

PERCEPTIONS, SATISFACTION AND DESIRED LIBRARY MARKETING TOOLS FOR USERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to explore the impact of various library marketing tools on users' perceptions, satisfaction and desires. The study sought to explore whether the marketing tools, improved library environment and better behavior of the library staff can fulfill the desired requirements and attract users towards library and its services. This article addresses the importance of online marketing tools like social media, websites/web portals, lib-guides and offline marketing tools like information literacy, liaison service and print materials as vital activities in libraries. The survey method was used to collect data and the tool employed in the survey was questionnaire. Moreover, quantitative paradigm was adopted throughout the survey. Data was collected from the five campuses of a semi government educational institution for investigation. Findings revealed that behavior of the library staff, environment of the library; infrastructure and latest marketing tools have a profound impact on the users. Based on these findings, some recommendations were made in the end.

INTRODUCTION

Uninteresting and dull, complicated and scary: is how majority of the users view about academic libraries. Students have various perceptions on libraries based on their personal experiences and general views that they have heard or seen. Some have developed stereotypes about the libraries through electronic and print media. These stereo types have strong impact on the minds of the users. To talk about Pakistani education system, students are not library oriented. The reason is that our education system is divided into three major sectors: private system, public system and madrassa (religious study) system. There are libraries in elite private schools which are quite few in number whereas majority of the public sector schools are devoid of libraries. As far as madrassas are concerned they do have libraries but no marketing tools or techniques are used in these types of libraries. This in turn results in a huge gap not only in between the rich and poor but also between the students of high cognitive abilities and average students. Library is considered to be the hub of knowledge and a well-organized library in any educational institution shows the intensity of creating higher order critical thinking and enhancing of research productivity. At the same time library can facilitate students in the best possible manner and can help the students/users to change their preconceived notions about the library and its services. The researcher is mainly concerned to explore whether the libraries can bridge the gap between the user's perceptions and the desires followed by the users' satisfaction depends on the library marketing tools. Our dilemma is how to break away from the stereotype and, at the same time, make the students aware of the library services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present research are:

1. To investigate how the online marketing tools can fulfill the desired requirement of users for learning purposes?
2. To investigate how the perceptions of the users can be formulated or improved through offline marketing tools?
3. To investigate how can the users get enough satisfaction by the improved library environment?
4. To investigate whether the library staff has an impact through their attitude/ behavior on users.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the present day of growing competition, the key factor of success is facilitating service quality, and majority of those who are doing research completely agree that the quality of services provided by the libraries is the most significant tool in reshaping marketing and business strategy (Nejati&Nejati, 2008). According to Folk and Lancaster (1976), marketing is a systematic process which is a combination of planning and concentration. It concentrates on customers' needs and their satisfaction.

The increasing significance of the online marketing tools and the focal emphasis on service quality has gone far beyond the theoretical discussion (Oluseye, Kolade, & Mercy, 2011). The importance of the relationship of library and the users are interrelated since the establishment of the first library. Ewers and Austen stressed on the client oriented libraries and wrote that librarians want the libraries to be client oriented then they must understand what the needs of their clients are, what should be the conducive environment for the users, what should be the strengths and resources and the social factors that influence users. In order to be quite competitive in business world the libraries must identify its strengths and must train their staff the more focused on client and marketing. Library cannot progress with the same pace as the libraries of the developing countries are progressing until and unless it focuses on the needs of the users. Lewis & Mitchell in 1990 threw light on the importance of the role of service quality. They said that the importance of the service quality for the user satisfaction and organizational performance cannot be denied.

K.G Saur in "library management and services" sheds light on the concept of "born digital" users. The libraries must create the space both physical and virtual in order to fulfill perceptions, satisfaction and desires of these born digital users. Transformations must be done in order to accommodate them. Information literacy should be increased through latest marketing tools like lib-guides, opacs, digitization and selective dissemination of information services. Joseph & Joseph in 1997 highlighted that improvement in service quality means improvement in the library's competitive position. In order to differentiate themselves from the competitors in the market place, the educational libraries need to improve their service quality. Managers of many service organizations have vividly concluded that the quality is one of the key factors in contributing to the success of organization (Mefford, 1993). Providing quality service as per users' expectations is considered as an essential strategy for success and growth in today's world of competition. Most of the research on service quality "focused on determining what it means to customers and developed strategies to meet customers satisfaction" (Hadikoemoro, 2001, p. 48). Various research studies (Ameen, 2006b; Haider, 2004) indicate that library services are not usercentered, rather collection centered. It has been observed that libraries are usually concerned about the collection of books rather on the desired expectations and satisfaction of the users.

