

# Digital Marketing of Library Products and Services Among Librarians in Selected Engineering College Libraries of Karnataka

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## Abstract

The study canvassed for the concept of digital marketing of library products and services among librarians in selected engineering colleges of Karnataka. This study investigated the existence of the concept of digital marketing in selected engineering college libraries as well as the benefits derived from digital marketing of library products and services. The study which was administered to 100 librarians in four engineering colleges of Karnataka, out of which 65 librarians responded. An item by item analysis of result was carried out by means of a table and simple percentage of respondents score. The result indicated that majority of the 65 librarians who completed and returned the questionnaire had a positive attitude towards digital marketing/pricing of library, information and knowledge products and services and are also aware of the numerous benefits of digital marketing in the digital age. Based on the result of the survey, it was concluded that certain information products and services can be marketed/priced and that the age-long practice of giving all manner of library, information and knowledge services free of charge should be reconsidered.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing; Academic Libraries; Library Products; Information Marketing; Knowledge Management.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of digital marketing has gained prominence since the advent of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). According

to *Al-bahrani, M (2009)* the term marketing refers to the management process which identifies, anticipates, and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably. While digital marketing on the other hand refers to the promotion of products or brands via one or more forms of electronic media. For example, advertising mediums that might be used as part of the digital marketing strategy of a business or organization could include promotional efforts made via the Internet, social media, mobile phones and electronic billboards, as well as via digital and television and radio channels. However, digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services is a comprehensive term that describes all the

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processes and interactions that result in promotion and sales of different information products and services for the library and information firm using digital technologies.<sup>2</sup>

As librarians understand the confusion associated with information overload, it is their responsibility to devise means to keep the students aware of the shortcomings of unevaluated internet information. To ameliorate some of the consequences of ICT resulting in underutilization of academic libraries, effort directed to promoting and creating awareness of library services is imperative. Librarians can promote the use of the library through other means such as marketing of library services to its users.

Marketing of library services according to *Jestin and Parameswari (2002)* involves activities such as identifying user's needs, designing suitable services or products to meet their needs, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and serve the users. It is a systematic process which entails the combination of planning, concentrating on customer needs and satisfaction with appropriate products and services.<sup>9</sup> (*Kendadamath, n.d.*). According to *Broady Preston and Steel (2008)*, it encompasses staff within the organization, product perception within the society and any potential method of customers receiving a message about the organization, its products and services.<sup>11</sup>

The information age has brought with it growth in information generation and use in a period where there is excess information explosion. This has led to unprecedented growth in the information industry, and also dramatic growth in services, revenue, and coherence of the information and knowledge industry over the last decade, where a society that consumes and generates the most knowledge and information is perceived as the strongest society. Though the marketing of knowledge and information services is a concept of comparatively recent origin, it has now emerged as an important area for libraries and information centres with the emergence of digital technologies. The main objective of digital marketing of library services to customers is to initially identify current and potential users and begin to develop a relationship with them. Academic libraries can achieve such relationship with users through the application of digital marketing strategies in rendering library services. Digital marketing strategies are processes that allow an organization to concentrate its resources on the optimal opportunities with the goal of increasing patronage and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (*Kendadamath, n.d.*). Without marketing strategies, library users

are unlikely to be fully aware of what the library can offer them. Although, factors such as perception, attitude and digital skills have been noted as some of the factors militating against the marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services in academic libraries.<sup>7</sup> (*Alemna, 2001; Al-Bahrani, Gray, 2004; Estall and Stephens, 2011; and Pathak and Jain, 2013*).

## MARKETING OF DIGITAL SERVICES

Libraries should have a clear plan to market their digital services. Several studies have been conducted to look into this aspect. Libraries need to adopt a coherent approach instead of scattered ones. Further, it is of utmost importance to deliver the right service at the right time to appropriate users in the right place in a cost effective manner.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, libraries should try to formulate marketing strategies. It will also aim to satisfy the five laws of library science. Libraries must continue to evolve to respond to the digital, financial and societal changes.<sup>4</sup>

If libraries do not come up to the expectations of the users, then commercial ventures may grab the opportunity. To counter the situation, the National library of Scotland (NLS) decided to introduce effective marketing relations to ensure the awareness of library sources and services among stakeholders. Harrington & Li found that marketing initiatives require thorough examination of competitors.

### Digital marketing Techniques

- A variety of techniques has been used to promote library services and resources. *Nkanga (2002)* found that promotional techniques such as personal contacts, circulars, memos, telephone calls, meetings, direct mailing, displays, talks, newsletters, library tours and leaflets were widely used.
- The tools used for promotion were reviewed and the promotion activities of the studied department's information products were described by *Cummings (1994)*. Many forms of techniques such as a combination of outreach programmes, holding lectures, changing library exhibits, library tours, classroom instruction, one-on-one appointments, library homepage, online catalogue and one-on-one training were suggested to promote library services and resources (*Dodsworth 1998*).<sup>3</sup>

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- Determine the extent to which librarians in academic libraries carry out digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services.
- Examine the benefits of digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services in selected Engineering college libraries in Karnataka.
- Investigate the challenges librarians encounter in the digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services in selected Engineering college libraries in Karnataka

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Digital Marketing of Library Resources.

