

## MARKETING OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN MAHARASHTRA STATE

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### **Abstract:**

The new Internet setting and frequent technical upgrades have caused libraries to rearrange and become accustomed to these innovations for a more efficient system and service performance. It is critical to escalate the use of library materials and services, which can be accomplished with the help of good marketing tactics. Marketing has become an increasingly important tool for promoting libraries and their services to users in today's rapidly evolving digital environment. The library must market itself to be proactive and meet the needs of its users. The purpose of this paper focus on the views of librarians about the marketing of library resources and services and to review its role in the usage of libraries. It also discusses what modern library services are, and how to promote and advertise those using digital technologies, including some of the most useful digital tools. Librarians should view the digital era as an opportunity rather than a threat for marketing their products and services. The present research is a survey method in which a questionnaire used as a tool for data collection and a Likert scale is used for interpreting the collected data. "Marketing of library resources and services is a major area which needs to be focused upon and if implemented accurately, it will surely motivate the patrons to walk towards the libraries", is one of the major findings on this research.

**Keywords:**Marketing, digital marketing, marketing tools, Likert scale, best practices, digital services

### **Introduction:**

Library books and services are considered tangible assets; which if used precisely may help patrons improve their focus, memory, empathy, communication skills, and decision-making potential. To use the library resources and services proficiently, they need to be conveyed to the end consumers through efficient marketing. The advancement in information and communication technologies (ICT); including social media, has resulted in changes in a variety of industries, including libraries. The shift towards ICT today in all sectors has introduced new trends such as e-business, e-commerce, e-finance, e-banking, e-marketing, e-governance, and e-libraries. Ocholla and Shongwe (2013) state that technology has affected the lifestyle of society and most people around the world now consider television, computers, cell phones, and the Internet to be essential.

In today's world, marketing is one of the most critical aspects of promoting any company, product, or service. It is an important mechanism that helps you reach your desired number of patrons. Even libraries no longer remained an exception from marketing themselves. Strong marketing strategies will make libraries more sustainable. Library marketing is critical for keeping users informed about the resources and services that are relevant to their needs and interests. Highly effective convincing skills

and abilities are a must to expand the user base and for transferring information or knowledge (Canzoneri, 2015). According to Thu, K., and Lixin, X. (2018); promoting the library and offering its various services to the consumer community in response to changing circumstances is significant, and libraries must be ready to respond encouragingly. Best practices in the library and information environment emerge when ICT is combined with creative/innovative ideas. The present study used a theoretical review based on past research. This research focuses on marketing products and services of libraries to promote utilization.

### **Marketing (Meaning, concept, and definitions):**

Marketing is the process by which a corporation, company, or organization promotes the purchase or sale of a product or service. Advertising, selling, and delivering things to consumers are all examples of marketing. According to Adegoke, K.A. (2015) marketing is the study, planning, implementation, and monitoring of well-crafted programs aimed at accomplishing business goals through the voluntary exchange of values. It is strongly reliant on tailoring the management offering to the desires and needs of the target market and on effective pricing, communication, and allocation to inform, inspire, and service the markets.

Kotler, Philip (1991) defines “Marketing as a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they want and need through creating, offering and exchanging products of value with others.”

Digital Marketing is defined as a set of techniques developed on the Internet to persuade users to buy a product or service (Avery, Steenburgh, Deighton, and Caravella, 2012).

Marketing library services have a long history that dates back to 1876. At an ALA conference in 1876, Samuel Swett Green advocated "improved personal relations between librarians and readers." (Chaubey and Lal, 2016). Therefore it can be said that the concept of library marketing has its roots in the United States and Northern Europe. This isn't to say that librarians in other parts of the world haven't been thinking about how to reach out to "the average man." The "library movement" in India around the turn of the twentieth century could be one of the examples of Library marketing (Renborg, 1997)

Therefore marketing of library resources and services can be defined as, “the proper execution of all efforts involved in boosting user satisfaction of the library patrons by offering maximum value to them. In the context of libraries, it can also be said that marketing is the art and science of attracting and retaining library and information center patrons.

