A Study of Marketing Library Services and Resources through Social Media at Universities in Dubai

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Abstract

This paper focuses on understanding the different marketing activities done by the libraries to promote their services and also to understand user participation in these social media tools used by the libraries. The results of this study very clearly highlights the fact that factors like age and gender of LIS professional have impact on using the social media tool for marketing library service and resources. It is also important that the selection of social media tool for various library services promotion should be based on the situation, user group etc. This study also throws light on the importance of well-structured and continuous marketing techniques to be followed using the social media tools which would result in the guaranteed use of the library resources and services by users to meet their expectation. The achievement and influence of the library services, resources provided via the Social media tools can be active only if the updation of information, knowledge sharing etc. is done by the LIS professionals on a regular basis and more frequently.

Keywords

Social Media, Social Networking, Marketing Library Services, Marketing Library Resources, University Libraries

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries are considered to be the store house of knowledge, which collects, preserves and disseminates information. The success of any library services and its proficiency in supporting the research/learning is defined by the accurate and well-timed information provided to its users. Thus dissemination of such information is done via various medium which has the ease of its access for the users. Social media also complements to be one of the communication tools from the late 20th century, which allows people to share and exchange their ideas, thoughts & information. The advent of social media and its swift growth has had its impact on almost all fields now and library is no exception to it. The Libraries and the librarians in this contemporary era have a challenging role, which is to cater to the information requirements of users who are gadget freaks and tech savvy. It is expected that the library does its services and activities beyond the standard expectation and are available even after the regular working hours. This mandates the libraries to use the social media and other web tools to make its services available online for the users.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Below listed are the objectives of this study:

- To identify the age & gender of the LIS professionals, who actively use the social media for marketing library services.

- To find the most popular social networking tool used by LIS professionals.

- To study and know the purpose for which each social networking tool is being used.

- To understand the major services that is promoted by LIS professionals through social media.

- To identify the social media tool that is user friendly for both the user and the LIS professional.

SIGNIFICANCE

The emergence of social networking is dated back from 20th century and from then it is progressing fast. This has led to the need for availability of information via the internet through social

networking platforms and library is no exception to this fast succeeding trend. So there is a need for a study that focuses on the various social media tools used for the marketing the library services to its users. This study focuses on the most preferred social media tools by the LIS professionals to market their library services and activities. This also analyzes the major library services or activities which are being marketed via the social media and the tool which is more effective in this mode of communication.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marketing of library services has to be more creative, customized and of interest to the users of this century. Interactive services are expected by the current generation users due to the technological advancements.

Connell's (2009) study says that students have negative feelings about the librarians using Social Networking tools to outreach since it may infringe on their sense of personal privacy. So Connell survey suggests that, "a library would want to use social network sites effectively, librarians should be cautious in establishing communications and relationships with their student friends and avoid mass friending". Deyrup's (2010) study shows that Web 2.0 applications can be used for marketing purposes. He concludes that librarians are using SNSs like Myspace and Facebook "to promote library affiliation and community building; the virtual environment; Second Life, to create alternative library spaces; and RSS feeds, wikis, and blogs to post announcements and post other information'.Hinchliffe and Leon (2011) have mentioned in their study that, to keep pace with evolving information technologies, librarians use a group of software applications including blogs, wikis and podcasting, media-sharing tools such as YouTube and Flickr, and social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook to market their services and resources with mixed success. Blogs and wikis, as well as social networking and information sharing sites such as Facebook, Flickr and YouTube, create new types of content. Information professionals use tools such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication), tagging and bookmarking as a means of promotion. The article by Horn (2011) mentions that "Online Marketing Strategies for Reaching Today's Teens", states that Web 2.0 applications like SNSs are the best tools for marketing library collections, marketing the library itself by posting different photos inside the library of computers, books, rooms and so on, and

marketing library programme. Mollel (2013) in his article says that, the marketing mix is traditionally referred to as the 4Ps: price, product, promotion and place; however the fifth P, people, is now commonly included. Although the marketing mix was developed for imparting the advantages of a tangible product, with the focus on product marketing, the literature agrees on the importance of applying this focus to service promotion. As the need for promotion of services has grown and is now more widely recognized, the marketing mix has been refined and adapted to include services, not just products. One of the key marketing mix strategies is effective promotion.

Methodology

This study is a quantitative study done by using questionnaire based survey. The questions were framed to capture the demographic details of the librarians and also data related to effective, resourceful, efficient use of social media by the libraries and the librarians. The questionnaire was distributed to 50 librarians working in Dubai and received all 50 filled in responses, thus the response rate is 100% for this survey.

Findings and Analysis

Below is the tabulated & analyzed data, which was collected through questionnaire.

Table 1a. Respondents' Age		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
20 - 30	12	24
31 - 40	19	38
41 - 50	17	34
51 and above	2	4

Table 1a shows that 38% of respondents are between the age group of 31 – 40. 34% respondents are under the age group of 41 – 50. 24 % respondents fall under the 20 – 30 age group and 4% respondents are above 51years. It is clear from the analysis that library professionals between the age group of 31 – 50 are more familiar and use the social media tools for library marketing.

Table 1b. Respondents' Gender		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Male	29	58
Female	21	42

Table 1b is gender study of the respondents. 58% of the respondents were male & 42% of respondents were female.

