University Librarians' Perception on the Marketing of Library Services in Sri Lanka: An Attitudinal Survey

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Abstract

In this Google era, Sri Lankan university librarians are in need to consider a way of "selling" their services to attract new users and retain existing ones. Bridging the gap between the users and the available information resources and services would require a positive perception and attitude of librarians. In this regard, the perception and attitude of Sri Lankan university librarians may influence the marketing of library services. The objective of this study was drawn to analyze the perception and attitude of university librarians in Sri Lanka, towards marketing their services in the light of improving the existing information services. The study involved 130 academic staff members in the libraries of the state universities established under the purview of the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka. Total population sampling was considered, and self-administrated questionnaires were used for data collection. Data analysis was performed using mean values, frequencies, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The results depicted that, Sri Lankan university librarians had a favourable/positive perception and attitude towards marketing library services.This study is significant since administrators with positive attitudes and perceptions towards marketing can develop favourable marketing strategies to promote their products and services among their user community.

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Introduction

The main purpose of a university library is to support teaching, learning and research activities with its information resources. Libraries have a major responsibility of satisfying their users with accurate information. The ultimate purpose of a library is to serve its users with the right information, at the right time when the users need the information and to present the information effectively. To fulfil this desire a library can consider using marketing strategies to promote its services to the users and attract new users and retain the existing ones. In the 21st century, the role of a library is changing gradually. The libraries must provide appropriate services to the information seekers in the google generation. The role of a traditional library has changed due to the changes in the information need of the digital natives. To meet the requirements of digital natives, libraries may need marketing strategies to sell their products and services. The challenge is to change from the status quo of a traditional library. When changing the status quo of a traditional library, the librarians' attitudes and perceptions play a major role as the deciding factor. Some librarians mistakenly believe that marketing is all about selling and advertising, whereas in reality, marketing is a comprehensive organizational endeavor to attract, satisfy, and maintain library customers' interests. In 2015, Chegwe and Anaehobi identified in their study, various factors which have influenced the marketing of library services in academic libraries. Such factors include the perception and attitude of the librarians. Some librarians perceive that the services provided by the libraries are so essential to their users and that the users will still use the resources as usual, regardless of any extra effort in marketing the services. They also have a perception that users visit the library since their needs are fulfilled.

The attitude of a person towards an object or an issue can be judged by the behaviour of that person concerning that issue or object. The way librarians think and behave regarding the marketing of library services is as important as any aspect that influences the library's performance and future (Chegwe & Anaehobi, 2015).

Sri Lankan university libraries consist of various staff categories such as academic staff, academic support staff, administrative staff, and non-academic staff. The academic staff category of a particular university comprises a Librarian, Deputy Librarians, Senior Assistant Librarians (Grade-I& II), and Assistant Librarians. This study was conducted in the Sri Lankan context. The study considers academic staff members of libraries

attached to the universities established under the purview of the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka.

Statement of the problem

The underutilization of library resources has been a major concern for traditional libraries. The librarians should re-think the traditional methods they have been using for the past few years to provide information to their users. They have a challenge in providing information for the google generation. As it has been a competitive environment, they must consider ways of "selling" their products to their users in an attractive manner to retain them. The perception and attitude of librarians may have an impact on this effort. Some librarians perceive that any extra effort is not needed to "sell" their services, as their services are so essential to the users, and they might anyhow utilize them. These kinds of perceptions might cause a bad impression of the library and would hinder the utilization of library resources. Therefore, there is a need of identifying the librarians' perceptions and attitudes towards the marketing of their services. There is a contextual gap, and this gap has been addressed in the Sri Lankan context.

Literature provides evidence that librarians' perceptions and attitudes have an impact on the use and application of marketing at libraries. So far, few similar investigations were found in the Sri Lankan context, regarding the use of marketing at university libraries. No similar studies have been conducted so far, to find both the perceptions and attitudes of university librarians towards the use and application of marketing in whole state universities in Sri Lanka.

Objectives of the study

1) To determine the perception of university librarians towards the marketing of library services.

2) To find out the attitude of university librarians towards the marketing of library services.

