Marketing of Library and Information Science Products and Services Through Social Media - Need of The Hour

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Technology has changed the spectrum of service oriented organizations to impress, assess and quench the quests of information seekers. To harness the dynamic technological changes, it is inevitable for libraries to use social media tools for marketing their library and information science products and services. Accordingly by accepting and adopting these new means, the information hubs can outreach and tap those potential or casual information seekers who due to reluctance or any other good reason are still not approaching and using the wide array of library products and services.

Keyword: Library and Information Science, Library Products and Services, Marketing of Library Products and Services, Social Media, Marketing.

0 INTRODUCTION

The technology has turned the tables and made it feasible to access the wide array of library resources without setting foot outside ones abode. To harness it, libraries are embracing and using all new emerging and cutting edge technologies to have better connectivity with users and by this marketing help as an inevitable process for survival in competitive era. The ease and acceptance of social media by all generations is the mantra of success and the present day LIS professionals have adopted this very successfully to quench the quests of users and also intimating the users about all the services they are offering to them.

1 MARKETING: ITS DEFINITION

• Marketing is an act of analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programmes designed to bring about
voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. Marketing involves the organization in studying the target market’s needs, designing/developing appropriate products and services, and using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate and service the market\(^3\). (Kotler 27).

- Chartered Institute of Marketing, U.K. defines it as a “Management process which identifies, anticipates and satisfy customer requirements profitably”\(^1\). (DULS 449)

These two definitions put light on varied essential aspects of marketing such as:

(a) Marketing is a managerial process involving analysis, planning, implementation and control;

(b) Marketing is concerned with carefully formulated programmes - not random actions – designed to achieve desired responses;

(c) Marketing seeks to bring about voluntary exchange;

(d) Marketing selects target markets and does not seek to be all people;

(e) Marketing is directly correlated to the achievement of organizational objectives;

(f) Marketing places emphasis on the target market’s(consumer’s) needs and desires rather than on the producer’s preferences.\(^1\) (DULS 450)

2 WHY MARKETING OF LIBRARY INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES?

In today’s electronic era there are numerous reasons to substantiate that marketing of library and information science products and services is necessary and these are:

- To orient and inform what we are doing for users.

- For the promotion of the use of information resources.

- To optimize the use of information.

- To enhance the collection and services of library.

- Rising cost of resources.

- Information explosion.

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• Impact of ICT.
• Increasing information demands of users’.
• Lack of budget.
• Competition from other sectors.
• For introduction of new array of services.
• To market the R & D activities of the institute^4. (Sardana 231-34)
• To design tailor made services.
• To accept, adopt and change with time.
• Inability to comprehend the precise needs of users’ has resulted in providing and promoting services that have very low usage.
• Efforts in assessing user requirements and selecting target audience were not sufficient.
• Introduction of new services needs to be product oriented instead of assumptions.^2 (Gupta 13)
• Effective strategy is required to reach the users.
• Categorization of potential users, regular users and non-users is needed.

4 WHAT LIBRARIES CAN MARKET?

When we analyze what can be marketed by library, we find that it is products, services, people and skills. The design of information products, how information might be customized, packaged and delivered is what libraries and information professionals have to work out. The present competitive market recognize information as a product and it is sellable and thus lending service, interlibrary loan, notification of new research, research reports, patent records, industry oriented products, marketing analysis projects, information literacy programmes, book review, consultancy service, etc. can be marketed.^5 (Saez 7-8)

5 MARKETING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

51 FACEBOOK

Present day users are tech-savy and use varied social networking sites for exchange of ideas, thoughts, social issues, pranks, educational and
cultural information, etc. To outreach the information untouchables, Facebook is one of the most popular tool that can be used by libraries of all types to reach their users. Facebook can serve both as a passive and an active marketing tool. In an active sense, libraries can post status updates that their followers can see. They can also purchase ads and target these to specific categories of users'. Whenever a user “likes” the library on Facebook, this usually shows up in their friend’s timelines, thus alerting more users’ to the presence of the page and potentially drawing more “likes” in a passive manner. Facebook also allows their ubiquitous “like” buttons to be embedded in external websites, allowing users to “like” particular items outside the Facebook system, which are then reflected on their profiles. Libraries can use it to increase their reach on Facebook and thus allow users to easily share particular books, services, important links, promote information literacy workshops, and embed search boxes for popular electronic resources.6 (Thomsett-Scott 5-6) For example the Seattle Public Library (SPL) is doing library marketing through Facebook and has more than seventeen thousand likes and sharing services, events, images of library displays and unique holdings, videos of librarians recommending materials, relevant web articles, reading lists etc.6 (Thomsett-Scott 35)

