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Information Products and Information Services Marketing in University Libraries in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The concept of marketing for non-profit organizations like libraries has been introduced by Kotler and Levy (Kotler and Levy, 1969). The library is engaged in the production of services rather than goods. Today we live in an information age and also an era of competition. Most of the libraries have competitors. The library and information field is undertaking endless evolution and change. Library professionals have understood that effective services must be based on strategic planning. The ability of the libraries to promote their information sources and services or to make potential users aware of their products and services can be the way to success. Today's libraries need knowledge of information marketing to operate their services effectively. This study, therefore, aims to identify information products and information services marketing in the university libraries in Sri Lanka. The mixed research methodology has been used as a research methodology for this study while the case research method has been used as a research strategy. There are three types of case studies exploratory case studies, Descriptive case study, and explanatory case study. The Exploratory case study method was used for this study. In this study, the questionnaire method was used to collect the primary data required for this research (Qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions, and quantitative data was gathered from the close-ended question). The printed questionnaire, as well as the online questionnaire, which has been created using a google form, have been distributed among the target group, that is university librarians. The study sample consisted of 15 state university librarians in Sri Lanka. Data analysis was carried out with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This study identified that under the current situation of information product and services marketing, librarians have appropriate knowledge of information marketing, However, most libraries do not have a specific information marketing policy. Furthermore, lack of trained manpower, a lack of public relations skills of university library staff, lack of needs assessment, less attention to promotion methods, and lack of a clear picture of the library in society are among the major problem in marketing information products and information services in the university libraries of Sri Lanka.

KEYWORDS: *Information Marketing, Information Sources, Information Products, Information Services, Barriers, and Challenges*

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental expectation of marketing is achieving organizational objectives and goals which can be considered an important part of management. In the field of library, the term marketing represents promoting information products and services to fulfill user needs and enhance user satisfaction. According to Narayan (1991), the existence of a library depends on the image of its library in the user's mind. When focusing on information marketing in university libraries, it can be explained how it works internationally and locally.

Internationally, university libraries have a wide range of transparencies in the concept of information marketing (Sharma, 2007). The main objectives of information marketing in university libraries are to improve the efficiency of its operations, to improve the quality of library services, to provide modern library services, to develop library management, to develop physical and financial resources, to enhance the image of university libraries, to maximize the satisfaction of library users, to provide proper access to information products and services, to use appropriate marketing strategies and techniques to distribute information products and services, to promote library products and services within the university and to introduce the concept of sales is paramount (Sharma, 2007).

Although university libraries are aware of the concept of information marketing, Kaur (2009) reported that the actual use of information marketing in university libraries is still in its infancy (Kaur, 2009). According to Kaur, the underlying causes of this condition are a lack of proper evaluation of the needs of users, an informal approach to providing information to potential users, and a lack of understanding of the adequacy of information products and services to enhance research and activity, the fact that being is paramount (Kaur, 2009). Many experts in the field of libraries believe that these institutions should constantly rely on their parent organizations to provide services as well as advertise them. According to Madhusudan (2008), librarians and

information professionals are still controversial in information marketing. Therefore, university librarians as professionals should first be made aware of the concept of information marketing. On the other hand university librarians have been unable to provide their services properly due to the rapid increase in information, technological advancement, and rising library costs (Taylor, 2016).

Locally, most of the funding allocated to university libraries was used to purchase and retrieve printed sources, electronic sources, other library materials, and staff training (Block, 2003). In addition, the housekeeping function of the library has been completely automated. Even in a brand-new library that is being renovated at such a high cost, the primary objective should be to provide its information resources in a way that enhances user satisfaction. It should pay close attention to the needs and wants of the target customers. Block (2000) identified various problems faced by university librarians in information marketing. For example, failure to provide information services to the target audience has led to a gradual decline in the number of readers visiting libraries. This seriously impacted the library because they failed to attract users.

In this age of growing demand for internet services and knowledge-based products, several other difficulties are faced by the university library sector. Despite the financial constraints on libraries, the high cost of information resources, staff shortages, and difficulties in controlling the budget by the parent organization, these libraries have to satisfy their user demands and promote their field (Block, 2003). However, due to the non-availability of nationally or internationally accepted standardized library orientation programs implemented by university libraries in Sri Lanka, they failed to attract users (Wickramanayake, 2015). Therefore, students resorted to using the University Library to study personal notes only during their examinations (Garusingarachchige, 2000). Even though university libraries are constantly introducing new services, they do not have a satisfactory level of user consumption.

