital marketing is needed. Libraries may succeed in the digital age by implementing user-centric methods, utilising partnerships, personalising experiences, and continually reviewing marketing initiatives. Future study in the area of digital marketing for libraries may focus on the possible uses of cutting-edge technology like artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) in marketing for libraries. Investigating how digital marketing tactics affect user engagement, user happiness, and library usage trends would also yield insightful results. To ensure ethical and responsible marketing practises, further research on privacy issues and data security in the context of digital marketing for libraries is beneficial. Top of Form

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