Research Paper

The importance of Social Media for promoting the products and services in Academic Libraries

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Abstract: *The presence of Social Media (SM) is almost everywhere, and its applications are used in various institutions and organizations. The applications have affected every spot of human activities and it modernized the information communication. The SM has been changing the face of the libraries and enable the libraries to market their resources and services. In this present scenario the libraries are depending on SM for fulfilling their academic objectives and satisfying the users. The college and University libraries adopt various platforms of SM to showcase the library resources. The attractive features of the SM can transform quickly the library atmosphere and the libraries. The aims of this study are to know the present position of SM tools, the attitude of the library professionals, to discover the most popular SM and to know the various problems faced by the librarians. A structured online questionnaire was prepared using Google Docs and send to 62 librarians of the Arts and Science Colleges of Kerala University. Out of 62 of them, 48 responded and were taken as the samples for the study. The findings of the study highlights that out of 48 respondents 31 of them use SM tools for marketing the library products and 17 of the respondents have no accounts in SM. The libraries used different SM tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Blog, Wiki, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. The Facebook and Blog were the most popular SM tools used for marketing. Majority of them agreed that they faced few problems.*
Keywords: *Social Media, academic libraries, library professionals, marketing, library products and services*

I. INTRODUCTION

The explosion of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought very major transformation in each and every aspect of libraries and among the library professionals. Revolution through ICT has brought occasion as well as hazard for the library professionals. How librarians admit and consume the technology is the fundamental factor which decides the outcomes of the technology in terms of the opportunity and threat. However, flourishing of the implementation of any technology primarily depends on the attitude of library professionals.

Some decades before library was a place where the users found only traditional documents like print journals, books dissertation and thesis etc. But due to progress in ICT library and librarians have been changed. In the present scenario many of the academic libraries have access to online documents such as E- books, E-journals and E-databases. Daily the use of Internet is increasing, many studies showed that now a days the user prefer to access the information from online rather than physically coming to the libraries.

A librarian is a person who handles all the resources and services accessible in the library. So it is very much essential that librarians need to be aware of the new trends and try to adopt the new technologies accessible in the Web to the libraries with the aim of better services. Some of the traditional services in the libraries have become outdated like card catalogue, now the users prefer finger tips services. Most of the libraries have Web OPAC facilities; many of the academic libraries provide their services through innovative tools and technologies.

SM is playing an important role in promoting the library services. SM tools are available in various formats and forms. Some of the SM tools the libraries prefer to use are Wiki, Facebook, WhatsApp, Blog, RSS feed and Twitter. The research shows that the application of SM is quickly gaining reputation among the various

categories of users from youth to old age people. Now days it is very essential that the libraries must adopt various SM tools to provide fast and quick services to their users. It was clear from some the studies, regarding the use of SM in the libraries that many libraries use various SM tools to offer effective services to their uses. Through SM the libraries can showcase their resources and services, and link with the users.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Maidul Islam and UmmeHabiba (2015) made a study to investigate the use of social media in marketing of library and information services in Bangladesh. The study focused on the importance, use, purpose and problems faced by the librarians in Bangladesh while marketing through the social media. The research samples for this article were 24 private universities, 5 special libraries and 17 public libraries in Bangladesh. An online questionnaire was used as the tool to collect the data. The study brought out that majority of these libraries used Linkedin and Facebook for marketing library resources and services. All most all the libraries used social media for sharing library events and news, advertisement, conferencing, research purposes and marketing library products and services. Suggestions made by the library professionals were to enhance the library services through using social media.

M.R. Murali Prasad (2016) in an article described the need of exclusive blog for department of library and information science [DLIS] in a university to evaluate their syllabus, courses and to disseminate the LIS research, display the strength of the faculty, with embedding Web 2.0 applications into their respective blogs and to create an online platform to network with the department authorities. The article also expressed the various strategies to sustain and develop blog for DLIS in a university. The study concluded that the blog is the best platform to make known the LIS research and education to the existing and prospective LIS professionals in the world and mainly in India.

V. Sriam (2016) studied the different concept of Social Media, like how they are essential to showcase, and market the library resources and services and to attract the patrons and how the social media tools can be effectively put to use in libraries for marketing were expressed by illustrating services in the KN Raj library centre for Development studies in Thriuvanathapuram. The study expressed that how the information centers and libraries are using different social media applications for marketing their services and about the different social media tools and argued for their widespread use in libraries for publicity and marketing.

S Y Bansode and S M Pujar (2008) made a study titled as "Blogs: An online tool for library services". The study highlighted on different types of blogs, how to begin a blog with suitable examples, blogs in library sphere and the areas which it can be best implicated. The paper concluded that the blogs can be used as thebest tool for the libraries to add their services and show their existence to the world at large.