Therefore, it is important to identify barriers and challenges to information products and information service marketing in University libraries in Sri Lanka.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In view of this research problem, this study has three objectives:
1. To identify the current situation of information product and information services marketing in university libraries
2. To Identify strategies used for information marketing
3. To understand barriers and challenges in Information products and services marketing.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study addresses the following research questions
1. What is the current situation of information product and information service marketing in university libraries?
2. What kind of strategies are used to marketing information products and information services?
3. What are the barriers and challenges in marketing information products and information services in university libraries?

METHODOLOGY

The mixed research methodology has been used as a research methodology for this study while the case research method has been used as a research strategy. The case study method is more flexible and allows the researcher to easily investigate the real event as well as the empirical events during the research (Schell, 1992). This case research methodology can be identified as the main methodology used for many types of research in the social sciences. This method provides a better understanding of research, observation, survey, and study of documentary information related to the research problem (Yin, 1984). There are three types of case studies Exploratory case studies,

Descriptive case study, and explanatory case study. The exploratory case study method was used to identify barriers and challenges encountered in information product and information services marketing in university libraries in Sri Lanka.

There are several methods used for data collection under the mixed research method. These include interviews, questionnaires, observations, targeted group discussions, and written testimonials (Anastasia, 2017). In this study, the questionnaire method was used to collect the primary data required for this research. The printed questionnaire, as well as the online questionnaire, which has been created using a google form, have been distributed among the target group, that is university librarians. Data were collected using an online questionnaire in many cases where the sample was difficult to access. In cases where the librarian could not be contacted to obtain the data, the data relevant to the research was obtained from the senior officials with the consent of the librarian.

All existing university libraries in Sri Lanka represent the population in this research and the sample represents only 15 state university libraries in Sri Lanka. However, this study sample excluded Gampaha Wickramarachchi University, because during the study period this university was not a separate university. Branch libraries are often found in addition to the main library at a university library. But the focus of this study was only on the main libraries of the 15 state universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In here data Analysis has been described following upon the main research objectives.

Background Information

The selected sample for this research were the Librarians of the State Universities of Sri Lanka presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of the Research

Name of the University	Frequency	Percent	Participation
Eastern University	1	6.7%	Librarian
Rajarata University	1	6.7%	Nominee
Sabaragamuwa University	1	6.7%	Librarian
South Eastern University	1	6.7%	Librarian
The Open University of Sri Lanka	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Colombo	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Jaffna	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Kelaniya	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Moratuwa	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Peradeniya	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Ruhuna	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of Sri Jayawaradenepura	1	6.7%	Librarian
University of the Visual & Performing Arts	1	6.7%	Librarian
UvaWellassa University	1	6.7%	Librarian
Wayamba University	1	6.7%	Nominee
Total	15	100%	

Service period in the Librarian at the University Library

Table 2 shows the service periods of the librarians. According to that, five librarians have been serving as librarians for more than 25 years and the percentage is 33%. Nevertheless, two librarians are serving between the years of 20-25 and it is 13 percent by percentage. When focusing on the tenure of librarians, it is clear that they are well-experienced employees.

Table 2: Service period of the Librarians

Service period	Frequency	Percent
More than 25 Years	5	33.3%
Years 20-25	2	13.3%
Years15-20	1	6.7%
Years10-15	3	20%
Years 5-10	3	20%
Years 1-5	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

O1- Current situation of information product and information services marketing

The views expressed by university librarians on information marketing can be summarized as follows

Knowledge of Information Marketing

The marketing tactic is exact useful to university libraries to expand their image and to attract more users. The librarians in the university libraries can play a trivial role in providing for the needs of diverse groups of the academic community for furthering their educational research. They are more responsive to their user's needs and wants and more effectively achieve the library goals and objectives. Therefore, knowledge of information marketing is helpful in this regard.
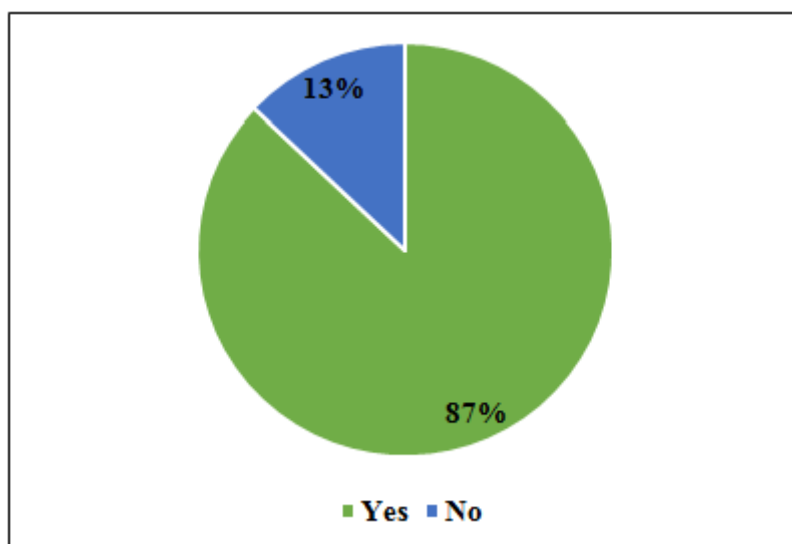
Figure 1: Knowledge of Information Marketing

