
A Study on the effectiveness of social media in marketing university library services in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This present scenario has had an impact on university library professionals as well as in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the main objective of the study was to identify the effectiveness of social media on marketing university library services in Sri Lanka. A non-probability purposive sampling procedure was used to select the respondents and library professionals from all the universities in Sri Lanka and data on their social media attitudes were collected through an online structured questionnaire. They were distributed among 123 (N=123) library professionals (population=N) and successfully responded to 97.8 %(n=113) of them. The use of social media to provide a new impression of libraries and the requirements of users is one of the key factors. Further, when it considers the professionals' views on the functions of use of social media, it can be seen that they have given a good impression on the functions such as improve the library image and e-reputation, a platform for information literacy and education, circulate new acquisitions for the library details quickly and widely

Keywords

Library Professionals; Social Media; Library Marketing; University Libraries; Library Websites.

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Introduction

Many of the published research papers include impressive proof of Web 2.0 software component implementations and modifications that have been used successfully by most libraries and information professionals in the provision of library guidance and support services. Web 2.0 also known as Participatory and Social Web refers to websites that emphasize user-generated content, user-friendliness, participatory culture, and end-user interoperability (i.e. compatibility with other products, systems, and devices) (Blank, 2012). Most libraries have served as early and keen adapters to new Information Technologies and have been moved as a technical advancement to Web 2.0 (Mahmood & Richardson, 2011). The incorporation of these web 2.0 applications resulted in the creation of a "library 2.0" that can be seen as remarkable advancement in the industry. Conventional library services were mashed up and the groundbreaking web 2.0 service tool was further developed.

Such recent technical developments have radically altered the entire structure and have resulted in major changes in the position of traditional librarians, as well as the library clientele's attitudes and information-seeking actions (Michal, 2019). This current scenario is very relevant since current users are not perceived to be conventional and easy buyers of specific content or service and behave positively to improve tools and applications (Kapoor, 2018). This clearly denotes that these Web 2.0 technology inventions have changed the roles and duties of librarians and the views of users in the library community in a creative way.

While the idea of library marketing via social media has been widely discussed in the academic world, the literature review shows that most of these studies have concentrated on narrow goals. Besides, it should be noted that their emphasis on university libraries has been given to limited studies. On the other hand, the majority of previous studies related to this research were conducted in the USA, Europe, and in a small number of Asian countries. Therefore, as a timely task to determine the scenario of libraries in Sri Lanka, the requisite contributions between information and technological improvements can be considered. The effectiveness of social media to market the services offered by university libraries in Sri Lanka, as an integral part of university education in an electronic world, needs to be studied in this context. The current study is therefore crucially

relevant as it provides Sri Lankan university libraries with social media tools with social, managerial, and technical participation in the research gap. In the field of Information Science, this study can be considered as a significant subject for investigating the relationship between libraries and various social media platforms.

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this study is to identify the effectiveness of social media on marketing university library services

The specific research objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate how important marketing university libraries using social media
2. To identify functions of marketing library services using social media platforms

Literature Review

A large number of studies have been found in the literature how significant are the use of social media in marketing university libraries. However, literature is scarce in research focusing on the usefulness of social media in the marketing of university library services. With some extended connections to the effectiveness of social media as a medium for library marketing in universities, there are few insights and research discussions. The link between the library and social media was classified under three perspectives by Serantes (2009). The first point of view explores how Web 2.0 can be implemented directly. The second focused on the advancement of Library 2.0, taking into account library missions and events, and developing an independent concept. Thirdly, the critical approach to library 2.0 was considered, and these insights would facilitate some ideas to adapt to and appreciate social media as a marketing tool. According to Carlson's (2012) study, Library 2.0 provides two choices: adaptation to technical modifications or obsolete. Further, Carlson (2012) described libraries as active co-constructors of technology.