NoaAharony (2010) in his research explored the use of Twitter in academic and public libraries to understand micro blogging patterns. Content analysis and Statistical descriptive analysis were used to analyse Twitter. The paper presented that there were some difference between academic and public libraries, including content, the number of tweets and linguistic differences. The use of applications of Twitter in libraries helped both these libraries to share and broadcast their opinions, status, professional interests and activities. The findings pointed out that they are relevant for information scientists and librarians who wish to better their understanding and explore the phenomenon of library tweets.

NoaAharony (2012) in his research study aimed to present an exploratory analysis of the use of Facebook in American academic and public libraries with the aim of understanding patterns of Facbook use in libraries. The study presented content and statistical descriptive analysis. The results emphasized that the academic and public libraries used the information section and the wall and there is significant difference in the use of other Facebook sections which was amazingly limited in both kinds of libraries. The public libraries used the photo section and the wall as major channels of information more than academic libraries. The study underlined that both section of the libraries used Facebook as a way to convey information to customers rather than as a place for discussion.

Objectives of the study
1. To find out the status of using SM tools for promoting the resources and services in the library
2. To identify the different types of SM tools used by the librarians and to evaluate the most popular tool used for promoting the library services.
3. To find out the library professionals views of using Social Media tools in promoting the library services

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the importance of social media for promoting the products and services in academic libraries. In order to collect the primary data for the study a well-structured online questionnaire was send to 62 library professionals of Arts and Science colleges of Kerala University. Out of 62 respondents 48 of

them responded and were taken as the samples. The data was entered in MS - Excel and was coded and imported into SPSS for analysis.

**Analysis and Interpretation**
Account in Social Media
    The following diagram represents the libraries account in SM platform. It was found that out of 48 respondents only 31(64.29%) respondents agreed that their libraries have SM account and they use them for promoting their services. While 17 (35.41%) respondents said that their libraries do not have the SM account.
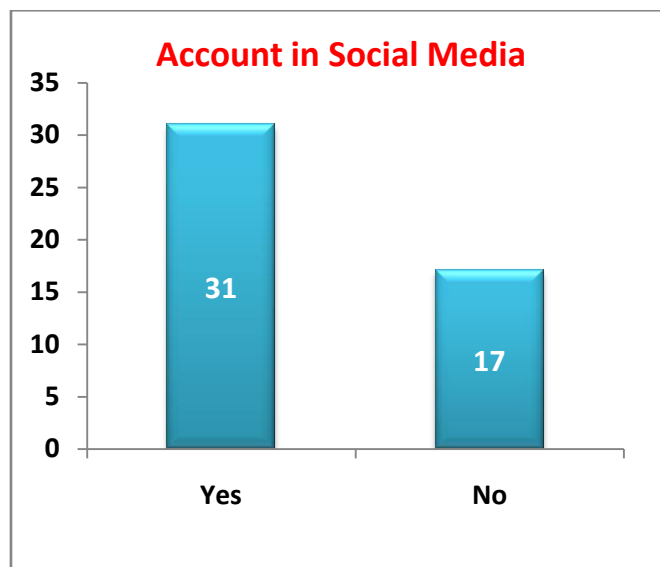
Frequency of using SM for promoting the library services
    SM has developed into a fundamental element for libraries and organisations. The applications of SM are trying to make an effective impact on users with respect to their work, communication and interaction with others. The applications of SM have attracted thousands of users including specialists across many subjects. SM offers the users with profuse information posted by others. They are becoming a display place for information sharing and promotion of the resources. With the appearance of specialized SM for specific user groups, users can now practise a mixture of activities either related to their work or their personal life.
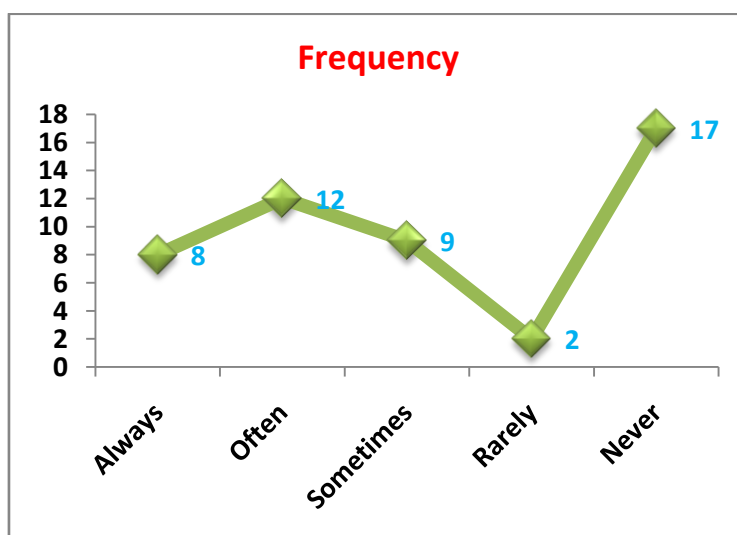
The results of the frequency of using SM tools in marketing shows that out of 48 respondents 8(16.67%) respondents always used SM for marketing their products, where as 12(25%) respondents reported that they often used, while 9(18.75%) of them sometimes used, (24.17%) respondents rarely used and 17(35.41%) of the respondents never used SM tools for marketing their products and services.