According to Figure 1, 13 university librarians responded that they have appropriate knowledge about information marketing and the percentage is 87%. Two university librarians responded that they do not have updated knowledge about it. However, these responses confirmed that librarians have sufficient knowledge of information marketing.

Information Marketing Policy
University libraries use information marketing policies to implement their services. Surprisingly, this study identified that except for 3 university libraries, there is no specific information marketing policy for university libraries, to proceed with information products and information service marketing. The information marketing policy is essential for maintaining university services effectively and attracting users. It may also be noted that many university libraries do not have guidelines for information marketing. Also, the parent organization does not motivate their university libraries and does not consider information marketing policy as an essential element of the library. It also deprives the librarian and staff of the opportunity to gain extensive knowledge of information marketing. Therefore, having an information marketing policy will be essential to achieve the objectives and goals of the parent organization and implement a successful library service (Garusing Arachchige, 2002).

Objectives of Information Marketing
The views expressed by librarians on the marketing objectives of information products and information services are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Objectives of Information Marketing

Objectives of Information Marketing	Frequency	Percent
To improve the user satisfaction	14	93.3%
To improve the library usage	13	86.7%
To improve the Library usage through the promotion activities	13	86.7%
To inform the user about information sources available in the library	13	86.7%
To achieve the overall objectives of the library to motivate the human resources	12	80%
To maintain the image of the library	10	66.7%
To collect and organize information sources	07	46.7%
To generate the income	06	40%
To increase innovation	06	40%
To combat Competitively with the commercial world	05	33.3%

University librarians have stated that the main objective of their information product and information service marketing, is to increase the satisfaction of the users who use the library. Subsequent responses have been overwhelming. They are to improve library usage, enhance library usage through promotion activities, and inform the user about information sources available in the library. Among the objectives of marketing information products and information services, moderate responses were received to collect and organize information sources (46.7%), generate income (40%), and increase innovation (40%). Among the goals of information product and information service marketing, there has been a slight response to the goal of combat competitively with the commercial world. Focusing on Understanding the Users, Sustaining the Users, Enhancing User Sophistication, User-Oriented Services, Product and Service Quality, User Satisfaction should also be

among the objectives of information marketing (Garusing Arachchige, 2002).

O2-Strategies used for information marketing in university libraries
This section discusses the strategies followed by university libraries in marketing information products and information services.

O2.1 Type of Information Products created by the university libraries
The 12 librarians of the university libraries have commented that there are already created information products on their own. Also, the librarians of three university libraries have stated that their libraries do not create information products.

The above-mentioned 12 university libraries describe their created information products as follows.

Table 4: Information Products created by the university libraries

Information Products created by the university libraries	Responses	Percentage
New Acquisition List	11	92%
Monthly list of the new edition	07	58%
Periodicals Index	07	58%
Monthly document list (Serial publication)	06	50%
Indexes	05	42%
Subject Bibliography	04	33%
Directories	02	17%
Abstract	02	17%

Out of the 15 university libraries represented in the sample, 12 libraries have responded that they create information products. Out of these 12 libraries, 11 libraries have mentioned that they are creating New Acquisition List. The majority of respondents further stated that they would create a Monthly list of the new edition and Periodicals Index. Its percentage is 58%. Among the sources of information generated by university libraries are Monthly document lists (Serial publications) took

moderate responses. However, Directories and Abstract were identified as the least responsive information products created by the university libraries.