Innovative technology theoretical principles explain how management should think about advocacy, listening, and preparation in the implementation of technology. Kelly et al. (2009) described many risks related to sustainability principles, digital preservation, responsibility for maintenance (human factors), and accessibility. Librarians and practitioners use various software applications and

resources such as YouTube, Facebook, flicker, wikis, blogs given the different requirements of catering users (Hinchliffe & Leon, 2011; Moulaison & Corrado, 2011). Xia (2009) analyzed the use of social media in libraries of research institutes and universities as a marketing tool, giving particular emphasis to Facebook, and concluded that web 2.0 tools are more powerful for this purpose.

Yi (2013) studied the approach and efficacy of academic libraries in Australia on web 2.0 tools as a marketing aid and found many factors affecting the perceptions of web 2.0 tools. It was tried as a marketing tool to comprehend the attitudes and ability of librarians on web 2.0 resources. It highlighted and suggested the use of powerful and sophisticated external and internal pressure instruments to meet the growing needs of various parties in the library environment. Amarakoon (2012) conducted limited research with the participation of Librarians attached to universities on social media and library marketing in Sri Lanka and concluded that Facebook is the most efficient platform to use as a tool. It was found that the attitude of the librarians is positive for this since most of them are well aware of Facebook tools and applications and it was limited for Facebook.

Ezeani & Igwesi (2012) studied the Nigerian scenario of the relationship between social media skills and social networking for library services, and the use of social media in libraries as a marketing medium for libraries and related services was strongly recommended. They stated that in Nigeria this would be a challenge as the operating staff does not have adequate training and experiences, technophobia, bandwidth issues, and problems with power supply. Azeez & Yila (2018) has undertaken a study on the social media platforms for supporting library services. Study based on the 200 students at the National Open University in Nigeria. They have found that, blogs and what's up are the most popular social media to promote library services. Further, they stated from the findings that, social media tools provide to ease communication with user of libraries and provide feedback forums, and enhance the library improvements (Azees & Yila, 2018).

Facebook can be considered as dominant with 88.8% of users in the library in South Carolina State and Twitter, Blogging, YouTube, Flickr, Google Docs, Wikis are also used by them in their academic activities (Macmanus, 2012). Colin and Haas (2012) conducted research on the Social media and academic libraries: Current trends and future challenges.

Researchers emphasized increasingly, academic libraries use social media platforms to support programs and to emphasize capital. This longitudinal research explored the rates and behaviors of social media adoption in academic books in the Ontario province over the span of a period of 14 months starting in April 2010. Research showed that while librarians have been involved in social media technology, the bosses of university libraries are also using these devices. Results suggest that libraries could in the future attempt to produce more original material for patrons and make more frequent use of their favorite platforms (Colin & Haas, 2012).

By offering the ability to consider the current scenario of the use of web 2.0 resources in libraries, literature offers a clear context for the research. However, very few studies have been done in Sri Lanka on the use of social media for university library marketing. Librarians have a positive attitude towards marketing library services, resources, and items, especially to users of online content. Literature not only highlights optimistic comments but also outlines a range of issues that will be generated on the subject. To draw more user groups, it can be seen as a timely responsibility of librarians to implement and give priority to technical changes in the premises and the way services are managed. Social media can be taken as one of the above-listed technologies that are in a higher position among the general public and in particular, among the university communities. A better approach for promoting university libraries in Sri Lanka would be the opportunity to use social media as a marketing tool that is recognized as an internationally accepted low-cost process.

Research Methods

In this research, the survey method was used to achieve the objectives, while most of the past studies (Rowley, 2002) on social media for marketing have built on the method of the case study. Also, the research was designed after a detailed review of past literature to achieve the overall objectives of the current study. In selecting the sample, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was used as it is more appropriate for professional research. Non-probability sampling is a group of sampling techniques that help researchers to select units from a population that they are interested in studying.