The importance of Social Media in marketing the library products and services.
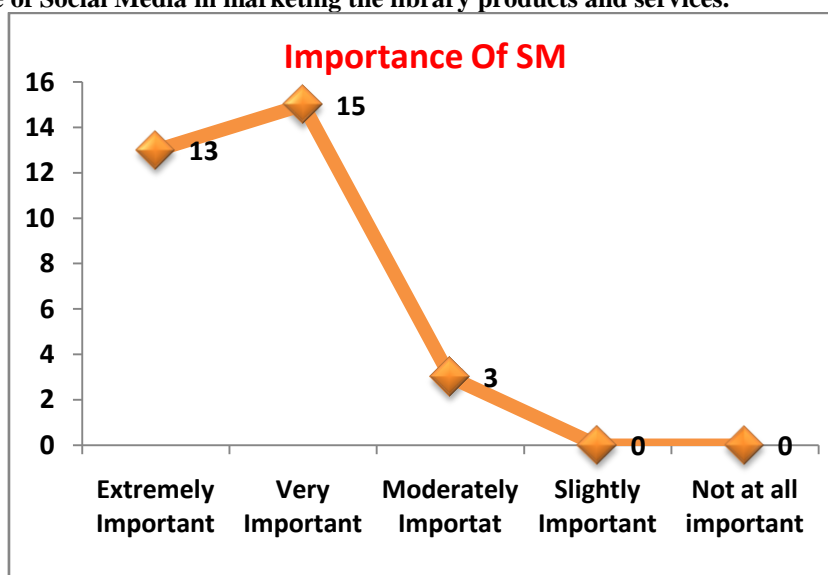
The above figure indicates how important the SM tools for marketing the library resources. Out of 48 respondents 13(27.08%) of them answered that the SM are extremely important, whereas 15(31.25%) of the respondents reported that very important, 3(6.25%) of them agreed SM are moderately important and none of the respondents said the SM are slightly and not at all important. From this study it was clear that the respondents believe that SM is playing an essential role in enhancing the library resources and services.

Advantages of using SM tools in enhancing the library resources and services

The applications of SM have expanded the growing esteem globally and it has been found that the library must consider marketing its services more recurrently through the SM, taking advantage of SM applications to develop access to its users and to support information services. Many researchers have discussed the significance of attractiveness of library services through SM applications such as wikis, Facebooks, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagam, blogs and RSS Feeds.

Advantages of SM	Respondents	%
Budget and time saving	23	47.91
Attract more users to the library	25	52.09
Enhance the library services	26	54.17
Provide 24*7 access	19	39.59
Connect users	27	56.25
Announce the new arrivals	22	45.83

The above table shows the importance of SM in enhancing the library resources. Out of 48 respondents 23(47.91%) of the respondents agreed that SM are important in the case of budge and time saving. Followed by 25(52.09%) of the respondents agreed that SM tools are important to attract more users in the library, 26(54.17%) respondents agreed for enhancing the library services, 19(39.59%) respondents reported that SM useful to provide 24*7 access, 27(56.25%) respondents agreed that to connect with users finally 22(45.83%) respondents said that SM are useful to announce the new arrivals.

Social Media activities used for marketing the library resources

Marketing through SM is an excellent strategy for conveying and advancing library services. "Marketing using SM can be a time and budget saving way to reach out to library users" (Landis, 2007). Studies shows that libraries seek to take benefit of the most superficial aspects of these applications. Libraries' main goal is to attract more users to make use of their resources and services. Academic libraries have recognized the

important of using SM tools in enhancing library services. Therefore, some of the libraries have responded to the quick development of the Internet in order to fulfill users' needs in the new era. SM is one of the high Web 2.0 technologies that have been included into library marketing efforts.