52 WIKIS

The library can use wikis for a variety of purposes, including instruction, virtual reference, desk management, and supplementing digital content offerings – types of content that often have multiple authors and require frequent updates. It serves as a collaborative space for knowledge sharing and library can add resources and information for users’ benefit. There are some third party hosted wikis which can be used by librarians for marketing such as:

- PBWorks- it is easy to use and is education oriented. It offers enterprise-wise solutions, most of which come at a fee, as well as free personal wikis for non commercial use. (www.pbworks.com)

- Wikispaces – it is widely used by school librarians as a home page for their library. It offers free and paid plans for educators depending on the level of storage space, branding, and functionality needed. (www.wikispaces.com). For example the Beaufort Academy Library website is using this facility.

- Locally Hosted Wikis - These allow users more control in creation and management. The software is also free of ads and many are free to
download as open source software. A good example is Tiki – a open source, free wiki software, is unique because it boasts some of the most frequently built-in features, including social networking components (polls, chat, comments, etc.), e-learning tools (quizzes, webinars, etc.) and personal information management (calendars, address books, time sheets, etc.) (www.info.tiki.org).

53 VIDEOS

The video sharing sites such as Youtube and Vimeo, allow libraries to easily post and share video content. Libraries create and share many types of view content such as General Promotion/Appreciation, Orientation/Tour, Patron-Generated, Promotion of Service/Collection, Event Documentation, News and Instruction / Tutorial. (Thomsett-Scott 7) Examples of common categories of marketing videos include marketing services, marketing collections, marketing spaces and marketing events.

- Marketing Services - A good example of marketing a library service is the video “Interlibrary Loan Whiteboard” produced by Harold B. Lee Library. It is a short, to the point, and visually engaging and explains the many advantages of using ILL. While preparing a video to marketing services it should be well planned, and cover all the services.

- Marketing Collections - The informative and rare collections should be brought to users notice through video presentation. An example is “Monster Ball; the 2012 Anti-Prom” from the New York Public Library which displays three different collections and also shows patrons interacting with them and using the materials to create new content of their own.

- Marketing Spaces - The library can showcase its most important video i.e. orientation or virtual tour of the library. Many libraries such as school and college and university libraries use this to promote collection and services to wider mass.

- Marketing Events - The libraries host many events, activities that can be benefitted through video promotion.

A video to be successful should have following features:

(i) The video prepared should be short and content oriented.

(ii) It should be tangible and convey the message.
(iii) It should be objective and focus to the market.

(iv) It should be attractive, qualitative and shot the message. (Thomsett-Scott 54-62)

54 PINTEREST

It is a social networking platform focused on visual content that allows users to create virtual pinboards of images from across the web, similar to the way that previous generations might have clipped images from magazines to create a scrapbook or a physical bulletin board. Users can create a variety of topical boards, and “pin” images from other places and around the web by pasting a short bit of code into their browser’s bookmarks bar, as well as by uploading their own images. These images serve as links to the original source of the material. Users can also browse the pinboards of other members that they follow within the service, or popular pins from all users and are able to ‘repin’ items into their own boards. Pinterest differ from other photo sharing sites, such as Flicker, which are largely intended for sharing individually created content. These pinboards can be used for promotion of libraries reading, literacy, resource suggestions, for promoting collection and services. (Thomsett-Scott 8) This wonderful tool can also be used by library as illustrated guide for library’s classification system, book trailers (pinning book cover photos taken by the library), historical photos(owned by the library), visual resource guides, digital collection promotion, or collaborative gathering of images or promotion ideas. For example the Smiley Memorial Library at Central Methodist University (CMU) in Missouri uses Pinterest to create “research portals” and visual images of ideas to help students to begin the research or writing process. The library uses it to manage recommendations for new books and to publish their new book lists6. (Thomsett-Scott 76)