To achieve the research objectives, the questionnaire was developed to collect data from academic library professionals working at university libraries in Sri

Lanka. All the professional librarians in 15 universities were selected as respondents. It was obtained their names and electronic mail addresses of all library professionals from the home websites of universities. Upon the selection of participants, they were asked to complete the survey sent through emails. 123 emails were sent to the 123 library professionals. 113 library professionals (91.8%) who work at various libraries were approached and returned questionnaires. A structured questionnaire was then used to gather data that was based on multidimensional scaling. The questionnaire is designed mainly with structured, close-ended and, open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions, and attitude scale to obtain the necessary information to meet the objective of the study. A 5 point Likert scale was used to obtain a variety of opinions about the respondent's attitudes about the effectiveness of social media. The appropriateness of this questionnaire was tested through the process of reliability analysis. Data collected were arranged and tabulated orderly and tabulated in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 16.0) and Microsoft Excel package. One-way Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) technique was used to compare three or more samples using F distribution and to verify the statistically significant differences between the means of three or independent groups. In addition to that, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (PCC) was used to analyze the importance of the use of social media by connecting demographic and library variables. The main focus was given on frequencies, percentages, correlations, and cross-tabulations and they have been presented in the form of tables, graphs, and diagrams. Frequency tables were drawn and presented in tables and bar graphs. Through these calculations, the study could be able to find out different influences of different factors on the usefulness of social media in marketing university libraries in Sri Lanka.

Results and Discussion

Profile of respondents

The overall sample included 70 (61.9%) females and 43 (38.1%) males. Figure: 1 shows the professions by the sample.

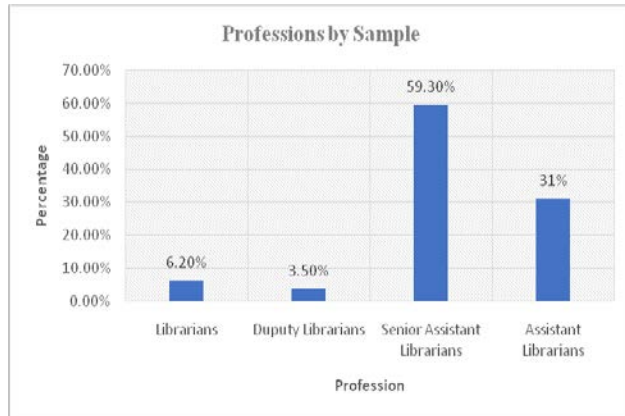


Figure: 1 Profession by the Sample

The full analysis of library professional questionnaires reveals that 59.3% of respondents served as Senior Assistant Librarians, while 31% were Assistant Librarians. As shown in the figure: 1 Deputy Librarians were the smallest group of respondents (3.50%).

Respondent's Education Qualifications

According to figure:2, frequency distribution of education qualifications, the majority(n=93) (84.6%) were having a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. N=2, (1.8%) of the respondents were having a Ph.D. degree and (n=6) 5.3% were having only a Bachelor's degree.

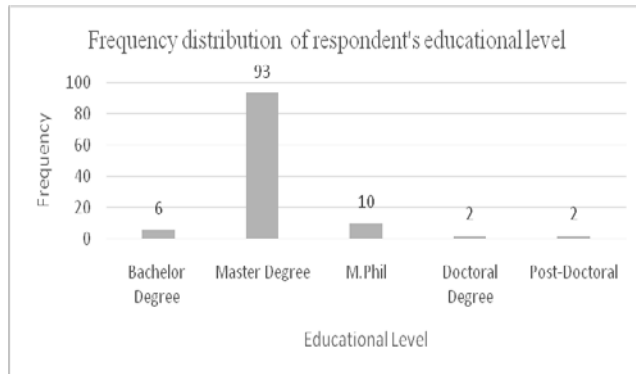


Figure: 2 Frequency distribution of respondent's education qualification

In what ways social media can help enhance the effectiveness of university libraries. In this study, attention was paid to identifying how social media can help enhance the effectiveness of university libraries. Following analysis based on that objective of this study.