Conceptual Framework

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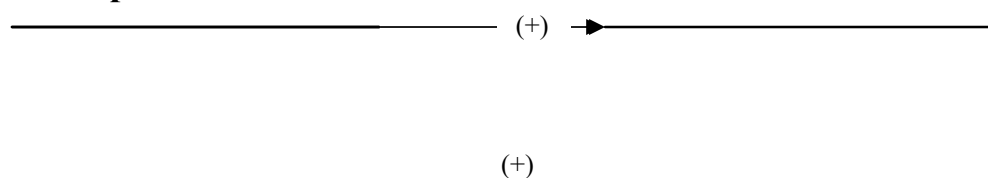
Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The above figure indicates the conceptual framework of the study.

Dependent variable   : - Use of marketing in library services
Independent variables : - Perception of librarians, Attitude of librarians

The use of marketing in library services is depended on the librarians' perception and attitude. A favourable/positive perception and attitude towards marketing practices will provoke the use of those practices in promoting the library services. According to Singh (2009), "The findings indicate that a positive marketing attitude of the library leadership is a prerequisite for the market-oriented behaviour of the library" (p.31).

Literature Review

The concept of marketing for non-profit organizations was first introduced by Kotler and Levy in 1969. Later in the book "marketing for non-profit organizations", Kotler (1982) elaborated on the marketing strategies for organizations like libraries. According to him, a non-profit organization like a library is engaged in the production of services rather than goods (Jose& Bhat, 2007). According to Singh (2009), marketing of library services is the process of planning, pricing, promoting, and distributing goods and services to create an exchange that satisfies the library and the customers. From this definition, it can as well be deduced that the 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 (Singh, 2009, as cited in Chegwe&Anaehobi, 2015, p.6). According to Garoufallou et al. (2013), "librarians realized that they should view their users as customers, identify and understand their needs and demands, then adopt marketing strategies to meet those needs" (Ewers & Austen, 2004, as cited in Garoufallou et al., 2013, p.633).

A major reason for marketing in university libraries is to fulfil the library's mission, meet the needs of users, and attract new and current users, and highlight unique services and programs as well as increase the use of library services and products (Duke & Tucker, 2007, as cited in Chegwe & Anaehobi, 2015, p.5). According to Onwubiko and Onu (2002), marketing library services in university libraries can make immense advances in reaching potential users who need the services the library can provide but are unwilling to seek their help and are not being satisfied (Onwubiko & Onu, 2002, as cited in Chegwe & Anaehobi, 2015). University libraries may also consider the marketing strategy, "personal selling" to interact and socialize with the academic community. University librarians play the role of sales representatives in the context of marketing. They must talk about the services

of the library in the coffee and the senior common rooms to their lecturer colleagues in the university (Martey, 2000).

The services offered by the library of the University of Colombo are reference services, lending services, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), document supply service, laptop lending service, Wi-Fi service, learning commons, photocopying service, inter library loan service, the resource centre for the visually impaired, etc. These are some of the library products which can be marketed effectively (Johoran, 2019). As per the study conducted by Rifaudeen (2015) on the sustainability of library and information science services in Sri Lankan university libraries, he has emphasized that marketing is a vital part of a library and promotion of the services should be done continuously to achieve sustainability in library services. His study further states that social media has been identified as the most cost-effective and popular marketing tool in Sri Lankan university libraries. Wijayasundara (2016) indicates that user training, one-to-one appointments, flyers, emails, posters, word of mouth and webpage were the most common marketing strategies used at the Library of University of Sri Jayewardenepura Sri Lanka, to promote its e-resources.

Perception refers to the way sensory information is organized, interpreted, and consciously experienced (Simons, 2017). The perception of a person is based on the interpretations carried regarding different sensations. Perceptions help in decision-making. Perception is a prerequisite to the subsequent application of marketing in libraries unless an individual applies it unknowingly. Some may be aware or interested in marketing but have misunderstood it. Some librarians tend to think that marketing is all about selling and promoting, not realizing that marketing refers to a total organizational effort to attract, satisfy and sustain the interest of library users(Chegwe & Anaehobi, 2015). Perception revokes a person's behaviour. Therefore, librarians' perception of marketing will shape their behaviour and they will tend to use marketing at their library services based on their perception.