Promotion methods used by the library
Promotion methods used by the University Library to promote information products and information services have been analyzed as follows.
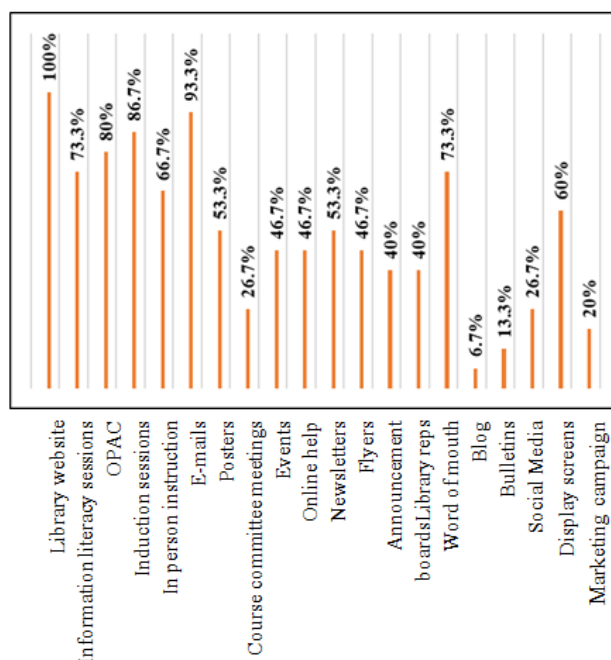
Figure 2: Promotion methods used by the library

All university libraries highly use their library websites to Promote information products and information services. Since then, 93.3% of responses have been to promote information products and information services via e-mail. The percentage of information products and information services promoted through induction sessions is reported as 86.7%. While responses to communications using posters and newsletters were moderate, with it 53.3%. University libraries have not been highly used in committee meetings, social media and blogs, and bulletins as promotional methods.

Libraries also require the promotion of their products and services. It is essential to make the user's awareness of the collection of the library and types of resources in the library, as well as the details of its services as they are not directly conscious. The library should publicize not only the nature of the existing information sources, their use, how they are serviced, service hours, membership, but also the reputation of the library in general. Library services can be advertised through seminars, lectures, exhibitions, and other programs conducted by the library (Garusing Arachchige, 2002). The advertising medium that is widely used by many marketers today is also easily used for libraries. Newspapers, magazines, posters, leaflets, make the reader aware of the library and its services. The

Internet, which has become a powerful medium today, can be used to great advantage not only for the distribution of library information but also for its publicity. The work that can be done through the library web page is commendable.

Promotion is an essential area in the marketing of information services and products in university libraries. Marketing communication targets to build an awareness of what the library offers and to decrease the apparent and actual barriers to the use of the library. Well-planned promotional methods in the university libraries can inspire potential users to use its products and services. The study revealed that only a few promotional methods are aware of library users. Therefore, conducting innovative user orientation programs in all the university libraries, Guided library tours for the users, Celebration of special events like anniversaries of the university library can be used for promoting information marketing in the university libraries (Garusing Arachchige, 2002).

The way services are delivered
The university libraries provide information products and services, both physical and electronic way. The study found that the University Library uses the following methods to distribute those products electronically.

Table 5: The way of electronic services are delivered

The way services are delivered	Frequency	Percent
Online database services	14	93.3%
E-journal/E book service	14	93.3%
UGC Consortia	13	86.7%
Internet Services	13	86.7%
Digital Library Services	13	86.7%
Institutional Repository	12	80.0%
Webpage/ web portal services	9	60.0%
CD ROM and DVD based Services	7	46.7%
Document scanning services	7	46.7%
Document printing services	3	20.0%
Digital Photocopy	3	20.0%

Focusing on the responses represented in Table 5, most university libraries used online database services, electronic books, and electronic journals to distribute their products electronically. Subsequently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) Consortia databases, Internet services, and digital library services, all of which are represented in a higher response rate of 86.7%.

The study received moderate responses for CD ROM / DVD services (46.7%) and Document scanning services (46.7%).However, it is clear that, those who represent the sample for Document printing services and Digital Photocopy, have paid less attention when distributing services electronically to their users. Its percentage is 20%.

The branch libraries, special units of the libraries, mobile services, and the library's counter, play an important role in the distribution of information services in libraries in the traditional way (Hiremath, 2003). The counter is generally used for providing community information services and borrowing books from the library. It is important to maintain proper printing and electronic documentation, use advanced equipment, and employ an efficient and friendly staff in the distribution process. This is the key concept to getting the most out of a product or service. Particular attention should be paid to productivity in the delivery of information services and information products. Therefore, the way services are delivered is very important.

The Fee paid information sources provided by the library
Sources of information available for payment from the University Library are as follows.

Table 6: Fee paid information sources

The fee paid information sources	Frequency	Percent
Abstract	3	20%
Electronic Document	3	20%
Databases	3	20%
Newsletter	2	13.3%
Indexes	1	6.7%
Bibliographies	1	6.7%

Out of the 15, 3 University libraries have information sources that are available for payment. These are Abstract, Electronic documents, and Databases. Its percentage is 20%. Two university libraries have responded that there are newsletters designed to get paid at university libraries and it's 13.3%. And Indexes and Bibliographies that are available for payment in only one library.