Activities	Respondents	%
Exhibit new arrivals	28	58.33
Sending alerts	19	39.59
Posting images of events, important days and programmes of library	24	50
Book discussions and communication	6	12.5
Research tips	14	29.16
Link to online resources	16	33.33

The above table presents the data of using SM applications for different activities regarding promoting the library services in the libraries. Majority of the respondents i.e. is out of 48 respondents 28(58.33%) respondents used SM applications to showcase their new arrivals, while 19(39.59%) used for sending alerts, followed by 24(50%) for posting images of events, important days and programs of library, 6(12.5%) respondents used for book discussions and communications, 14(29.16%) for research tips and 16(33.33%) used to link to online resources.

Social Media Tools
The SM supports the users in developing an online presence, which enable them to create a forum for discussion and to be aware of the services available in the academic libraries. Social networking can be an effective method for the library professionals to outreach their services and take care to respect the user's privacy and to offer equivalent exposure for all subject.
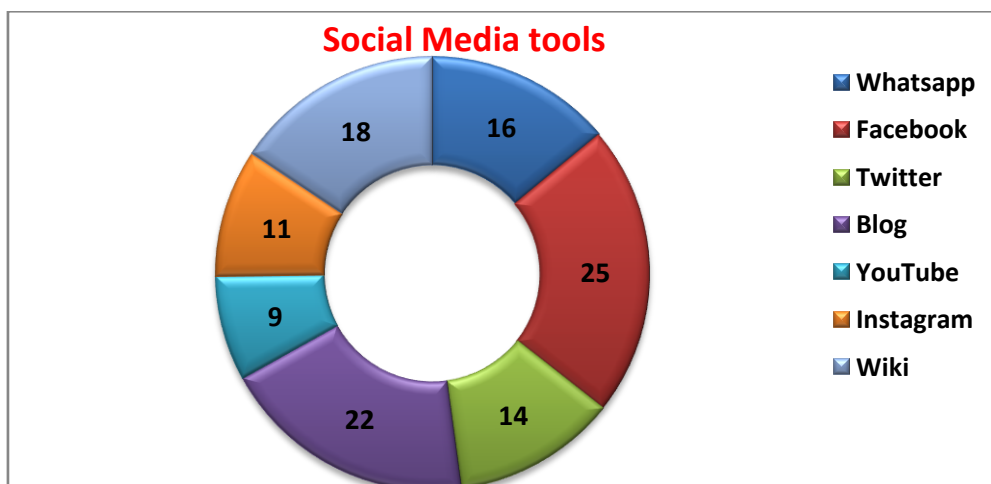
The outcome of the research showed that library professionals used different SM tools like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Wiki etc. for marketing their library products. Out of 48 respondents 16(33.33%) respondents used WhatsApp in marketing their products, followed by 25(52.09%) of them used Facebook, 14(29.17%) Twitter, 22(45.83%) Blog, 9(18.75%) YouTube, 11(22.91%) Instagram, 18(37.5%) Wikis.
The Facebook and the Blog were the most popular tools used by the librarians for marketing their library products.

The views of Librarians regarding the SM in using to market the library products and services

Statements	Strongly approve	%	Approve	%	Dis approve	%	Strongly disapprove	%
Enables to promote the library services	29	60.4	19	39.6	0	0	0	0
Assist the user to know the available services in the library	21	43.8	27	56.3	0	0	0	0
Motivate the user to assess the services	24	50	22	45.8	0	0	0	0
Updates the user with latest information in the library	32	66.7	16	33.3	0	0	0	0

The above table indicates the different views of librarians regarding SM, Majority of the respondents strongly approved the different views such as SM enables to promote the library services, assist the user to know

the available services in the library etc. Many of the respondents approved that SM helps to promote the services. All the library professionals have positive attitude and no one disapproved about using the use SM in promoting the library services.

Findings of the Study
1. Majority of the respondents have account in Social Media
2. 17 of the respondents agreed that they never used SM tools in promoting the library services.
3. Majority of the respondents agreed that now a days SM tools are very essential in enhancing the library services.
4. The respondents agreed that budget and time saving, 24*7 accesses, link to user are some of the advantages of the SM.
5. Most of the respondents responded that link to online resources, sending alerts, showcasing the new arrivals and communication and book arrivals are some of the important   SM activities promote the library products and services.
6. Facebook and blog are the most popular SM tools used by many of the library professional to promote the library services.
7. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed the statements of SM such as assist the users to know the latest services of the library, motivate the user to access the resources in the library.

Suggestions
All the librarians should use the different SM tools in promoting the library services.
The libraries should be updated with the latest SM tools with the aim of promoting the services.

IV. CONCLUSION
The findings of the study showed that Social Media tools play an essential role in promoting the library services. In this present scenario SM tools have been shaping and transforming the library services. Many studies suggest that the library professionals should constantly use the SM tools in marketing the services. SM applications are the new trend to attract the users and they showcase the resources and activities in the libraries.

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