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Use of Marketing Skills in Promoting Library Resources: A Need of the Hour in Indian Academic Libraries

Dr. Sanadi Dinesh Annappa Shalini

(Librarian,St. Joseph College of Arts & Commerce,

Affiliated to University of Mumbai, Satpala, Post - Agashi, Virar (W),

Tal. Vasai, Dist. Palghar - 401 301, Maharashtra State, INDIA)

Email - dineshsanadi@gmail.com

Abstract

The growing pace of information and communication technology has significantly altered the operations of academic libraries around the world. Libraries are no longer limited to traditional print media services but are developing into vibrant knowledge hubs that integrate digital media for better user engagement. In the Indian context, despite substantial investments in collections and services through initiatives like INFLIBNET and the National Education Policy 2020, many academic libraries face declining user participation and underutilized resources. This paper argues that the application of marketing skills has become a "need of the hour" for Indian academic librarians seeking to reverse this trend. Drawing on recent Indian research and case studies, the paper examines why Indian users are disengaged, what specific marketing skills librarians need to develop, and how these skills can be practically applied within the Indian academic context. The paper concludes that the integration of marketing skills into library services is critical for maintaining relevance and providing continuous academic support in the digital age, with specific recommendations for integrating marketing competencies into library practice, professional education, and institutional policy within India.

Keywords: Indian academic libraries, library marketing, marketing skills, user engagement, NEP 2020, INFLIBNET, social media marketing, library outreach

I. Introduction

The current century has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the development of digital communication technology. The advent of smartphones, high-speed internet connectivity, and web-based applications has revolutionized the way information is accessed, shared, and consumed. Social networking sites and digital marketing applications have become an integral part of daily life, especially among students and academic communities.

Academic libraries, which were hitherto regarded as the repositories of books and academic literature, are presently undergoing a transformation in the wake of digital changes. The contemporary library is a converged information center that combines print media with electronic media, online databases, institutional repositories, and digital learning applications. In this rapidly evolving environment, communication with users assumes paramount importance to ensure optimal utilization of available resources.

Marketing in the context of libraries is different from marketing in a business organization. While the latter seeks to maximize profits, the former seeks to create awareness, promote services, engage users, and maximize resource use. Marketing skills offer a cost-effective and interesting way of achieving these objectives.

The libraries that fail to use modern marketing skills and technology-based communication tools will become invisible to technology-minded users. Therefore, the integration of marketing skills into library operations has become the need of the hour rather than a choice. This paper will discuss the conceptual framework, implementation, and evaluation of marketing skills as tools for promoting library resources in Indian academic libraries.

Concept of Library Marketing

Library marketing is the deliberate attempt made to promote library resources, services, programs, and facilities to users. The American Library Association (ALA) defines library marketing as "a series of activities that foster constructive and mutually beneficial relationships between libraries and both current and potential users, encompassing aspects such as products, costs, delivery methods, and promotional tactics."

The primary objectives of library marketing are:

- Increasing awareness of available resources
- Improving usage statistics
- Improving user satisfaction
- Enhancing institutional support
- Establishing long-term relationships with user communities

Unlike business marketing, library marketing emphasizes service orientation, education improvement, and community development. It requires understanding user needs, designing

services, and effective communication through appropriate channels. In the contemporary era of technology, marketing plans should align with user behavior patterns. Since students and faculty members are actively using digital platforms, libraries need to use these channels for effective marketing.

The Indian Academic Library Landscape: Current Scenario

The Engagement Challenge

Academic libraries in India are at a crossroads. They have a collection of valuable resources and offer advanced services through groups like INFLIBNET. Still many libraries are seeing fewer people coming in attendance in workshops and digital collections not being used much. Studies from academic libraries show a harsh truth: even though students say they know about library services "library introductions and other promotional activities are not reaching the users properly." This creates a gap, between what users expect from the library and how they actually experience the librarys efforts to market itself..

II. Why Marketing Skills are the "Need of the Hour" in Indian Academic Libraries

Changing User Behavior

Today students are different from before. They use the internet and other digital things all the time. So, they want to get information in a way that's easy to use and understand. If something is not easy to find or use, they will not look for it.