In the view of *Kumar (2014)*, marketing of information products and services is a concept of sensitively serving and satisfying the needs of all those who are involved in education, scholarship, research and development.<sup>12</sup> *Duke and Tucker (2007)* added that the major reason for marketing in academic libraries is to fulfil the library's mission, meet the needs of users, and attract new and current users, and highlight unique services and programmes as well as to increase the use of library service and products.<sup>6</sup> *Wu (2012)* therefore stressed that marketing of library services is not all about telling the public what collection and services are being offered but contribute to building a relationship with library customers.<sup>14</sup>

According to *Singh (2009)* marketing of library services is the process of planning, pricing, promoting and distributing goods and services to create exchange that satisfy the library and the customers. From this definition, it can as well be deduced that mere provision of library resources in the library is not enough rather making them accessible and useable to the satisfaction of the users is paramount.

### *The Services of Engineering College Libraries*

Academic libraries have many services and products that can be marketed. Each library needs to identify what service each user needs at a given

time and how to market and satisfy the need. This is because marketing is not just about promoting new services and products but also bringing awareness to clients of existing services and products and determining their appropriateness *Sharma & Bhardwaj, 2009*. Hence the need for academic librarians to market library services to users. The Engineering College librarians have been charged with the description of document (indexing and abstracting), their content, features and purpose including the organization of such document. Indexing and abstracting is a means of such description to provide access to their identification and retrieval. Marketing indexing and abstracting services by academic libraries will enhance user's awareness on how to locate materials in the subject area they need as well as providing summaries of the contents of reading materials in the library thereby serving as time saver for library users.

Successful marketing includes the art of deciding that strategy / technique used in different situation. As non-profit making organizations, library and information centres cannot avoid marketing practices. Although libraries/information centres as non-profit organizations have three constituencies, e.g., clients to whom they provide services, the parent institution from whom they receive funds and donor agencies; but should engage in digital marketing of information products and services because of the numerous benefit associated with digital marketing.

### *The Benefits of Digital Marketing of Library Resources.*

Below are some of the benefits of digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services according to Oyeniyi (2016):

- **Global reach:** with only a small investment, a library or information centre can market their products and services to the globe through a website or social media tools.
- **Greater engagement:** With digital marketing you can encourage your prospects, clients and followers to take action, visit your website, read about your products and services, rate them, buy them and provide feedback which is visible to your market
- **Trackable, measurable results:** measuring a library's online marketing with web analytics and other online metric tools makes it easier for a library to establish how effective their campaign has been. You can obtain detailed information about how

customers use your website or respond to your advertising.

- **Personalisation:** if your customer database is linked to your website, then whenever someone visits the site, you can greet them with targeted offers. The more they buy from you, the more you can refine your customer profile and market effectively to them.
- **Openness:** by getting involved with social networking and managing it carefully, you can build customer loyalty and create a reputation for being easy to engage with.

### Reduce cost

Your business can develop its online marketing strategy for very little cost and can potentially replace costly advertising channels such as Yellow Pages, television, radio and magazine.

### Simple to measure

You can see in real time what is or is not working for your business online and you can adapt very

quickly to improve your results. For measuring traffic to your site you can use Google Analytics to measure specific goals you want to achieve for your website or blog and most packaged email marketing solutions provide good insight into how many people are opening, reading and converting from your emails.

## METHODOLOGY

The Researcher gathered information from sixty-five (65) librarians who responded out of 100 questionnaires issued out to librarians in four selected Engineering College libraries in Karnataka namely:

- Bangalore Institute of Technology Library, Bangaluru.
- Sri Jayachamarajendra College of Engineering Library, Mysore.
- Canara Engineering College Library, Mngalore.
- R.V. College of Engineering Library. Bangaluru.

### Responses by Librarians from Four Academic Libraries.

| Name of Academic Library                                     | Respondents | % Age      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Canara Engineering College Library, Mngalore                 | 14          | 22%        |
| R.V.College of Engineering Library, Bangaluru                | 23          | 35%        |
| Bangalore Institute of Technology Library, Bangaluru         | 19          | 29%        |
| Sri Jayachamarajendra College of Engineering Library, Mysore | 9           | 14%        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>65</b>   | <b>100</b> |

## DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

**Table 1:** Sex of Respondents

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Male      | 20        | 31         |
| Female    | 45        | 69         |
| Total     | 65        | 100%       |

From the table 1 shows that out of the 65 respondents, 20 respondents (Respondents 31%) were male, while 45 respondents (Representing 69%) were female.