Table 2. Medium of user's preference to access library resources		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Library Website	28	56
Social Network	18	36
In Person	4	8
Any Other	0	0

Table 2 analyzes the medium preferred by the users in accessing the library resources. 56% of the respondents prefer to access the library resources through library website. 36% of the respondents prefer the social networking medium to access the library resources and only 8% prefer to go in person to access the resources. This reveals the increased trend of user's preferring to access library resources through online medium both library website and social networking.

Table 3. User's interest in Social Media Interaction with Library		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Always	22	44
Sometimes	15	30
Rarely	13	26
Never	0	0

Table 3 shows that 44% of respondents always prefer to interact via social media with the library. 30% respondents sometimes prefer to interact through social media and 26% rarely prefer to use social media to interact with library. No respondent (0%) is against the use of social media for interaction with the library.

Table 4. Most useful Social Media tool for library services communication		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Facebook	13	26
Twitter	21	42
Linked In	16	32
MySpace	0	0

Table 4 indicates the Twitter (42% respondents) is the powerful social media tool used to communicate library related services. Linked In (32%) and Facebook (26%) is also used to communicate library services to the users. These tools are used to ensure maximum reach of library services related information to the users.

Table 5. Frequency of communication through the social media		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Daily	9	18
Weekly	31	62
Fortnightly	7	14
Monthly	3	6

Table 5 shows the frequency of social media communication done by the LIS professionals. 62% of respondents do it weekly, 18% do it daily, 14% do it fortnightly and 6% do it monthly. Considering the demand for social media communication it is observed that the daily updation should have been more than the weekly social media communication.

Table 6. Most used social media tool for knowledge sharing		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Facebook	25	50
Twitter	9	18
Linked In	16	32
Delicious	0	0

Table 6 shows that 50% respondents prefer Facebook as a knowledge sharing tool, followed by Linked In for which 32% of respondents have given their preference and then 18% for Twitter which the users prefer using for knowledge sharing.

Table 7. User friendly social media tool which connects users and the library professional		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Facebook	32	64
Twitter	12	24
Linked In	6	12
Delicious	0	0

Table 7 shows that Facebook (64% respondents) is felt to be the easiest social media tool which connects the user and library professionals. 24% of respondents feel Twitter to be more convenient social media tool for them to connect the library professional and user. 12% respondents feel Linked In to be useful social media tool.

Table 8. Most preferred social media tool for book reviews		
Description	No. of Respondents	Response %
Facebook	4	8
Twitter	16	32
Jelly books	11	22
Goodreads	19	38

Table 8 shows that 38% of respondents use Goodreads for sharing the book reviews followed by 32% using the Twitter for the same. 22% of respondents use Jelly books & 8% use Facebook for sharing book reviews via social media.

DISCUSSION

The present scenario challenges the academic libraries with reduced or limited budget, the ever changing stress in learning, teaching etc., due to which libraries are mandated to undergo inclusive and wide-reaching initiatives to build, custom and uphold the electronic collection, print collection and services for use by the library users.

Almost all libraries have started using social media tools to promote their services and resources, which also is considered to be an effective platform for in-house professional communication in any institution or organization. The social media tools are considered to be a useful base to introduce library services through web technology for the benefit of both the LIS professional and to the library users. The methodical tactic of using social media tools to

promote library services and resources will improve the prominence of the library.

This study undoubtedly brings out the high impact of gender and age factor of the LIS professionals in using the social media tool for marketing library services and resources. This study divulges that well-structured and unceasing marketing techniques through the use of social media tools will guarantee that the library resources and services are up to the expectation of the users. The success and reach of the services, resources provided via the Social media tools can be effective only if the libraries update the information published in these tools frequently.

The results of this study will allow the LIS professional to understand the effectiveness of the available social media tools and area of its use for promoting the library services and resources. LIS professionals can get to know the choices of promotion strategies, choice of social media tools etc. only if they have a better understanding of the their respective user group. The operative tool used for promoting the library services depends on the situation. The tool used should be flexible and adaptive as per the situation. In broad, this will give them a better idea of what techniques they would be more likely to use in a given situation.

CONCLUSION

The use of social media tools has become very extensive in the current digital scenario and academic institutions are no exception to this. It's significant to note that LIS professionals have also shown much prominence to the use of social media tools for their library services and resources. It is also agreed upon by the LIS professionals that social media tools are very effective platform to showcase, market and promote the library services and resources. The ease of accessing these tools by the user group has assured the use of the library collection and improving the library services as per the user requirement.

The social media tools are known to be shared platform through which the LIS professionals can reach out to various types of users groups with ease. It is noted that young generation professionals are more active in using these tools and considering their tech savvy nature they prefer social media over the traditional methods. Most of the respondents feel that using social media tools are the easiest way to communicate with their user group, meet their requirements. This also helps in identify the user's

information seeking pattern and their needs, which in turn helps the LIS professionals to enhance their services.

This study reveals that the most used preferred and popular social media tools are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn; which are being used for knowledge sharing, book reviews etc. Considering the ease of access to these tools by the users, LIS professional should focus more on the updation of information provided via social media tools. This trend of using social media tools to market library services mandates the need to educate the LIS professionals and the users about the importance, values of social media tools which currently is benefiting the visibility of libraries in the digital era.

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