The attraction of users to the library 53.1% of the participants agreed that they use social media to attract users to libraries. And 31.9% has strongly agreed with this. Further 14.2% have selected the check box of "agree to some extent" (Figure 3). All participants agreed that the attraction of users to the library is the main function of the use of social media in libraries. Table 1 in the Appendix shows that, there is a positive and significant differences, $F=6.618$ ($p<0.01$) between professions and answers to the attraction of users to the library.

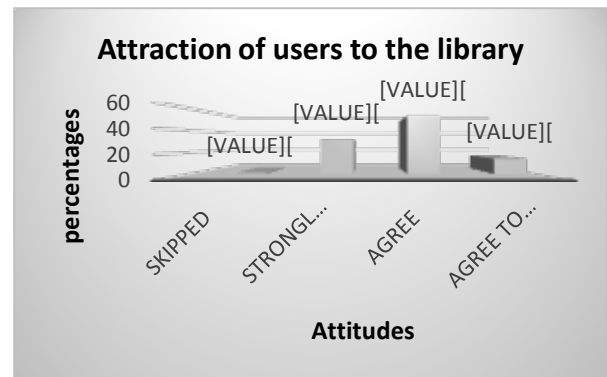


Figure: 3Attraction of users to the library

Promote the collection

It can be said that the main function of a library is to promote its resources among its users. Therefore, from the total sample (See figure: 4), a greater portion of the respondents (56.6%) had an answer to the question regarding the use of social media to promote library resources as the main function of social media. About 33.6% of the sample had selected "strongly agree" when answering this question. Accordingly, more than 90% of the total sample is agreed and strongly agree with the same fact.

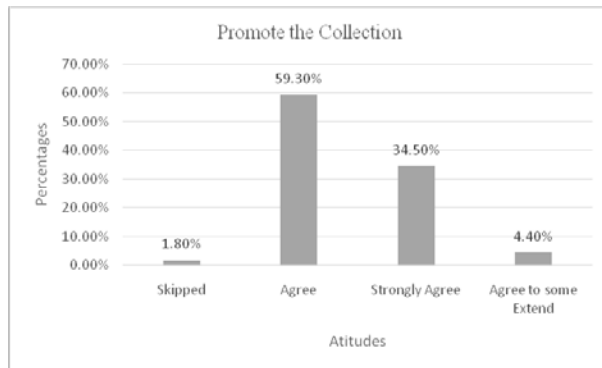


Figure 4: promote the collection

Promote the Collection Reach out and interact with potential users

It can be noticed that this function is a well-known and very useful function of social media since it has got the highest rate (63.7%) of the correspondents than other functions by "agreed" response. 28.3% of the participants have "strongly agreed", while 6.2% have "agreed to some extent".

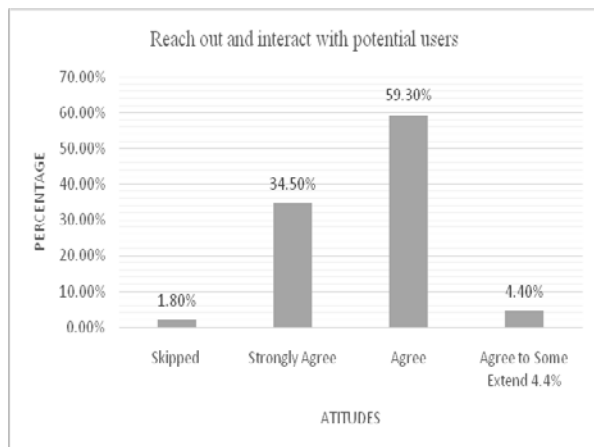


Figure: 5 Reach out and interact with potential users

Improve the library image and e-reputation

It was examined the attitudes of the professional staff of the libraries about social media concepts. The findings show that a large sample of participants (59.3 %) have accepted that social media would lead to enhancing library image and e-reputation. According to the table:1 in the Appendix, there was a significant relationship=4.816 (p<0.01) between age groups of respondents and answer to the "improve the library image and e- reputation".