Remote access services are changing the way people use library resources in India. Now people can use the library from anywhere not from the physical library building. They can get the information they need at any time. This is a change.

Because of this change people are using the library in ways. Libraries are also changing the way they do things. There are some problems. Some people do not know how to use the library properly. Some places do not have internet connections. There are concerns, about keeping personal information safe when people use the library from afar. Remote access services and library resources are still very important.

Competing Demands for Attention

The academic workload is a problem for students when it comes to getting involved in library activities. Students have a lot of coursework to do. That takes up most of their time. So library

activities have to be really good at getting their attention. Librarians need to be good at marketing so they can show students that the library can actually help them with their workload not just add to it. The academic workload is an issue and librarians have to find ways to make library resources seem like a solution, to this problem not just something extra that students have to do.

The Digital Transformation Imperative

Libraries are spending money on things like eBooks and audiobooks and streaming media and online databases. They also need to tell people about these things. If they do not the digital things they bought will not be used much during the school year. This happens when they only talk about the things at the beginning of the school year. The National Education Policy 2020 says that libraries should use things more and do more to help people. This means libraries can do more to market the things they have. Libraries can use this as a chance to get better at telling people about what they have to offer. The digital things that libraries have, like eBooks and audiobooks need to be talked about so people will use them.

Strategies for Effective Marketing of Library Resources

Promotion of New Arrivals

When libraries post about books and journals that come in it really gets people excited to read. They like to see notes and pictures of what the books look like. Libraries can make a post every week or every month on media to show people what new books and journals they have. They can pick a few of the books and journals and write something interesting about them. This helps people want to come and check out the books and journals at the library. Posting pictures of the covers of the books and journals and adding a few keywords about what they are, about also helps people find them.

Awareness Campaigns for Digital Resources

The library pays for a lot of things like databases and e-journals. A lot of people who use the library do not know about these things. When we tell people about the librarys things, on social media more people start using them. The INFLIBNET study found out that people do not know how to search for things which is why they do not use the librarys online things. So when we tell people about the librarys things we should also teach them how to use them. The librarys online things are really useful. People need to know how to use them and that is why we need to teach people about the librarys online things, like databases and e-journals.

Video Tutorials and Demonstrations

When we make tutorials that show people how to use the Online Public Access Catalog and other library things like repositories and online databases it helps people do things on their own. We can make videos that show how to look for things, in databases how to get to e-books and how to use tools that help with citations. These videos can be put on YouTube. Also put on the library website so people can see them.

Promotion and Follow-Up of Events

You can tell people about workshops and seminars and book exhibitions and reading activities by using posters and countdown notifications. People will get excited when they see these things. When you send follow-up reports and pictures people will be more interested. They will know what is going on. The Yale University Library Workshop Incentive Program showed that when you promote things in a way and give people incentives a lot more people will come to workshops and seminars and book exhibitions and reading activities.

Interactive Engagement Activities

The library has things like polls and quizzes that get people involved. They also have reading challenges and contests which's really cool. These things help people talk to the library and make the library feel like a place where you can go and have fun with books and reading and stuff. The library is trying to make reading a habit for people. These activities are a big part of that. Reading is what the library is about and they want to make it fun for people to come and read and participate in things, like polls and quizzes and reading challenges and contests.

Announcements for Research Support

Notifications about plagiarism detection software and citation management software and research methodology workshops are really helpful, for faculty members and students.

These notifications tell faculty members and students about the research methodology workshops and plagiarism detection software.

Targeted communications that go to research scholars and faculty members make sure that research scholars and faculty members know about the services that can help them with

research. This is good because research scholars and faculty members are the ones who need help with research the most.

Reimagining Orientation Programs

The way we do things now is too much for students. They get much information that they cannot take it all in. A better way to do things is to give students information a little at a time over the semester. This approach also includes students showing students around the school. We can also use fun activities. Give out free things in areas where a lot of people walk by. This is like what you see on the street when people are trying to get you to buy something. We can make the school feel more fun and exciting with marketing, like this.