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of the present study are to:

1. To examine the need for marketing library resources and services
2. To define current practices employed by librarians in the marketing of library resources and services.
3. To identify the different skills required by the librarians in carrying out the marketing services of the library resources
4. To investigate the advantages of adopting digital technologies for marketing library resources and services
5. To examine the difficulties involved while marketing library resources and services.
6. To give suggestions to promote the marketing of library services

### **Need and importance of the present study:**

One of the aims of any library is to keep its patrons aware of the resources and services that match their needs and interests. Library services, resources, and products may not be marketed or sold by themselves unless marketing techniques are applied. Therefore, to connect the library with the audience

on a larger scale, the library should use some marketing techniques to market its library services, resources, and products to its target audience. This will also help to improve contact between librarians and the public, providing librarians with an opportunity to create a positive image of the library, and potentially increasing the utilization of the library's services and resources. Past research shows that marketing is practiced in companies, industries and other profit-making institutions. Many librarians feel marketing is somehow inappropriate for a public service institution such as a library. According to Edewor and Omosor (2012), a library is meant to offer services to its patrons and not to make profits. Marketing strategies when applied at various levels have increased the credibility of organizations. Along the same lines; this research will assist librarians to realize the benefits of efficient marketing of library and information services in society. It will also help librarians improve their incorrect impression of marketing. The findings of this study will serve as reference material for library managers and other library staff who intend to carry out research.

### **Methodology:**

The present research is a survey method in which structured questionnaires are used for data collection. Further, the Likert scale was used while interpreting the collected data wherein a midpoint of the responses was analyzed a mean value above the midpoint was observed as a positive response (Accepted), and the mean value below the midpoint was observed as a negative response (Rejected)

### **Review of literature:**

Edom, B. O. & Edom, E. U. (2019) and Millie N. Horsfall (2020) revealed that efficient marketing should be employed to promote library and information services as a panacea for ensuring the long-term viability of Nigerian libraries in the digital age.

Joseph, Muema Kavulya, (2004) studied Library marketing activities in different universities in Kenya. What type of activities are done in the university libraries to promote the services? Kenya Libraries use Information brochures, newsletters, notice- boards, and information services provided through Library websites. The authors recommended that Kenyan universities should have a strategic marketing approach that will create, develop, and deliver good services.

Shontz, M. L., Parker, J. C., & Parker, R. (2004) surveyed public librarians in New Jersey. This study revealed administrators and public service librarians had more positive attitudes about marketing than reference and technical services librarians in a survey of public librarians on their attitudes toward marketing and the marketing of library services. To complement their marketing efforts, extra training and research will be required.

Patil, S. K., and Pranita Pradhan (2014) discussed the role of library professionals in the promotion of library services. Library professionals can adopt marketing of library services by adopting user awareness programs, use of electronic media, and also mass media like YouTube, social media pages, blogs, and wikis. Special services can be provided to blind and physically handicapped people. Understanding users' needs through surveys is one of the main solutions to promote library services but the major barrier is a lack of finance.

### **Need for Marketing for Library Services:**

#### **1.Information Explosion**

The more information available in the market, there is need for library management marketing techniques to meet consumers' information needs, "The place of libraries in the world has evolved dramatically." It moves at a faster speed, is more reliant on technology, and is more competitive. Libraries must look to marketing

## **2. User Satisfaction**

Library users' happiness is a top priority in the marketing process. The library and information center is not a profit-driven organization in terms of marketing. Client satisfaction will increase, resulting in a higher desire to use and pay for the services offered. As a result, the level of support library administrators receive for library and information services has a direct correlation with library user satisfaction.

## **3. Understanding Library Users Needs**

When it comes to library users, a few simple questions need analysis by librarians that have an impact on all library services. What are our user's particular areas of interest? What services can we offer to assist you in achieving library users' goals? What are the benefits to users of creating and distributing information products and services? How well do library staff interact with library users? In the information age finding information/products is the most crucial role of marketing in a library or information center.

## **4. To Attract users to the Library**

Libraries should have a pleasant mindset and build positive interactions with their customers. They will come again, however, only if their current demands are met, and therefore a marketing attitude is crucial in meeting users' information needs.

Adekunmisi (2013) points out that almost all libraries are getting stringent funds from their parent organizations when compared to the budget of other departments. Therefore he feels that marketing library resources may attract users and will raise library usage. Increased library footfalls will always be helpful to get extended budgets from the parent organizations.