The findings of the pilot study conducted by Yi et al. (2013) revealed that: University librarians had varied perceptions of the effective approaches used to market services and resources.Using multiple marketing approaches was perceived to be the most effective strategy used to market services and resources. Correlation analysis confirms that demographics, human capital and library variables play significant roles in predicting librarians' perceptions of the effective marketing techniques used. The factors influencing the marketing techniques used are gender, age, education level,

number of library staff, number of library branches, years of present positions, number of different professional positions and years of library service. (p.597)

The present study considers the perception of Sri Lankan university librarians towards the use and application of marketing at their university libraries. Perception and Attitude were identified as two different variables in the study. Perception is the use of the mind to understand the surroundings. Attitude is how a person chooses to react to his understanding. Perception of librarian refers in the study to the understanding of librarians about marketing. Though many studies were found which are conducted in other countries on the perception of university librarians towards marketing, only a few works of literature had addressed the Sri Lankan context. Garusing Arachchige (2002), in his study on marketing in academic and special libraries in Sri Lanka, had emphasized the application of basic marketing principles to library activities. Literature on Sri Lankan university librarians' perception towards the marketing of library services was lacking. However, a similar survey has not been conducted so far focusing mainly on the perception and attitude of Sri Lankan university librarians towards marketing their library products and services. Findings from similar studies around the world may not apply to the Sri Lankan university libraries due to the different cultural, geographical, and behavioural aspects of the library community. A literature gap was able to trace, and focus is made to address the gap.

Allport (1935), has defined attitude as a mental and neutral state of readiness organized through experience exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects or situations with which it is associated (Allport, 1935, as cited in Adekunle et al., 2007, p.2). As per the literature, one of the factors on which a person's behaviour is based is the attitude he has towards an object or a concept. Likewise, university librarians' attitude towards marketing concepts plays a major role in deciding whether marketing practices will be used or not in the services they provide to their library users. Their attitude paves the way for their behaviour.Marcinkowski and Reid (2019) have defined "attitude is primarily evidenced with a person's evaluative dispositions and judgments about an "object" (e.g., a being, thing, event, idea, issue, or action) that are derived, at least in part, from their experience or situation".

The present study considers the attitude of Sri Lankan university librarians towards the use and application of marketing at their university libraries. The attitude of librarian refers to the way the librarians react or behave on their

understanding towards marketing. The attitude of a librarian to marketing, plays a major role in the decision of using marketing strategies for library services. A librarian's attitude can be influenced based on the knowledge of marketing practices, perceived benefits of using marketing practices, and the degree of contribution to marketing activities. There were several pieces of works of literature conducted to reveal the attitude of the school and public librarians towards the use of marketing in Sri Lanka. Literature on university librarians' attitudes towards the use of marketing at their libraries was rare. Therefore, there is a need to identify the university librarians' attitude towards the uses of marketing at their library services. This gap is addressed through this study.

Methodology

The population of the research was academic staff members in the libraries of the state universities established under the purview of the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka. Based on the directory of the University Librarians Association issued in 2020, there were about 130 academic staff members attached to these state universities accredited by the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka**.** The sampling method considered in this study was total population sampling. Primary and secondary data were used to achieve the objectives of the research. To collect primary data from the sample units, a structured questionnaire was used. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire to measure the responses, where 5- Strongly Agree, 4- Agree, 3- Neither Agree nor Disagree 2- Disagree and 1- Strongly Disagree. Secondary data was collected through analysing research articles of previous studies.The main data collection tool was the self-administrated questionnaire. The finalized questionnaire was pre-tested using a pilot study with randomly selected ten academic staff members from the library of the University of Colombo. It was validated by a panel of experts. Basic statistical parameters such as mean values, frequencies and Pearson Correlation Coefficient were used to analyse the primary data. Likert scale questions were used to draw data relevant to the variables considered in the study. SPSS package and Microsoft Excel 2013 were used in analysing and presenting the data which was collected from the sample.

Analysis

Out of 130 participants, 105 responded to the questionnaire. The response rate of the study was 81%.

