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Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services During Covid -19 Pandemic: A Study

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Abstract:

The Social networking sites play a major role in promoting library services and products to its user community. In this Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown period, physical communication was locked and online web communication technology proved a powerful tool to bridge the gap between the library and users. The users were unable to reach the libraries during this pandemic period. The librarians used social networking tools to provide information during this pandemic period. The libraries provided a variety of services to its user community. The purpose of this paper is to show how effectively the libraries used Social Networking Sites for marketing & promoting the library and information products & services to their users during this pandemic and lockdown period. A structured online questionnaire was used for data collection. The targeted population was academic librarians working in colleges in Goa, India. From the study, it was found that Social networking sites play a major role in marketing and promoting library and information products and services during this pandemic period. Maximum librarians are using the Library website, Facebook and WhatsApp tool for marketing and promoting the library services and products to reach their users.

Keywords: Social networking sites, pandemic, academic libraries, user community, library services, library products.

Introduction:

Education is a lifelong learning process and plays a pivotal role in human behaviour. The libraries always played a vital role in providing information to society for their learning & knowledge needs. Social networking sites (SNS) has attracted the attention of lacs of peoples in the world and its very popular among the young generation. SNS is treated as popular means of communication. Now in emerging new technological scenarios, the academic libraries need to pace with this new technology to reach the users and fulfill their needs. In this COVID-19 pandemic when the academic things paralyzed, the academic libraries played an important role in providing the information to users by using the SNS and increasing their learning habits. The use of SNS in academic libraries is for communication with users for information literacy and information delivery. The SNS technology is used for discussions, sharing information, assignment work, personal activities etc. To develop a good collection and to provide user satisfaction services library needs to market its product and services. The librarian needs the expertise to market the library products for the institutional user community. Because of emerging information technology, libraries no longer a choice for the students, faculties & research scholars. The libraries need to expand its physical services beyond the technological point. To market a library product and services there is a need to market orientation & ICT based library services. The marketing of services and products should be beneficial for the academic user community. The library needs to use promotional approaches to convey the users about the resources available in the library. The success of the library depends on the satisfaction of users, reduction in barriers to access and maximum use of available resources. Successful marketing strategies increase the library's visibility across the campus and develop an interest in the academic community with the library; as a result, the library would be able to get support from the institution if library resources are to be greatly used by the library patrons. It is an essential duty of the academic librarians to develop a solid marketing plan. Developing a concrete marketing strategy will help in understanding the core resources and facilities which should be promoted, and communicated with their advantages. Everyone in academic libraries should recognize their significant role in an active promotional plan within the institution and beyond.

Why marketing of the Library?

Marketing plays a very vital role in creating awareness for library and information products and services. Recent technological developments are creating new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information by passing traditional

institutional-like libraries in this pandemic period. There has been increasing pressure on libraries to mobilize resources and become self-reliant. Marketing provides an opportunity to see how they can offer effective and efficient services to their users online. The role of marketing is more than finding customers for the available information sources, services and technologies. Libraries and information centers have begun to realize that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of the administration, especially as a means for improving user satisfaction and promoting the use of services by current and potential users. The best way for an academic library is to create a clear vision and strategic plan to marketing library resources and services to achieve its objectives and goals. The adoption of social media is a tool of communication for library resources and services as an innovative channel now between library and users and make users aware of library resources and services. The best way to achieve this, librarians have a clear vision and strategic marketing plan for their library. A marketing plan is a key responsibility of academic librarians in order to awareness of library assets and benefits with a full range of facilities and resources. Nevertheless, the requirements of contemporary data processing, combined with the emergence of ICT, which creates multiple rivals in the delivery of data service, demanding innovative strategy in reaching customers, for which the traditional approaches mentioned above are no longer sufficient. It is therefore not surprising that increasing numbers of academic libraries embrace social media to support and market library services. Marketing is a method involving a systematic assessment of the requirements of customers and the design of data products and services to meet the requirements

1. To ensure the maximum use of available information during this pandemic period.
2. To create an online demand for the available resources.
3. To fulfill the needs of the users by providing online information.
4. To make familiar with the resources available in the library.
5. Networking demands/ complexity in information requirements.
6. Maximum use of databases.
7. To increase learning/reading habits among the users.

Marketing strategies

To market a library's resources and information services is not difficult. Wolfe's (2005) observation, "Library public relations, promotions, and communications: a how-to-do-it

manual” is a very useful guide for library marketing. Here are a few suggestions for marketing the library services to the readers:

- A well-designed library web page is a good way of promoting library information services and resources.
- The Emails containing the tips about finding information on library resources are of great value at the critical stage.
- Use library wall space. The library can display different language study tools such as bilingual dictionaries, English thesaurus, dictionary of synonyms and antonyms, subject-related dictionaries and encyclopedias.
- The librarian needs to meet the users to discuss and gather the relevant information they required.
- The libraries need to provide “Help” services link to library web pages, where assistance may be provided to search for resources.