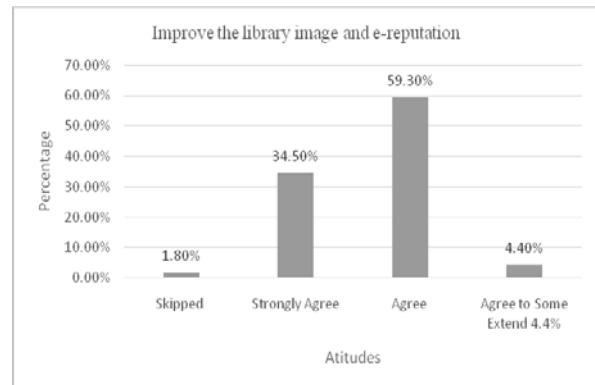


Figure: 6 improve the library image and e-reputation

Circulate library new acquisition details quickly and widely In this study, it was examined how to utilize social media in the library system for smooth administration and to create a user-friendly environment in the modern world. According to the data collection and analysis of them as in figure 8, it can be noticed that 56.6% of the sample has agreed with this and 37.2% has given their clear idea on this as "strongly agree".

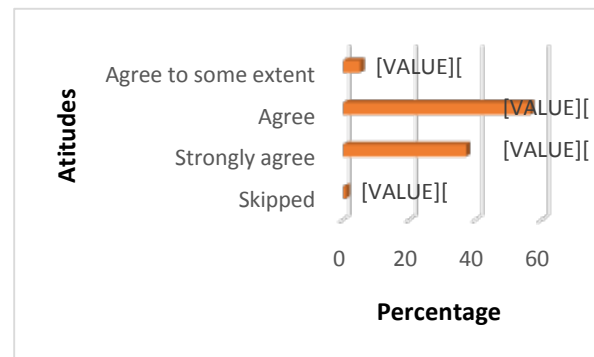


Figure: 7 Circulate library new acquisitions details quickly

A platform for information literacy education

Since the concept of information literacy education is very well attached to the university libraries in Sri Lanka, the attitudes of the professionals about the possibility of utilizing social media platforms for literacy education were examined. According to 59.3% of professionals have indicated that it is a major function of what social media does. Further, they have agreed strongly with this statement in the questionnaire with a remarkable percent of 27.4% of the study sample. But the least amount of participants, 3.5% of the sample, indicated that this is not a function which social media does by selecting "disagree" to the statement. According to the Table: 1

in the Appendix, there was a positive and significant differences between answers of this function by library professions ($F=6.53/p<0.01$) and by age of librarians ($f=3.216/p<0.01$)

Improve user satisfaction and promote the use of services

A very high percentage (66.4%) of the sample has agreed with this function of social media in the university library context. It is the function that has the highest percentage of agreed by the participants in the sample. Another remarkable observation on this statement is that a higher percentage (30.1%) of professionals who participated in the questionnaire has checked the "strongly agreed" response, while the percentage for the response "disagree" is having a very little value (0.9%). Further, it can be noticed that another limited percentage of participants (1.8%) have skipped this question.

Importance of the use of social media for marketing library services

The importance of the use of social media to market university libraries for the benefit of the university community was studied in this section. In this, the data were collected to analyze the importance of social media and to what extent it utilizes to market the Sri Lankan library system. Most library professions have mentioned that social media is an important tool that improves marketability and can be easily used in the library system. The Pearson Correlations Test was used to analyze the importance of the use of social media by connecting demographic and library variables in this study. According to the Table: 2 in the Appendix, there is a significant relationship (at 0.01 level) can be seen working experience in years, age, and positive attitudes of the importance of the use of social media for marketing library services. The data were analyzed as follows.