Socio-Demographic details of the respondents
Gender

Out of 105 respondents, 63 respondents (60%) were females, and 42 respondents (40%) were males.

Age group
Out of 105 respondents, there weren't any respondents who belonged to the age group below 25 years. 22 respondents (21%) belonged to the 26-35 years age group. 55 respondents (52%) were in the 36-45 years age group. 22 respondents (21%) belonged to the 46-55 years age group. And only 6 respondents (6%) were in the age group above 55 years.

Designation
Out of 105 respondents, 5 respondents (5%) were Librarians, 2 respondents (2%) were Deputy Librarians, 74 respondents (70%) were Senior Assistant Librarians, and 24 respondents (23%) were Assistant Librarians.

University librarians' perception of marketing of library services
Table 1 indicates the mean values of librarians' perception of the marketing of library services.

Table 1: Mean values of librarians' perception of marketing of library services

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Marketing will help library users easily identify and utilize the available resources at the library	4.50	.502
2	Marketing is a management process that includes the identification of customer needs and wants and creating value through satisfying them	4.41	.567
3	Marketing is a process that bridges the gap between the library and its users	4.34	.552
4	Marketing plays a major role in reaching organizational objectives	4.33	.566
5	Marketing is crucial for both profit and non-profit making organizations like libraries	4.17	.740
6	Users' perception of librarians and libraries can be influenced by marketing	4.11	.751
7	Marketing focuses more on user needs rather than on the product preferences	3.91	.878

8	Users take librarians for granted due to marketing practice	2.91	.878
9	Marketing emphasizes an extra burden on librarians	2.61	.925
10	University libraries do not need marketing	1.67	.906

As per table 1, the statement "Marketing will help library users easily identify and utilize the available resources at the library" had the highest mean score, which is 4.50 and a standard deviation of 0.502. The second highest mean score was 4.41 for the statement "Marketing is a management process which includes identification of customer needs and wants and creating value through satisfying them" and it had a standard deviation of 0.567. This depicts that most university librarians agree with the above two statements which indicates a positive perception of the marketing of library services. As per the results, the standard deviation values received for all the statements were less than one which indicates that data were clustered around the mean values. There is less deviation in the statements given by the librarians. The lowest mean score was 1.67 and it had a standard deviation of 0.906 for the statement "University libraries do not need marketing" which the librarians disagreed with this statement. The standard deviation value for the statement is less than one and the mean value was 1.67, which indicates most of the librarians' disagreement with the statement "University libraries do not need marketing". Further librarians disagreed with the statements such as "Users take Librarians for granted due to marketing practice" (mean 2.91) and "Marketing emphasizes an extra burden on Librarians" (mean 2.61).

As per the results, the standard deviation values received for all the statements were less than one. The data were clustered around the mean values. That depicts that there is less deviation in the statements given by the librarians. Most Sri Lankan university librarians have a similar perception regarding the marketing of library services.

Further, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the objectives of the study. If the Pearson correlation coefficient is greater than 0.5, then there is a strong positive relationship and if it is less than 0.5, then there is a positive, but not a strong relationship.

	Use of Marketing Techniques in Library Services

Perception of Librarian	Pearson Correlation	.413**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	105
Use of Marketing Techniques in Library Services	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	105

Table 2: Correlations between the perception of the librarian and the use of marketing techniques in library services

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As per Table 2, The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.413, which is less than 0.5. Therefore, there is a positive, but not strong correlation between the Perception of the librarian and the use of marketing techniques in library services.

University librarians' attitude towards marketing of library services

Table 3 indicates the mean values of the librarians' attitude towards the marketing of library services.