### **Prominent marketing tools:**

The laws of library science demand maximum usage of books or library resources. Therefore intending to reach the maximum number of users many libraries are using the following methods to reach a large number of audiences:

### **Use of Digital Marketing tools in the Library:**

As per American Marketing Association (2022), "digital marketing refers to any marketing methods conducted through electronic devices which utilize some form of a computer. This includes online marketing efforts conducted on the internet. In the process of conducting digital marketing, a business might leverage websites, search engines, blogs, social media, video, email, and similar channels to reach customers." Digital marketing tools are the use of social media, email marketing techniques, Graphic designing tools, E-learning apps, and user-friendly applications on mobiles that can promote library services through digital marketing techniques.

### **Use of social media for marketing library services:**

Many library staff use social media to make things easier for themselves and their readers, as well as to improve their ability to create healthy relationships between library staff and library users. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WeChat, Instagram, LinkedIn, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, Telegram, and other social networks have been established, and some of them are widely used around the world. To publicize their library's resources and services, library staff can create affiliated accounts on social media sites like Facebook. Social media has advantages over traditional marketing methods. It allows users to create, connect, discuss, and share information even while connecting libraries closer to their users. New users are attracted to social media, which also helps with distant learning.

### Use of Search Engine Optimization tool for library marketing

The process of boosting your website's visibility in search engines is known as "search engine optimization." When users search for items or services linked to your organization on Google, Bing, and other search engines The more exposure your pages have in search results, the more likely you are to draw the attention and new and existing users of your library. Libraries can apply Search Engine Optimization tools to promote their services Because it is a critical component of digital marketing. Search is often a company's primary source of internet traffic, and it works in tandem with other marketing strategies. It will have a huge impact if you have more visibility and a higher ranking in search results than other competitors.

### Use of Email marketing tools:

To boost knowledge and use of the library's e-resources, the library sent out various emails and messages to its users. The library's second marketing campaign expanded the campaign's scope to include online resources, tools, and virtual programs. The library sent SMS messages to the students via Google groups and Google classroom so at a time mass mail can be sent out. This is one of the most important tools for marketing library services.

### Data analysis and interpretation:

The following tables represent the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. The inferences are drawn by using the Four point Likert scale in which psychometric responses of the respondents are analyzed to their level of agreement with a particular statement.

**Table 1 - Questionnaires distributed and responses received**

Questionnaires distributed	Responses received	% of responses
150	123	82%

The above Table 1 shows that 150 questionnaires were distributed among the librarians in and around Pune city. A total of 123 responses were received which formed a percentage of 82%.

**Table 2 - Need for Marketing Library and Information Services**

Sr. No.	Need for Marketing Library and Information Services	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	Respondents who think that lack of marketing knowledge and understanding discourages librarians/staff from adopting marketing strategies	99	17	5	2	3.73	A
2	Respondents who think that user satisfaction is the core of marketing activities?	93	26	4	0	3.72	A
3	Respondent's views on applying marketing tools and techniques will enhance library working and reputation	63	38	16	6	3.28	A
4	Respondent's belief in the importance and necessity of marketing	36	68	15	4	3.10	A

5	Respondents who think that the library should have a separate marketing unit/section?	48	37	23	15	2.95	A
6	Respondents who think that marketing strategies help in the promotion of library	0	112	3	8	2.84	A
7	Respondents who think that marketing helps in better understanding of user's information needs	31	27	15	50	2.31	D
		Average mean				3.13	
		Criterion means				2.5	

**Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree and X= Mean**

A question to assess the need for a marketing library and information services was asked of the respondents. The inferences received are arranged in the following Table 2.

**Note: Decision A = AGREE and Decision R = REJECT**

The above table 2 reveals major reasons mentioning the need for marketing libraries and information services. It is seen here that all the elements mentioned in the above table are accepted by the respondents by the mean of 3.73, 3.72, 3.28, 3.10, 2.95, and 2.84 respectively; except element No. 7. Not all the respondents think that marketing may help in better understanding of the user needs and therefore it stands rejected by the mean of 2.31. However the average mean is 3.13 and it is greater than the criterion mean, which is 2.5, and therefore it can be inferred that the reasons mentioned in the above table are accepted by the librarians

**Table 3 - Practices employed by librarians in the marketing of library resources and services**

Sr. No.	Marketing practices of library and information services	Great extent	Moderate extent	Little extent	Not applicable	X	Decision
1	Display of banners and signboards for various library resources	123	0	0	0	4.00	A
2	Providing Email alert services	87	32	4	0	3.67	A
3	Organizing special Resources awareness workshops	52	38	27	6	3.10	A
4	Organization of library orientation and awareness programs	31	72	18	2	3.07	A

5	Use of Social media platforms for the promotion of Library services	57	19	24	23	2.89	A
6	Conducting user surveys	23	61	37	2	2.85	A
		<b>Average mean</b>				<b>3.26</b>	
		<b>Criterion means</b>				<b>2.5</b>	

Further, an attempt was made to know the best marketing practices applied by the respondents to reach the maximum number of patrons. The responses received are arranged in the following Table 3.

