



# INSPIRING LIBRARY SERVICES

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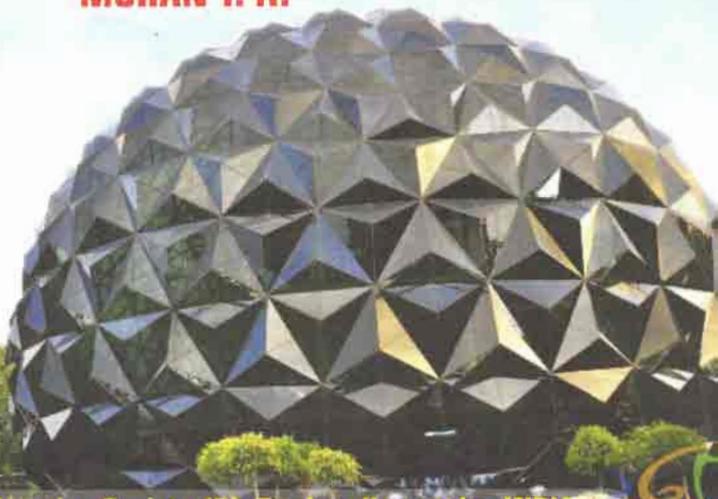
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## Marketing of Library Services and Products through Social Media: An Evaluation

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### Abstract

Social media has a great impact on information promotional activities by bringing tremendous changes in the field of marketing. Social networking applications help the users to possess interconnections among the community members and remix the library services and products to brand them visible in a broader way. This paper gives an overview of the concept of marketing of library services and products in the pretext of handiness of social networking technologies (SNT). The paper also discusses various social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, YouTube, Flickr etc. An outline of how the social media may successfully be applied to enhance the effectiveness in marketing library services and products is observed. Relative merits and challenges with adoption of SNS are also examined.

*Keywords:* Social networking sites, SNS, Library marketing, social media, Library services, Library products, Networking technologies, Promotion

### 1. Introduction

The present society creates, collects, manages, diffuses and makes use of information for its development due to the knowledge process exemplified as "information revolution". The information society has found out the potentiality of information that creates a gateway for commercial profit due to which the modern librarianship has the responsibility of knowledge management. Changes in technical and technological aspects of library services and products have compelled library professionals

to market their services and products for increasing its visibility, providing quality services and also for fulfilling the organizational objectives.

In the context of libraries, marketing does not merely mean promoting and diffusing the services or developed products they hold, but it is an action of literally creating awareness among the users about the offered information sources and services which is ever happening process as the library is a place where changes keep happening to cater the ever growing needs of users. In the contemporary world, irrespective of the kind of library, it has been very essential to market the library services and products to enhance the awareness among the user community. Marketing the library services and products according to users' perception has been one of the current challenges of information sector. Technological innovations have been helping information professionals to enhance effectiveness in their promotion (Hiremath, 2000).

## **2. Concept of Marketing**

Marketing is a method or a pragmatic action through which the commodities are promoted and diffused to the consumers. It has a special meaning in terms of library services as the core product of library is "information", a marketable good and is intangible in nature though considered to be possessing the qualities of any given commodities. The horizon of library marketing strategies has developed from library home pages to social media applications due to the revolutionary changes in the 'information society'. According to Majaro (1993), Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably. Social networking technologies are new means for libraries to market their product and services to a great extent.

### **3. Why to market library products and services?**

Marketing is an integral part of any library and one of the best ways to enhance the use of library services and products. Sophisticated marketing enriches the use of libraries and thereby achieve the organizational objectives. Marketing may be instrumental in maximum utilization of information products for which information centres have been investing huge amount of money, man power and time. Communication, visibility and customer orientation are key factors in a successful marketing.

A satisfied customer is a loyal customer and instrumental in bringing in more users to the library (David et al, 2012). Madhusudhan (2008) signifies the essentiality of marketing for libraries as to

- conceptualize the perception of information need thereby create demand
- ensure the best use of library resources and improve the image and status of the libraries and library professionals
- tackle the problems of increasing costs of information source and manage with the information explosion
- introduce cutting-edge information technology systems in library services
- balance shrinking funds and save libraries from devaluation
- save libraries from declining reader-support and uphold the motto that information is power

### **4. Go Where your Users Are**

Information at your door step is now changing its paradigm to bring library promotional activities at social web pages where even the library catalogue can be browsed. Social media is gaining increasing focus and it is undisputed that SNS such as Facebook, twitter are the most visited places by the users for their updates. The transient society is on moving wheels that are heading towards digital environment where virtual libraries are gaining more

importance with web based services. The applications of web 2.0 have brought revolutionary changes in information business. Social media has been successfully exploiting these applications for the process of information exchange. As Mishra (2010) denotes, librarians and information professionals must integrate web 2.0 to effectively market and advertise their services for competition for customers, competition for resources, maintain relevance, promote an updated image, visibility, valuable community resource, rising expectations and survival.

## **5. Social Networking Sites (SNS)**

SNS are boon for library professionals to publicize their services and products. It acts as an online marketing tool for making of traditional library services feasible widely. It helps to share resources and also facilitates group communication among the library users.

### **5.1. LinkedIn**

Enables patrons to connect with subject specialists in their particular field of interest. Library professionals can use this platform to render specialized services such as Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI). LinkedIn also facilitates to create professional connections among the library professionals. LinkedIn can be an effective marketing channel with proper planning and implementation.