Effectiveness of social media in marketing of libraries

It is very important to examine the usefulness of social media to implement in university libraries. Therefore, in this study, the question on "How the effectiveness of social media in marketing of libraries" was presented to a sample which was consisted of 113 respondents who are the experts in the library field of Sri Lanka. Their responses to this research question were analyzed as follows.

Social media capture potential clientele of the library

As a usefulness factor in marketing libraries, it was used social media to capture potential clientele of the library in this study. From the total sample (See figure: 9), 63.7% has shown that this factor can be considered as a useful factor in marketing libraries. Also, the percentages which were got for the responses were 21.2% and 11.5% for "strongly agree" and "agree to some extent" respectively. Another 3.5% of the sample has not given any answer to this question. It proves from the table: Table: 3 in the Appendix shows that, there is a positive and significant differences between the answer to this factor and the all age groups ($F=6.286(p<0.01)$) and significant differences with the working experiences ($F=7.137(p<0.01)$) of library professionals with relation to this factor.

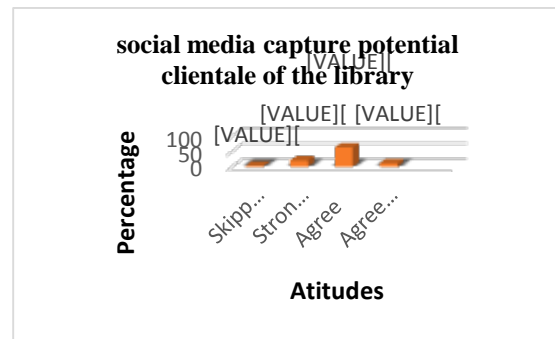


Figure: 8 Social media capture potential clientele of the library

It helps to minimize the traditional and existing library methods

It took quite a long time to introduce the internet facility into the library system of Sri Lanka. Also, the social media platforms were started to popularize recently among the local society of Sri Lanka as well as the university public. The data on the influence of social media on the traditional and existing library methods in the library system of Sri Lanka would be represented under the following tables. In this case, most of the respondents agreed with the statement "the social media platforms minimize the traditional and existing library information dissemination methods". 64.6 % of respondents agreed and 12.4% have been strongly agreed with this. While another 12.4% of the sample have been agreed to this with "agree to some extent" and 8% disagreed with this statement. As well as there was a significant differences ($F=7.018(p<0.01)$) with the working experiences of library professionals in relation to this factor (Table:3 in the Appendix).

It helps libraries in building a collaborative network with the clientele

Social media can be utilized as a tool in building a collaborative network with the clientele. The possibility of this was critically analyzed in the study and 59.3% of the sample agreed and 25.7% strongly agreed with this usefulness. Further another 11.5% was agreed with some extent to this.

Social media helps students in locating library resources

Students in the university system want to know up to date information about the locating of library resources without any delay. In this study, it was analyzed the possibility of use of social media as a mechanism to help students in locating library resources. 59.3% of participants were agreed with this statement and 15.9% were strongly agreed. Another 16.8% of the sample has agreed to some extent with this effectiveness of social media. Further, Table: 3(In the Appendix) shows it is as $F=7.783(p<0.01)$, a significant differences with the working experiences of library professionals about this factor.

Cooperation and knowledge sharing

In the present day, in most technical matters, there is a desire to share tools with an open-source facility. Especially, this is very common among software related activities. The users of some software packages may reluctant to use them due to the higher costs. In the library system, as well, this phenomenon appears. If the library can provide library facilities and services on the social media platform, it would be an ideal solution to attract users to the library. In this study, the usefulness of this concept was analyzed. The majority (65.5%) of contributors to the questionnaire agreed to this and from that, 2% agreed strongly. Only 3.5% had skipped the question without any response.