**Note: Decision A = AGREE and Decision R = REJECT**

The above table 3 clearly shows that all the respondents have accepted all the elements applied by the respondents by the mean of 4, 3.67, 3.10, 3.7, 2.89, and 2.85 respectively. The average mean here is 3.26 which is again greater than the criterion mean. The respondents here seem to believe that all the marketing practices of library resources and services mentioned above are beneficial in reaching library patrons.

**Table 4 - Challenges you face while marketing library and information services**

Sr. No.	Challenges do you face while marketing	Great extent	Moderate extent	Little extent	Not applicable	X	Decision
1	Lack of Financial support	92	28	3	00	3.72	A
2	Lack of Manpower	52	39	32	00	3.16	A
3	Lack of staff having marketing knowledge	37	62	24	00	3.10	A
4	Less awareness of marketing techniques while promoting library services	19	41	63	00	2.64	A
5	Lack of interest from higher authority	10	36	77	00	2.45	D
	<b>Average Mean</b>					<b>3.01</b>	
	<b>Criterion Mean</b>					<b>2.5</b>	

**Note: Decision A = AGREE and Decision R = REJECT**

The above table 4 reveals challenges faced by librarians while marketing libraries and information

services. It is seen here that all the elements mentioned in the above table are accepted by the respondents by the mean of 3.72, 3.16, 3.10, and 2.64 respectively. Further, it is also seen that element No. 5.; i.e. 'lack of interest from higher authority' stands rejected by the mean of 2.45. It means that the college's higher authorities of 77 and 36 respondents respectively feel that the library resources and services should be marketed to reach the patrons.

Whereas the higher authorities of 10 respondents seem to be not promoting the marketing of library resources and services. However the total average mean is 3.01 and it is greater than the criterion means, which is 2.5, and therefore it can be inferred that the challenges faced by librarians who are mentioned in the above table are accepted by the librarians.

**Table 5 - Skills and Competencies required by librarians in carrying out library marketing**

Sr. No.	Skills and competencies required for Librarians in Marketing of Library and Information Services.	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	Collection development	98	23	2	00	3.78	A
2	Good communication skills	87	36	00	00	3.70	A
3	Information literacy	72	47	4	00	3.55	A
4	Computer skills	68	39	16	00	3.42	A
5	Decision making	48	57	18	00	3.24	A
6	Leadership and management	37	61	24	1	3.08	A
7	Interpersonal skills	55	24	37	7	3.03	A
8	Evaluating and analyzing skills	11	78	29	5	2.77	A
9	Research and Development	14	28	61	20	2.29	D
<b>Average Mean</b>						<b>3.20</b>	
<b>Criterion Mean</b>						<b>2.5</b>	

**Note:**SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree and X= Mean

**Note: Decision A = AGREE and Decision R = REJECT**

Marketing the product needs a lot of skill and competency. Therefore, reaching the library patrons demand some extra potential for the librarians. Therefore, it became necessary to check and analyze the skills and competencies levied with the respondents and a question in this regard was asked to them. The above table 5 reveals the skills and competencies required by librarians in carrying out library marketing of libraries and information services. It is seen here that all the elements mentioned in the above table are accepted by the respondents by the mean of 3.78, 3.70, 3.55, 3.42, 3.24, 3.08, 3.03, and 2.77 respectively. Further, the majority of the respondents feel that the knowledge or skill in carrying out research and development activities is essential from the point of view of higher education, but it might not be useful in marketing library resources and services. And therefore element No. 9.; i.e. research and development skill stands rejected by the mean of 2.29. However the average mean is 3.20 and it is greater than the criterion mean, which is 2.5, and therefore it can be inferred that all the elements