Literature Review:

The emerging technology in libraries, the explosion of electronic resources and search engines are creating many challenges for libraries as well as librarians. It is important for academic libraries how to formulate a marketing plan while many librarians do not understand themselves as marketers, although marketing is a crucial role of librarians

Margam, Madhusudan (2008) in his study reveals that the marketing aims to identify the client base, determine their wants, needs and demands and fulfilling them by delivering the appropriate products and services. The main focus is on user satisfaction. The need for marketing of information is essential in India for promotion of information resources, creation for the demand of information, maximum use of information, improving the image and status of library and professionals, shrinking budget, rise in the cost of resources such as Journals, Databases which makes the marketing of library and information services essential.

Sharma, Ajaykumar and Bhardwaj, Seema (2009) in their study states to understand the user needs and promotion of available services by using various market research techniques such as surveys focus on user groups, and analysis of suggestions. Librarians can understand the needs of the user and can design appropriate services and facilities to meet the user needs. The reduction in budget and rise in the cost of resources and the advent of Information

Communication Technology has opened new vistas for marketing information products and services.

Joseph Justin, K. J. and Parmeswari, B. (2002) in their study states that the three main factors i.e. Information Explosion, Technology Revolution and Rise in the cost of library resources are the main factors responsible to develop a marketing approach in its operations and services. Library acquisition, organization and Dissemination to be based on modern concepts of marketing to achieve reader satisfaction.

Patange, Jagdish Tukaram (2013) in his study states marketing of library and information products and services approach to determine the needs, wants and demands of the client by designing and delivering appropriate products and services more effectively. The librarians should understand the new dimensions of library and information services which will help in formulating appropriate plans and programs to make library services most effective

Chu, S.K.W. and Du,H (2013) observes that Social media applications help their users to acquire interconnections among the library members and remix the library services and products to brand them visible in a wider way. Tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Blog, and Twitter are being used to erect relationships, connection and sharing knowledge with user groups, to enhance libraries and to provide information services. Social networking sites were being used by a number of academic libraries and were perceived to help promote library services and interact with students. However, the implementation of these sites by library staff was found to be challenged by limited time and perceived inadequacy of the staff to keep pace with the development of technology.

In a survey of ARL libraries, Mahmood and Richardson (2013) stated that 76 libraries were using some form of Web 2.0 technologies, i.e., RSS, blogs, social networking sites, wikis and instant messaging were found the most used technologies as these were used in more than 80 % of academic libraries. Kumar¹⁰ observed that majority of Sikkim University students expressed the use of the internet for SNSs and its resources and were enthusiastic in improving their skills in the use of SNSs.

Khan and Bhatti (2012) reported that the respondent's behavior towards the use of social media for marketing of library resources, services was positive and suggested that libraries

should be connected with the internet services and develop their web page and social media page

Schmidt (2007) stated that libraries can adopt a 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. The 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 utilized optimally.

Wenhong (2006) 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 library resources and services. The author suggested that exhibitions are a good marketing idea in academic institutions. Libraries have been demanding the inclusion of marketing links on their websites. Therefore, library professionals must grab this opportunity in the digital environment

Mamatha (2016) 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.

Hendrix, et al., (2009) conducted a study on 70 librarians to know the use of Facebook and found that majority of libraries use 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 the proper use of these feeds' services can be useful tools in the promotion of library resources and services.

Mu (2007) 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. The library should provide a comfortable environment of interaction so that users feel free to ask questions to the reference librarians. Moreover, university libraries should adopt more systematic techniques in users' needs assessment so that libraries can provide the best services.

Ekart (2011) explained in his study that by using Twitter, libraries not only get feedback about library services but also get valuable information about library users. This valuable information can be used in planning library resources and services.

Snoj and Petermanec (2001) assert that marketing knowledge can assist libraries to have a competitive advantage over competitors and it is through the development of new services or changes in the existing ones that they can achieve this and satisfy users better. In other words, marketing competency can bring about improvement in organizational status and enhance the image of librarians thereby improving library performance. Unfortunately, many studies have documented librarians' lack of professional understanding of the marketing concept and its applicability to librarianship

Duke and Tucker (2007) focus on the importance of constructing a marketing plan that is an outcome of a strategic planning process and addresses a library's vision and mission statement, their definition of marketing library services is to convey what the library has to offer to its community of consumers

Empey and Black (2005) suggested that outcomes of promotional practices are often intangible, evaluating outcomes may be challenging and tough. Librarians can assess outcomes based on the informal response from customers, and more formal remarks from individuals. They also reported that librarians are more interested to know about awareness of library patrons as well as resources and facilities are used by library patrons or not, if they have made dramatic changes in their marketing and promotional plans

Conley and Tucker (2005) highlight the need to understand who internal and external consumers are and how to find ways to reach them. They also focused on the development of a marketing plan that outlines activities that fulfill the library's goals and mission.