Broadcasting news and information about library resources

The publicity of the resources is also very advantageous to the marketing of the library system. Social media platforms can be utilized as a publicity tool since a lot of the public have free access to different types of social media platforms. If notices were published on the platform, it would spread all over the world from user to user within a very short time period. The university libraries can be marketed their plenty of resources. For example, access to some highly impacted journals, magazines, and books

that were published a long time ago may be interested in different types of communities. Sometimes, they don't know where the resource is located. If the system uses social media platforms, users can have access through them and easily they can find the place. Therefore, social media can be used as an efficient tool to broadcast news and information about their resources. For this effectiveness of social media, 62.8% of the questionnaire participants were agreed and 28.3% of them had selected it as a strongly agreed usefulness. Further table: 3 in the Appendix shows that a positive and significant differences between experienced in the use of social media and answer to this factor $F=5.556(p<0.01)$.

Social media helps in promoting distance learning

Another tendency in the modern world is distance learning via social media. Most of the educational institutes have been offered distance learning facility to their students those who are far away from the central location. In this case, students may want access to the main library which is located in the main institution. This can be done easily with the help of social media. The usefulness of social media as a distance learning education tool to promote Sri Lanka University libraries was tested in the present study. For this, 68.1% of the professionals agreed to the statement and 23% of them had agreed strongly.

It helps to ask a question or provide feedback about library services

Generally, social media platforms can be used to ask questions and to get feedback from the customers. It is a well-known method in the modern world. It was tested in this study whether this effect could be used successfully for library services or not. In this sense too, the majority of participants committed to a higher rate of 59.3%. Further, from the agreed participants, 25.7% agreed strongly. While 8% of the respondents had skipped this question.

According to the above data analysis, it can be noticed that the majority of the participants agreed with almost all the factors. It means that all these factors are very useful in marketing the Sri Lanka university library's system by utilizing social media platforms.

Conclusion

Among the research findings on the intended roles of social media sites on marketing libraries, it is very important to increase user satisfaction and encourage the usage of services. In library management, library

promotions and marketing principles are inter-related concepts. It can be seen that the use of social media to market library services is not only affected by improving user satisfaction, but also promoting library resources among user groups. Professionals have given their opinion in this respect, as they can easily and efficiently satisfy users and encourage libraries across social media channels. This implies that there is little difference between the expected goals of social media use in the rest of the world and the views of Sri Lanka. Open access to emerging technology and imminent free access to protocols include facilities for free communication and the exchange of information between each other. With the appeal of social media, many librarians have enthusiastically used social media to exploit and connect with consumers and reach out to users (Chua and Gob, 2010). The research revealed that the key roles of marketing libraries are to "increase customer satisfaction" and "promote the use of resources." From the above two aspects, it can be clearly seen that library professionals gave more importance to the views of users in providing services to the library community in Sri Lanka. Also, considering the views of professionals on the functions of social media use, it can be seen that they have given a positive impression on functions such as enhancing the image and e-reputation of the library, knowledge literacy and education network, easily.

The importance of marketing library services in Sri Lankan universities using social media platforms was discussed and the opinion of the majority had identified this as timely very important. It means that the answers which were collected through the questionnaire survey consisted of more "Agree" as the answer for a lot of questions than the number of answers as "Strongly Agree".

The function of social media on literacy education has been proved by previous studies worldwide. But there is no such study has been done in Sri Lanka based on the university libraries. Librarians should implement social media knowledge for their information literacy programs and user awareness programs.

In the present day, library social media websites are very common for librarians to market their services and disseminating information. This shift has brought changes in students' attitudes and behaviors regarding information searching and its use. Although, in this kind of research, the views of the user communities are very important, due to the limited schedule of the research university students were not included in the sample of this study. With

the rapid development of technology and its' application to the library, the traditional library service has transformed its mode into the web environment. This shift has brought changes in students' attitudes and behavior regarding information searching and its use. Therefore it is very important to conduct future research to understand this changing environment.

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