mentioned in the above table are accepted by the librarians

**Table 6 - Advantages of adopting digital technology for marketing**

Sr. No.	Advantages of adopting digital technologies for library marketing	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	Ensuring a wide variety of content accessible at a high speed	123	00	00	00	4	A
2	Multiple and simultaneous access	123	00	00	00	4	A
3	Multiple platforms for marketing	80	43	00	00	3.65	A
4	Ensuring seamless access	72	35	16	00	3.45	A
5	Easy to measure and calculate	68	23	32	00	3.29	A
6	Openness	29	88	6	00	3.18	A
7	Effective targeting	29	37	53	4	2.73	A
8	Lower cost	13	23	74	13	2.29	D
	<b>Average Mean</b>					<b>3.32</b>	
	<b>Criterion Mean</b>					<b>2.5</b>	

The above table 6 reveals the advantages of adopting digital technology for marketing libraries and information services. It is seen here that all the elements mentioned in the above table are accepted by the respondents by the mean of 4, 4, 3.65, 3.45, 3.29, 3.18, and 2.73 respectively; whereas element No. 8. is rejected by the respondents because they might feel that applying digital technology for marketing library resources and services might be a costly affair. Therefore, it stands rejected by the mean of 2.29. However the average mean is 3.32 and it is greater than the criterion means, which is 2.5, and therefore it can be inferred that the advantages of adopting digital technology for marketing required by librarians in carrying out library marketing in the above table are accepted by the librarians.

## Findings

The data collected were analyzed and interpreted in the above tables and the findings are given following the sequences of the tables. The following is the sum up of major findings:

Considering the importance and applications of marketing strategies in all the fields today, the majority of the respondents think that marketing is an essential area, which when implemented may enhance the use of library resources too. But at the same time, they also believe that poor marketing knowledge may discourage them from adopting marketing techniques. The respondents are aware of the present scenario of the libraries and therefore they wish to have a separate marketing unit within the library which will take care of reaching a large number of patrons in a short time.

Also, many respondents disagree with the statement, “marketing helps in better understanding of user's information needs”. This may be because many respondents believe that user needs can be understood by knowing the users and receiving recommendations from them. User surveys and feedback is one of the important mediums to understand the taste of the user. And therefore respondents might have not considered this statement appealing.

Many librarians try to reach their patrons in a variety of ways. The study reflects that most of the

librarians display banners and use signboards of newly added collections to reach the users. It is also seen that email alerts are also a commonly practiced method in marketing library resources. Some other methods for marketing library resources include organizing workshops and orientation programs on the library collection. Social media platforms, though highly effective techniques have been accepted by a low mean of just 2.89. This might be because of the indolence of the patrons in surfing or following the social media accounts of their libraries.

While focusing on the challenges faced by the librarians in implementing the marketing strategies into their organization; it is revealed that the upper-level management of many colleges think that libraries are not a production unit and therefore they don't promote marketing of library resources and services. "College libraries are maintaining a regular collection which consists mostly of syllabus related books which should be used by the patrons". Therefore, an ideology for not marketing library resources is seen to be strongly developed among the upper management of the college. As a result, they are not seen to be extending any type of support for library marketing.

Professional librarians who are aware of the taste of their patrons form an integral part of the library marketing process. Such library professionals ensure valuable collection development in their libraries. Apart from this library professional should be competent communicators amalgamated with all the necessary managerial skills which are a must in carrying out library marketing services in an efficient way.

Information Technology has always proved to be a boon to every industry. The education industry is also not left behind in implementing IT in its different capacities. Digital marketing is a new concept evolving and affecting almost every field of society. The use of digital technologies in libraries or digital marketing of library resources has numerous advantages in reaching the target audience.

## Conclusion

To conclude, library marketing is an essential aspect of ensuring that libraries remain relevant and meet the changing needs of their communities. Effective library marketing strategies involve understanding the library's target audience and their information needs, developing creative and engaging campaigns that showcase the library's resources and services, and using a mix of traditional and digital marketing channels to reach and engage with patrons.

A successful library marketing campaign can lead to increased library usage, greater community engagement, and enhanced public support for the library's mission. Additionally, library marketing can help libraries stay ahead of the curve in terms of emerging technologies and changing user needs.

Overall, library marketing should be an ongoing process that is integrated into the library's overall strategic planning and is informed by ongoing feedback from patrons and staff. By staying attuned to the needs of their communities and continually adapting their marketing efforts, libraries can continue to thrive and play a vital role in their communities for years to come.

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