O3- Barriers and Challenges of Information products and services marketing

According to the study, one of the major barriers identified in the marketing of information products and information services in university libraries is a lack of skills of library staff to use Public Relations (PR).Librarians are essential to achieving public relations work both externally and internally. It considers it internally, apublic relations practice is the best protection against budget cuts. For this, the library has to mostly become a vital source of information. Furthermore, the library had better involve in superior activities such as providing training programs and hands-on activities external the library.

Lack of needs assessment is also regarded as a barrier to information marketing. Most of the times librarians are not able to assess the desires of the users. The libraries are primarily involved in developing and managing resources in the library without recognizing what information product or service will be wanted by the users (Hiremath, 2003). The libraries will have to do a needs assessment survey through formal and informal means. This will allow libraries to bring out products and customer-specific services.

According to this study, less attention has been made to the promotion of information products and services in university libraries. Most of the libraries used traditional methods such as displays, exhibitions, newsletters, posters so on. It considering social media marketing it seems 26.7%. Therefore, librarians should focus on new promotional methods such as publicity on media or other modern communication platforms. Currently, social media plays a vital role in the dissemination of information and access as hurriedly as possible. Hence the University Libraries should adopt the use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram for promoting information products and the services offered by the library.

Social media has provided a substantial platform for librarians to the promotion of their sources and services (Akporhonor and Olise, 2015). Social media and its tools are considered the greatest tools for communication and sharing information in today's digital era (Swain and Barik, 2016).Besides, social media is helping the library and information professionals to build up a virtual environment to keep their image throughout the world.

In Sri Lanka, most university libraries are trying to use social media to promote their resources, services, and their programs too. Not only that, libraries courage to produce durable and fast communication, attract and take feedback from library users from diverse locations.

In this study, through web observation has been found some university libraries promote their library using social media as follows.

Many issues can hinder the personnel adopts marketing principles in their field of work. The study found several problems in the marketing information product and services. Lack of trained manpower still used traditional marketing strategies, failure of promotional programs, lack of proper technology, and absence of the information marketing policy for libraries selection as use of.

The lack of a clear picture of the library in society is one of the challenges faced by librarians in the marketing of information products and information services in university libraries. Similarly, 80% of the respondents said that the lack of marketing skills of the library staff is also a challenge in the marketing of information products and information services. Inadequate library funding, lack of staff with professional experience in marketing, lack of users' attention to library resources, and lack of government support can also be identified as challenges in the marketing of information products and information services in university libraries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Well-informed human resources were deficient for information marketing in university libraries because they are the foremost forces of information marketing in the library (Taylor, 2016). Therefore, there is no doubt that the foremost force must be professional wisdom. The concept of information marketing includes several components such as marketing mix, marketing strategy, brand name, information services, product design, and user engagement. The combination of all these factors is the foundation for successful information marketing. University libraries have already started to think about this concept, which is good. But in order to fully satisfy, university libraries should move more actively on it.

Most library staff do not have well-trained manpower on information marketing principles, and they are not aware of the prominence of marketing in university libraries. Some librarians consider that marketing is only the purchasing and selling of things for a monetary profit. Reasoning the lack of understanding of the marketing process, librarians hold biases that they cannot prepare for marketing in their activities. Inclusive tactics and effective means must be utilized to overcome problems that come upon in the marketing of information products and services. In observation of the important part of marketing library products and information services show in making awareness in library services, librarians must certify that they put in more effort in the aspect of marketing and promotion of their information products and services.

The following recommendations were made to enrich the quality of marketing library products and information services in university libraries.
▪ A proper marketing plan needs to be prepared and implemented

- Conduct more awareness programs / Engage with subject library information literacy service as a unit
- The university libraries should assist the users to keep up with the innovations by providing them with various information services and information products.
- There should be a proper feedback mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the information service and information products.
- The library management should communicate with their customers frequently and attract them to visit the library
- Most libraries do not have separate marketing personnel. Though should be given to establishing formal marketing positions to handle marketing-related activities.
- Libraries should be continuously aware to maintain and improve the quality and range of their services/products and to match it to the changing user requirements.
- Library and information professionals have to identify properly the concept of information marketing. To help them understand and utilize the concepts of modern marketing techniques, continuing education seminars, workshops, and training programs should be arranged frequently, so that could be more responsive to user needs.

In this corona Pandemic, most of the libraries have been closed for users physically. Apart from that still they can provide various kinds of services using new technology. Therefore, further research can be done from the E-marketing perspective in university libraries in Sri Lanka.

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