### **5.2. Ning**

Being an online platform, Ning facilitates people to create custom social network where community web pages can be created and be connected through network. Communities on Ning can associate with online services like Facebook, Twitter. People can create their own social network to build up discussion on a particular topic. Ning has a potential to converge the information professional together and thereby the marketing of information

among the libraries would be much effective than ever. It works like a bridge connecting librarians with users and library associations.

### **5.3. Facebook**

The most popular and successful of its kind as it is very user friendly and interactive website for connecting library services to the users. Many applications like JSTOR search, World Cat have been made available for the users. Librarians can interact with users to know their information need. This new channel of communication helps to keep more general topics for discussion there by supporting research and teaching and extend their services to more users. Better and faster distribution of library news letter, uploading brochures about academic activities such as schedules of conference, seminars can be done in no time on Facebook.

### **5.4. Twitter**

It is a kind of micro blogging application where short messages can be sent to the destination. Twitter has become an important feature on the social media landscape and it has been an increasingly popular social networking tool for libraries to reach out to their patrons (Sewell, 2013). It helps to keep staff and users informed of the events and programs of library, workshops, new arrivals and new services through short messages either through web or through SMS using a mobile phone with a limitation of 140 characters. Marketing activities happen at its best way as it facilitates the real time communication, which can also be instrumental in online reference service. Modern libraries are finding exemplary marketing strategies to engage with their followers on twitter that is resulting in increased number of patterns. Twitter post can be linked to the home page of the library, blog posts, wiki, online archives for detailed information.

### **5.5. Flickr**

This application facilitates sharing images of library. Cover page and content page images of new arrivals of books and journals can be diffused among the users community through Flickr. Academic events such as seminars, workshops and conferences through images may be shared to public for the awareness. Libraries can use Flickr to upload library images and the pictures of different services offered.

### **5.6. You Tube**

A popular audio visual application where videos can be uploaded, searched, accessed and downloaded throughout the world. Video clippings of Documentary films of libraries and information centers give users a grid view of intact collection and environment of the library. The users can even comment on the video which may be considered for the feedback. Library products such as e-learning tutorials are promoted through virtual tour. YouTube can also be used to share video conferences, workshops and library events and other programs.

### **5.7. Slideshare**

It is a platform for slide hosting service. It allows users upload files privately or publicly which can be viewed by users. Slideshare has been playing a vital role in the field of education and e learning. Sharing ideas, conducting research, connecting with others have been much effective through slideshare. Anyone can view presentations & documents on topics that interest them, download them and reuse or remix for their own purpose. Presenting prepared slides that contain information about library products and service will notify every user who visits and shares.

### **5.8. Del.icio.us**

It is a social bookmarking service that facilitates discovering, gathering and sharing bookmarks. Del.icio.us has created a

platform for the users where users share web resources in an effective manner. It also a means of organizing the huge stock of information a user come across in his daily life by bookmarking them from difference sources like LinkedIn and Facebook for future use. A detailed document on library services offered and their usefulness can be created online and bookmarked which itself would be an activity of library marketing. The link can be tagged at later stages for keeping everyone in the community informed of the latest updates.

### **9. How to plan?**

Marketing library products too needs sufficient planning, executing and implementation at distinguished levels. There is a need of clear understanding of the needs of users and realization of organization's objectives while libraries planning marketing activity. Continuous feedback system and revision of strategies according to the changes in needs can fetch fruitful results in library marketing. As social media ensures continues communication between users and library professionals, getting feedback and working on recommended visions take place in a brisk way (Fig.1)



Fig.1: Plan for Library marketing through SNS

## 10. Challenges

- Awareness among the LIS communities needs to be created to fall in line to use SNS for effective marketing. On the other hand users as well need to be updated and trained on use of SNS.
- The library professionals in Indian scenario do not satisfactorily possess the interest to learn social media. Actions to be planned to provide sufficient training on using social media for library marketing will intensify core objective.

- Adoption of contemporary marketing strategies in promotional activities.
- Undependable electricity supply.
- Sluggish speed of internet
- Security issues of personal identity.
- Setting up the right attitude towards the social media by planning modules to get rid of “technophobia”
- Support teaching community to cope with the emerging social changes as to learn and adopt information culture in its shifted paradigm.
- Creating awareness among educational institutions about social media being not just a medium of entertainment but also an effective platform for academic activities and thereby provide access to the social media within the campus. Setting up the line of thinking to best use of social media among the patterns can be achieved through continuous monitoring.
- IPR issues while providing full text document.

## 11. Conclusion

The social media reaches all possible heights in incorporating and furnishing according to the changing needs of users. Every stage of library marketing can be effectively incorporated by social media. Almost all activities in a library can be brought under this umbrella. Being a marketing tool, social media provides quick updates to the users of the new generation.

Libraries ought to change according to the changing nature of information and communication technologies to promote their services and products to maximize the utility. The responsibility of library professionals dwells in implementing the appropriate marketing strategies using social networking technologies. Marketing policy of libraries using SNS needs attention while planning, structuring and execution and should be reviewed frequently with the feedback from the users. Convergence of

professional assistance has been a reality through social media which enables LIS professionals to connect with the counterparts throughout the world. Exchange of innovative marketing proposals and experience is possible among the professional contacts if social media is effectively used.

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