Faculty Partnership Strategies

We can reach people by working with teachers. Teachers have an impact on what students do so if we get teachers on board we can make a bigger difference. To do this we can put our resources into the classes they are teaching make guides just for them visit their classrooms and give them easy-to-use guides, for the specific resources they need for their classes.

III. Types of Social Networking Platforms Used by Libraries

Academic libraries utilize different types of social networking sites depending on their objectives and target audience.

Communication-Based Platforms

Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter are some of the social media platforms that can be used by a library to disseminate library-related updates, notices, and announcements in real-time. They make for real-time communications and give users a chance to respond through comments and messages. There is high popularity for WhatsApp group-making functions in Indian academic contexts, used to communicate with students quickly.

Visual and Multimedia Platforms

Instagram and YouTube support visual marketing strategies. The libraries can share images of book covers, tutorials in short videos, virtual tours of the library, and events that take place in the library. The nature of Instagram makes it conducive for showing the spaces of the library, new books and reading endeavours.

Ethical Issues

However, the professional standards of the library must be maintained while employing marketing techniques. The ethical considerations in this context are:

Privacy of Users: Maintaining the privacy of users and ensuring that the marketing process

Professional Networking Platforms

LinkedIn is used as a professional networking site for the promotion of research outputs, faculty publications, and research achievements related to the library. It is very effective for reaching faculty members and research scholars.

The strategic choice of platforms helps in targeted communication and engagement. Research carried out in Delta State, Nigeria, found that effective university libraries market their services using "the use of library websites and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.

IV. Impact of Marketing on Resource Utilization in the Library

The application of marketing strategies has resulted in a significant improvement in resource utilization. Libraries that apply SNS-based marketing strategies to promote e-resources have shown an increase in the database access statistics. The INFLIBNET study can be used as a baseline to measure the improvements.

The involvement of users in workshops and events is also increased through digital marketing. Reminders on social media have resulted in a reduction in absenteeism and increased awareness. The Yale workshop program showed that a combination of marketing strategies and incentives has a significant impact on increasing user involvement.

The marketing platforms are also used as a form of feedback, where users are asked to provide suggestions for improvement and their satisfaction levels. This two-way communication process creates a positive feedback loop where user inputs are used to improve services, resulting in positive word-of-mouth marketing.

Role of Librarian in Marketing

The librarian's role is very significant in digital marketing. The tasks include:

Content Planning and Scheduling: Planning the content according to the academic calendar to post content regularly.

Creative Post Design: Designing posts that are visually attractive and engaging.

Engagement Analytics: Analysing the reach and impact of the posts to understand their effectiveness.

User Queries: Handling queries through comments, messages, and questions in a timely and effective manner.

Ethical Compliance: Ensuring that all marketing operations are carried out in a professional manner and in accordance with ethical standards.

It is essential to develop skills in digital communication to manage marketing operations effectively. The significance of training and development in digital communication skills is highlighted by the finding of the social media marketing study, which reveals the lack of confidence among Indian librarians.

V. Challenges in Library Marketing

Though there are advantages in applying marketing strategies, there are also some challenges that need to be considered:

Skills and Confidence Gap: Research studies on Indian university libraries show "a marked lack of willingness and prevalence of less confidence among the library professionals to execute or implement the social media tools to market library resources and services." The lack of qualified staff may hamper the production and implementation of content.

Time Constraints: Marketing needs continuous effort, but librarians have other duties too. Time constraints may affect the posting of content.

Resource Limitations: Academic libraries have limited budgets and staff, making it difficult to allocate resources to marketing activities. The Karnataka university study showed that 14% of university libraries do not have functional websites, indicating a lack of basic infrastructure.

Response Management: Handling comments, queries, or misinformation may need careful attention and timely action. This may be difficult without proper guidelines.

Privacy Concerns: Privacy issues also need to be considered while handling user-related information. Libraries need to strike a balance between interaction and privacy.

does not affect the confidentiality of the users.

Avoiding Copyright Infringement: Ensuring that all the information shared does not infringe any copyrights.

Authenticity of Information Shared: Ensuring that all the information shared is authentic and credible.