Table 3: Mean values of librarians' attitudes towards marketing of library services

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I think marketing increases user awareness regarding library services	4.55	.500
2	Marketing library services are acceptable to me	4.47	.501
3	A market plan helps us to identify which services/ products to continue/discontinue	4.25	.585
4	I think marketing is useful to university libraries since it helps us to meet current and future demands	4.22	.571
5	Marketing is enjoyable and useful to my job	4.15	.647
6	Though university libraries already provide a full range of services, there is a need for marketing	4.11	.880
7	I think university libraries should prioritize marketing	4.10	.771

8	The increased use of ICT has forced librarians to consider using marketing in the libraries	4.05	1.248
9	I think marketing is primarily about persuading people to use products and services they may need	3.83	.753
10	Marketing library services varies with my interest	3.70	.735
11	Insufficient library budgets discourage the use of effective marketing techniques in our operations	3.22	1.177
12	I think marketing library services will make librarians look cheap before library users	2.46	1.248

As per table 3, the highest mean score was 4.55 for the statement "I think marketing increases user awareness regarding library services" and it had a standard deviation of 0.500. The second highest mean score was 4.47, for the statement "Marketing library services are acceptable to me" and it had a standard deviation of 0.501. Most statements had a standard deviation value of less than one which indicates the data were crowded around the mean and that majority of the university librarians had an agreement with these statements and had a positive attitude toward marketing. The lowest mean score was 2.46 for the statement "I think marketing library services will make librarians look cheap before library users".

As per the results three statements, "The increased use of ICT has forced librarians to consider using marketing in the libraries", "Insufficient library budgets discourage the use of effective marketing techniques in our operations", and "I think marketing library services will make librarians look cheap before library users" had standard deviation values higher than one. This means the data points relevant to these statements were spread out and there was a high deviation between the attitudes of the librarians towards these statements. On the other hand, the remaining nine statements indicated a standard deviation value of less than one. This means that the data points were clustered around the mean value and had less deviation for those statements. This indicates that the majority of the librarians had a similar attitude towards these statements. Further, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the objectives of the study.

Table 4: Correlations between the attitude of the librarian and the use of marketing techniques in library services

		Use of Marketing Techniques in Library Services
Attitude of Librarian	Pearson Correlation	.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	105
Use of Marketing Techniques in Library Services	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	105

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As per Table 4, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.359, which is less than 0.5. Therefore, there is a positive but not strong correlation between the Attitude of the Librarian and the Use of Marketing Techniques in Library Services.

Discussion

The results clearly shows that university librarians in Sri Lanka have the perception that they need to adopt marketing practices in their respective libraries, especially to promote their products and services. Chegwe and Anaehobi (2015), came across similar findings as they found in their study, university librarians in the Delta State of Nigeria, had a high perception of marketing library services.

The results indicate that there is a positive attitude of the librarians towards the use of marketing techniques in library services. The present study was carried out in the Sri Lankan context, to find out what sort of attitude the Sri Lankan university librarians have on the application of marketing practices at their respective libraries. Chegwe and Anaehobi (2015), came across similar findings as they found in their study, that university librarians in the Delta State of Nigeria, have a positive attitude towards the marketing of library services. Parker, et al. (2007) also found in their study that, librarians in New Jersey tended to express a positive attitude towards marketing. The study carried out by Estall and Stephens (2011)too had a similar finding that marketing attitudes of the academic library staff were very positive. Respondents who had worked in the library service for a considerable time or who were older had more positive attitudes towards marketing. Seddon (1990) also had a similar argument that, with a change in attitude to marketing, libraries will find that the marketing approach can be used to improve their image and attract users.

Conclusion

It was revealed that most Sri Lankan university librarians have a favourable perception of using marketing practices at their respective libraries. Most of the librarians did not consider marketing as an extra burden and most of them disagreed with university libraries that do not need marketing. Sri Lankan university librarians have the perception that marketing is needed for university libraries to promote their products and services.

Most Sri Lankan university librarians have a positive attitude towards using marketing practices at their respective libraries. Most librarians refused to agree that marketing library services will make them look cheaper than users.

This indicates that Sri Lankan university librarians have a positive attitude towards marketing.

Future Research

In this study, the focus is on university librarians in Sri Lanka as the target group. Their perception and attitudes towards the use of marketing practices at Sri Lankan university libraries were considered throughout this study. Future research may be conducted by considering the perception and attitude of librarians of public libraries, school libraries and special libraries towards the application of marketing practices at their respective libraries.

Further studies may carry out to find out the perception and attitude of Sri Lankan university library users (undergraduates, postgraduates, academic staff, administrative staff, non-academic staff) on the application of marketing practices and their usefulness to them in their university libraries.

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