Objective of the Study:

1. To assess the techniques used for marketing library and information products and services during the pandemic period.
2. To know the challenges faced by the librarians during the lockdown period in marketing library and information products and services.
3. To find out how frequently libraries are using SNS tools for marketing library and information products and services during a pandemic.

4. To know the types of products and services used for marketing library and information services during this pandemic period to reach users.

Research Methodology:

A structured online questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The targeted population was the academic librarians working in the colleges in Goa. The online questionnaire was sent to 58 college librarians out of which 43 college librarians responded to the questionnaire. The data collected through the questionnaire have been analyzed and presented in a tabular form. The data analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) which includes frequency tables and percentages.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The total of 43 online feedbacks received from the librarians. Since some questions are multiple choices the responses and percentage may vary according to the questions.

Table1: Techniques used for Marketing of Library products and Services

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Library Website	37	16.2%	86.0%
	Email	34	14.8%	79.1%
	Online Training sessions	33	14.4%	76.7%
	Classroom instructions- (Google classroom)	28	12.2%	65.1%
	Online Workshops	21	9.2%	48.8%
	Online In-house book exhibition	29	12.7%	67.4%
	Social media Tools	34	14.8%	79.1%
	Online Newsletter	13	5.7%	30.2%
Total		229	100.0%	532.6%

From the above table 1, it is clear that all the libraries are using most of the SNS tools to market their library products and services during this pandemic period. The library website is the mirror that reflects the image of the library with the available resources and other services offered. The library website plays an important role in attracting users towards the library. Nearly 86% of libraries using their website to promote their library products and services and more than 75% of libraries are using e-mail, training sessions and social media. The information literacy programmes conducted through classroom instructions (Google classroom) and online training sessions create awareness about the resources available in the library and creates demand for the resources.

Table 2: Do You think Social Networking sites are an Effective Tool for marketing library Products and services during Pandemic?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	43	100.0
No	0	0

From table no. 2 it is seen that all the libraries (100%) agreed that they are using SNS services to promote their products and services. SNS is the easiest and fastest way to reach the users during this lockdown period and all the libraries are using this tool for marketing the library products and services.

Table 3: SNS used by your library for promoting library & Information products and services				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Facebook	26	23.2%	60.5%
	Whatsapp	43	38.4%	100.0%
	Youtube	18	16.1%	41.9%
	Twitter	6	5.4%	14.0%

	Blog	11	9.8%	25.6%
	Linkedin	6	5.4%	14.0%
	Instagram	2	1.8%	4.7%
Total		112	100.0%	260.5%

Table 3 indicates that WhatsApp (100%) is the most popular SNS tool used by the libraries for marketing their products and services. WhatsApp is the popular mode of to & fro communication tool from where the libraries and users can communicate with each other quickly. Facebook (60.5%) which is the most popular site having 290 million users in India used by the librarians for promotion purposes. YouTube (41.9%) used by the libraries for promotional events and uploading Tutorials etc. LinkedIn, Twitter, Blog, Instagram are the other tools used by the librarians for online marketing of library products at a very low level.

4. Types of Products used for marketing library and information services.				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Books	36	23.5%	87.8%
	Journals	32	20.9%	78.0%
	E-Resources	35	22.9%	85.4%
	Newspapers clipping	25	16.3%	61.0%
	Databases	25	16.3%	61.0%
Total		153	100.0%	373.2%

The library is the learning resource center that caters to the needs of its users. The above table no. 4 reveals that books (87.8%) are the most in-demand service and used by the users during this lockdown period followed by E-journals (78%). The libraries used most of their products & services such as E-Resources, Databases, newspaper clipping to reach at the users. All the librarians too agreed that they are using the SNS for their marketing and

promotion of library products and services. The libraries are also providing newspaper clipping services of day to day happening to their users.

5. Types of services provided by the library using Social Networking Services

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Resource sharing	30	24.2%	69.8%
	Reference service	26	21.0%	60.5%
	Library updates	38	30.6%	88.4%
	New arrivals	30	24.2%	69.8%
Total		124	100.0%	288.4%

Above table no. 5, it is found that the library updates service (88.4%) is the most popular service used by the libraries for promotion purposes. The libraries using library website services to update their users during the pandemic. The readers always want to know about the library updates to fulfill their information needs. 60.5% of librarians are providing reference service while 69.8% of libraries posting the new arrivals in their library on SNS to create demand for products.