**Table 2:** Age of respondents

| Responses        | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| 21-25 yrs        | 2         | 3          |
| 26-30 yrs        | 3         | 5          |
| 31-35 yrs        | 11        | 17         |
| 36-40 yrs        | 28        | 43         |
| 41 yrs and above | 21        | 32         |
| Total            | 65        | 100%       |

The table 2, it was observed that out of the 65 questionnaire collected, 3% which comprised of 2 respondents fell under the age bracket of 21-25 years, 5% (3 respondents) were between the ages of 26-30yrs, while 17% (11 respondents) were between 31-35 years. 43% (28 respondents) and 32% (21 respondents) are 36-40 years and 41 years and above respectively.

**Table 3:** Category of Staff

| Category                   | Frequency | Percent    |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Library Assistant (Junior) | 23        | 35         |
| Library Assistant (Senior) | 15        | 23         |
| Senior Librarian           | 11        | 17         |
| Assistant Librarian        | 8         | 12         |
| Deputy Librarian           | 5         | 8          |
| Chief Librarian            | 3         | 5          |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>65</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 3 above, the figure shows that 35% (representing 23 respondents) of the total

respondents are Library Assistant (Junior), 23% of the respondents are Library Assistant (Senior) while 17% of the total respondents are senior Librarians. Also, 12% (representing 8 respondents) of the total respondents are Assistant Librarian while 8% and 5% of the total respondents are deputy librarian and Chief librarian respectively.

**Table 4:** Benefits of Digital Marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services.

| Benefits of digital marketing          | SA  | A       | D  | SD      |
|----------------------------------------|-----|---------|----|---------|
| Wider/global communication             | 54  | 9       | 1  | 1       |
| Low cost of marketing                  | 45  | 12      | 6  | 2       |
| Easy to measure or evaluate            | 29  | 32      | 3  | 1       |
| Enhances greater engagement with users | 42  | 9       | 6  | 8       |
| Enhances customized services           | 46  | 14      | 2  | 3       |
| Faster marketing                       | 58  | 5       | 2  | -       |
| Openness                               | 37  | 11      | 7  | 10      |
| Total                                  | 311 | 92      | 27 | 25      |
| Aggregate total and percent            | 403 | (88.6%) | 52 | (11.4%) |

From table 4 above it is evident that digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services comes with numerous benefits such as wider/ global communication, low cost of marketing when compared to traditional methods, enhances greater engagement with users as well as customized services as indicated by 88.6% of the total respondents. While 11.4% of the total respondents expressed a contrary opinion.

## DISCUSSION

Research question one examines the extent to which librarians in Engineering College libraries in karnataka carry out digital marketing of Library, information and knowledge products and services. From the result of the study, a mere 6% of the total respondents indicated that they carry out digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products to a very high extent while a staggering 40% and 43% of the total respondents indicated that they carry out digital marketing of library products and services in a low extent and very low extent respectively. This is in line *With Estell and Stephens (2011)* whose study revealed that most Engineering College librarians in university libraries do not engage in digital marketing of their libraries' products and services.

From research question two, it is evident that digital marketing of library, information and

knowledge products and services in Engineering College libraries comes with numerous benefits such as wider/global communication, low cost of marketing when compared to traditional methods, enhances greater engagement with users as well as customized services as indicated by 88.6% of the total respondents. While 11.4% of the total respondents expressed a contrary opinion. This findings supports *Martney (2009)* who noted that there are numerous benefits that accompany digital marketing of library, information and knowledge products and services such as cheaper communication in relation to the number of persons, wider communication etc.<sup>13</sup>

Research question three showed that 94.9% of the total respondents affirmed that the challenges of adopting digital marketing includes low knowledge of the use digital technologies among librarians and library users in Karnataka, high cost of acquiring digital technologies, frequent obsolescence of computer hardware and software technologies, incessant power failure, poor network/internet technologies etc., while a mere 5.1% of the total respondents expressed a contrary view. This finding corroborates the result of a study carried out by *Wu (2012)* which revealed that the challenges facing librarians towards digital marketing library and information services and products includes; insufficient tools for marketing, lack of systematic marketing and its relevance to education, insufficient employees to work on marketing and library's poor attention to marketing.

## CONCLUSION

Information is a mortal fund for general education. The increscent knowledge and usefulness of advertisement as a rise of digital supplies will no fear ameliorate the economizing of any nationality. The advice era has rise in the settlement of complaint systems and avail which afford a diversity of tip benefit and products. Therefore, libraries in Nigeria must do well to involve the digital generation in its entirely internality. This comprehends the custom of digital and internet technologies in supplies the essential products and avail of libraries and complaint kernel in this instruction Time.

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