55 GOOGLE +

Google+ allows users to organize their contacts into “circles” in an effort to replicate the way that real social networks function. Libraries can organize followers into circles based on their relationship to the library. Library can use Google+ Hangouts, a form of video conferencing, to conduct reference interviews and one-on-one interactions with library users. For example Falvey Memorial Library at Villanova University has a Google+ page that features photos and library news (www.joemurphylibraryfuture.com).
In comparison to other social media tools, Google+ is well designed, connects Google’s products, has good mobile applications and has high number of potential users based on the use of Google search. The library marketing includes the following features:

- Broadcast hangouts - It is useful for author readings, instructions and other activities.
- Communities - Useful for book groups and other topical approaches.
- Contacts via Google+ Circles - Target content via existing contacts.
- Google Drive Files - can be shared, and include forms for assessing the services library provides to users.
- Events - Useful to leverage Google Calendar and push events directly to Google Calendar.
- Photos - include photos with Google Events to create a single photo pool for an event, which can create a deeper sense of engagement. (Thomsett-Scott 81-82).

56 FOURSQUARE

It is a platform that ties physical locations into social networking and thus has probably inspired more enthusiastic debate than any other tool. By allowing users to “Check in” to physical locations and share this location information on other social networks. Foursquare leverages the combination of global position system (GPS) and map information with social media. Users earn points and receive virtual badges for checking in to certain types of locations, and can become the “mayor” of a particular location by accruing the most check-ins. (Thomsett-Scott 11). Libraries can participate in Foursquare by ensuring that the Library is listed as a location within the tool and that all information is correct and up to date. Any foursquare user can create a location to check in to, thus, it is extremely likely that most libraries have a presence on Foursquare whether they know it or not. Libraries can tag within the system such as books, library, or Wi-Fi, features tips and to-do lists; or offer incentives to users who check in at the library. (Thomsett-Scott 12)

57 BLOGS

Blogs are in-vogue for exchanging ideas, thoughts, views, opinion and provide an opportunity to users to provide feedback and converse with the library. In present time many libraries amend the world use blogs for better and effective communication and for example Wordpress and Blogger are
the two most popular options. Readers want to know more about library staff, collection, services and new trends, activities and share or comment with wide members which will help in bringing more members and for marketing\textsuperscript{6}. (Thomsett-Scott 12-13).

58 TWITTER

It is a microblogging tool that allows user to share tweets of 140 characters or less, including spaces with their followers. Twitter is very useful for sharing short, factual information as well as links to further information. It can be also used to broadcast information from the library and to promote conversations with followers (Thomsett-Scott 15). For example Library of Congress uses Twitter to outreach users’ with latest information. Many libraries use Twitter to promote their library programmes and services, to share information with other organizations, to learn the customers information needs and what they are thinking, to build conversations with users’, to address customer concerns and to advocate the library programmes and services\textsuperscript{6}. (Thomsett-Scott 147-48)

Apart from the above-mentioned technologies many more can be used by libraries for marketing their information products and services such as:

\(a\) Library website

\(b\) LibGuides another web based research guides can serve as a marketing platform with an easy to update interface and the ability to display multiple content types, including video.

\(c\) GoodReads and LibraryThing networks can be used to share new and award winning books and for users’ interaction.

6 CONCLUSION

Technology has opened the floodgates and serving the users appetite as per their quests. The paradigm shift in outreaching the users from library and information centres has got a solace in terms of emerging and cutting edge technologies. It is necessary for libraries to adopt and accept the social media tools and techniques to market their library and information science products and services and thus outreach the casual and potential users. By doing so it can be envisaged that information hubs are really worthy for society but now there is need to promote and make the users’ aware about the activities performed or can be undertaken as per the information needs of the user community. Further, these marketing tools and practices will help in wider promotion and generating revenue to
introduce new array of services, collection development and modification as per the users’ requirements. To accomplish the library mission and vision, social media is the soul of library marketing strategy and that is how connecting the whole world in the web of information sharing.

7 REFERENCES