Professional Decorum: Maintaining professional standards in all interactions.

Inclusive Representation: Ensuring that the marketing process represents the diversity of the users and does not create stereotypes or exclusion.

Adherence to ethical standards will help in establishing credibility and trust with the users.

Academic Libraries in Mumbai Region

The academic libraries affiliated with the University of Mumbai have gradually begun to utilize social networking sites for promotional purposes. Many libraries have begun using Facebook and WhatsApp groups to inform students about new arrivals and exam-related resources.The libraries in semi-urban areas have observed increased activity after opening Instagram accounts with reading areas and book displays. The utilization of social networking sites has enhanced communication between librarians and students.

The academic libraries in Mumbai cater to a diverse group of students from different linguistic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Such diversity demands culturally sensitive marketing strategies that appeal to all sections of the user community. The fact that Mumbai is the financial and commercial capital of India means that students are bombarded with many demands on their attention, making marketing even more crucial.

Measurable Indicators of Success

The success of marketing-based promotion can be measured by:

Increase in Footfall Statistics: Tracking physical visits to the library before and after marketing campaigns.

Growth in E-Resource Usage Reports: Monitoring database access statistics, e-book downloads, and journal article views.

Social Media Engagement Analytics: Measuring likes, shares, comments, reach, and follower growth across platforms.

Feedback Surveys: Collecting user feedback on awareness, satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement.

Event Participation Records: Tracking attendance at workshops, orientations, and library events.

Reference Query Analysis: Monitoring the number and nature of reference questions received.

These indicators show the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies and provide evidence for demonstrating value to stakeholders.

VI. Best Practices for Successful Marketing Implementation

1. **Establish a social media policy** that provides guidelines for content, tone, frequency, and response management.
2. **Ensure consistency in posting** by maintaining a content calendar and regular schedule.
3. **Post visually appealing content** using images, videos, and graphics that capture attention.
4. **Review analytics on a regular basis** to understand what works and refine strategies accordingly.
5. **Link social media sites to institutional websites** creating integrated pathways for users to access resources.
6. **Allow user-generated content** by encouraging students to share their library experiences and tag the library.
7. **Respond to queries in a timely manner** building relationships through responsive communication.
8. **Collaborate with faculty and student organizations** extending reach through trusted intermediaries.
9. **Align marketing with the academic calendar** timing messages to coincide with student needs.
10. **Invest in staff training** addressing the confidence gap identified in Indian research.

11. **Start with simple, low-cost initiatives** building confidence and demonstrating value before scaling up.

12. **Document and share success stories** contributing to collective learning within the profession.

VII. Recommendations

For Individual Librarians

1. Develop marketing skills through online learning platforms like Coursera, edX, LinkedIn Learning, and Udemy.

2. Apply established marketing frameworks (7Ps, STP theory) to library contexts.

3. Start with simple, low-cost initiatives that build confidence and demonstrate value.

4. Connect with other librarians through professional associations to share experiences and learn from peers.

For Library Leadership

5. Prioritize marketing in strategic planning, recognizing it as essential rather than optional.

6. Allocate specific resources for marketing activities, including staff time and training.

7. Create supportive environments that encourage experimentation and normalize that not every effort will succeed.

8. Invest in staff development through workshops, training programs, and conference attendance.

For LIS Education

9. Integrate marketing competencies into curricula, ensuring new graduates enter the profession with foundational marketing knowledge.

10. Provide hands-on experience with marketing tools and platforms commonly used in libraries.

11. Include social media marketing training specifically addressing the confidence gap identified in research.

12. Offer targeted training programs addressing marketing skills for librarians at all career stages.

13. Create peer learning networks where librarians can share successes and challenges.

14. Recognize and share successful marketing initiatives through awards and publications.

VIII. Conclusion

The application of marketing skills for the effective promotion of library resources is a major shift in the way libraries communicate. It is important for academic libraries to incorporate marketing strategies into their service delivery framework in order to be relevant in the modern technological age. The evidence from Indian research confirms that this is indeed a "need of the hour" for Indian academic libraries facing declining user participation.

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