6 Frequency of promoting library products and services

		Frequency	Percent
	Regular	21	48.8
	Weekly	10	23.3
	Fortnightly	4	9.3
	Monthly	8	18.6
	Total	43	100.0

Table no. 6 shows that 48.8% of libraries regularly used the SNS service to promote their products and services while 23.3% of libraries use SNS services weekly to update the user.

In order to attract the user's libraries needs to use these services regularly. SNS is a to & fro tool that immediately interacts with the users. so there is a need to promote the library products regularly.

7. Extent of usage of SNS for promotion.

		Frequency	Percent
	Highly	8	18.6
	Medium	34	79.1
	Less	1	2.3
	Not Using	0	0
	Total	43	100.0

The above table no. 7 shows that the extent of usage of SNS for promotion is medium (79.1%). The libraries should use the SNS to promote their products and services to a higher extent. The libraries can reach the maximum of their users if they use the SNS to a high extent.

8. Barriers in marketing library and information products and services				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Lack of fund	13	12.1%	30.2%
	Interrupted Internet connectivity	25	23.4%	58.1%
	Inadequate ICT Infrastructure	19	17.8%	44.2%
	Lack of Technical Skill	15	14.0%	34.9%
	Lack of Manpower	25	23.4%	58.1%
	Lack of Awareness	10	9.3%	23.3%
	Total	107	100.0%	248.8%

The above table no. 8 indicates that the interrupted internet connectivity (58.1%) and lack of manpower (58.1%) are the two main barriers to the functioning of libraries. The library should have adequate manpower with a good ICT skill. A good quality uninterrupted internet service gives speedier access to users to retrieve and download the information. To provide better online services to users, the libraries need good and adequate ICT infrastructure and many libraries are lacking behind with the ICT infrastructure.

9. Impact of Social Networking Sites on Library				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
	Users increased	24	22.0%	57.1%
	Build good relation with Staff & Student	32	29.4%	76.2%
	Increased e-learning among users	31	28.4%	73.8%
	Discussion made easy with staff & Student	21	19.3%	50.0%
	Does not create any impact on students & staff.	1	0.9%	2.4%
Total		109	100.0%	259.5%

Above table no. 9, clearly indicates that the SNS plays an important role in the library. The impact of SNS shows that library users are increased, the libraries build a good relationship with staff & students, students increased their e-learning habits and learning concepts are made easy for staff and students. With the promotion of online services, 76.2% of libraries built a good rapport with the staff and students and increased the e-learning habits among 73.8% of users. Almost 57.1% of libraries agreed that their online users are increased.

10. Does the Library should continue its marketing services using SNS?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	43	100.0
No	0	0

The above table no. 11 indicates that all the librarians (100%) agreed to use the SNS for the marketing of library and information products and services. It is the easiest way to reach the users and attract the users towards the library. The communication at both the ends get quick response, so libraries agreed to use SNS tools for marketing of library products and services.

Findings:

- Library websites played a major role in providing online resources to its users.
- WhatsApp is the most powerful tool used by all the libraries to reach their users.
- E-Books, E-Journals & other E-resources are the most in-demand resources used by the users during the pandemic period.
- The online services provided by the libraries during pandemic indicates that the usage of the resources increased and libraries built a good rapport with the users.
- All the librarians agreed that they will use SNS for the promotion of library products and services.

Conclusion

SNS has become one of the most popular tools for marketing libraries' products and services. The present study was conducted to see the use of SNS services used by the academic libraries for marketing and promotion of library products and services during the covid-19 pandemic period. The finding of the study reveals that the maximum librarians have made the use of these SNS tools for marketing the library products and services. Most of the librarians preferred to use Facebook and WhatsApp to promote and market their products and services during this pandemic period. The continued use of these SNS has improved the image of the library and encouraged the users to use the library and its online resources.

With the help of Information technology, many libraries and information centers have their own websites on which all kind of material is accessible. The marketing approach is mainly useful for academic libraries to improve their image and to attract more and more users. It helps the library staff to upgrade their innovative knowledge both within their organizations and as a profession within the society. It is the need of the hour to adopt this concept. The librarians should understand the nature of information, the needs of users, the transfer process between people and information. It is by adding value to information through service delivery that Librarians can encourage the usage of information service. It requires an in-depth understanding, greater intimacy and mutual trust among the library and its users. The deciding factors for all this are our own attitude and our commitment to the community. We who work in the library are the greatest marketing forces in libraries during this pandemic since the students do not come to the library. Marketing helps show a Librarian and library staff's expertise, the organization's mission, promotes productivity by quickly and efficiently finding the right information at the right time, and add value to an organization's products. Libraries and information centers have begun to realize that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of the administration, especially as a means for improving the user satisfaction and promoting the use of services for current and potential users.

Future study: The librarians can do further study with innovative technologies adopted by the libraries for the marketing library and information products and services.

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