Understanding the perceptions, satisfaction and desired marketing tools of the users is a necessity for providing high quality services according to the desired needs of the users. Due to the growing demands of various marketing tools as lib guides, liaison, digital libraries etc. it opened a new horizon and encouragement to the funding bodies. Now funding bodies are compelling library administrators to satisfy and meet the expectations of different user group including faculty, staff, graduates, undergraduates, post graduates.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was used to get the desired data. Quantitative paradigm has been used to investigate the said matter. A questionnaire consisting of 20 items with Five Likert Scale was made. It focused on the perceptions of the users about the library, their satisfaction level for the current marketing tools, and their desired level for the library services. 50 electronic questionnaires were sent to the users of library in five campuses under study. Five campuses of an institution situated in different cities of Pakistan and the students who were studying there was the population of the present research. The researcher used convenient sampling for the study. All five campuses were different in their structure, area and infrastructure. Two campuses were situated in developed cities while the three campuses were situated in comparatively less developed. Accordingly their libraries are providing services differently. The questionnaire was sent to the students of all five campuses to dig out their perceptions, satisfaction and desires related to different library marketing tools used in the libraries.

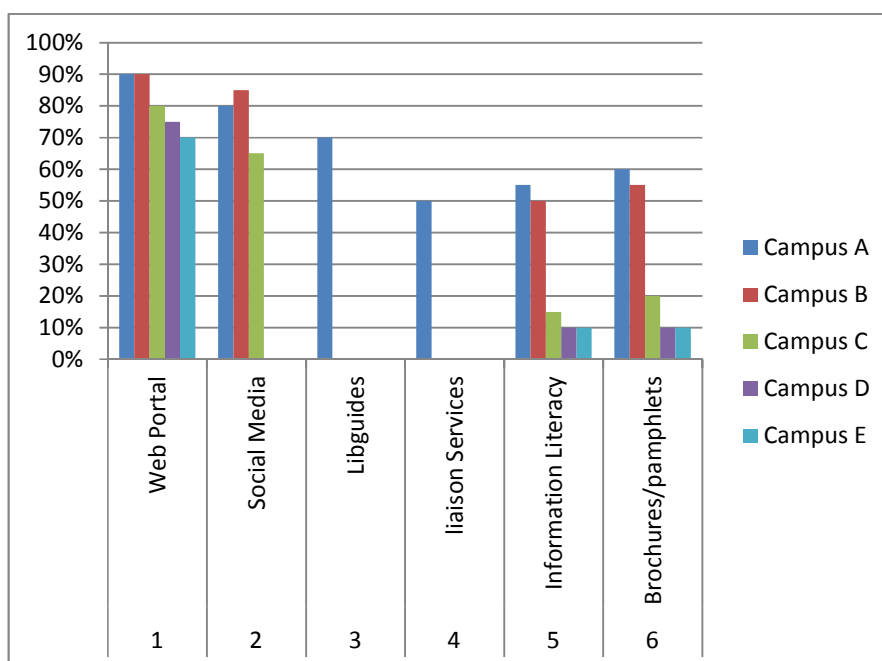
RESULTS

The overall result revealed that the campuses situated in the developed cities have more resources, marketing tools, trained staff and better environment as compared to the campuses situated in the less developed cities. Those campuses which were situated in the less developed cities were generally meeting the minimum requirements of their user's perceptions, satisfaction and for desired marketing library tools. On the contrary, the libraries of two campuses that were situated in the developed cities of the country were fulfilling the requirements of their users' satisfaction, perceptions and desired marketing tools. These two campuses were meeting the maximum requirements of their users by employing the latest marketing tools to facilitate them.

Table 1: Campuses' responses

Sr. No.	Marketing tools	Campus	Campus	Campus	Campus	Campus
		A	B	C	D	E
1	Library Web Portal	90%	95%	0%	0%	0%
2	Social Media	80%	85%	65%	0%	0%
3	Lib-guides	70%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4	liaison Services	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5	Information Literacy	55%	50%	15%	10%	10%
6	Brochures/pamphlets	60%	55%	20%	10%	10%

Figure 1: Graph of Campus Responses



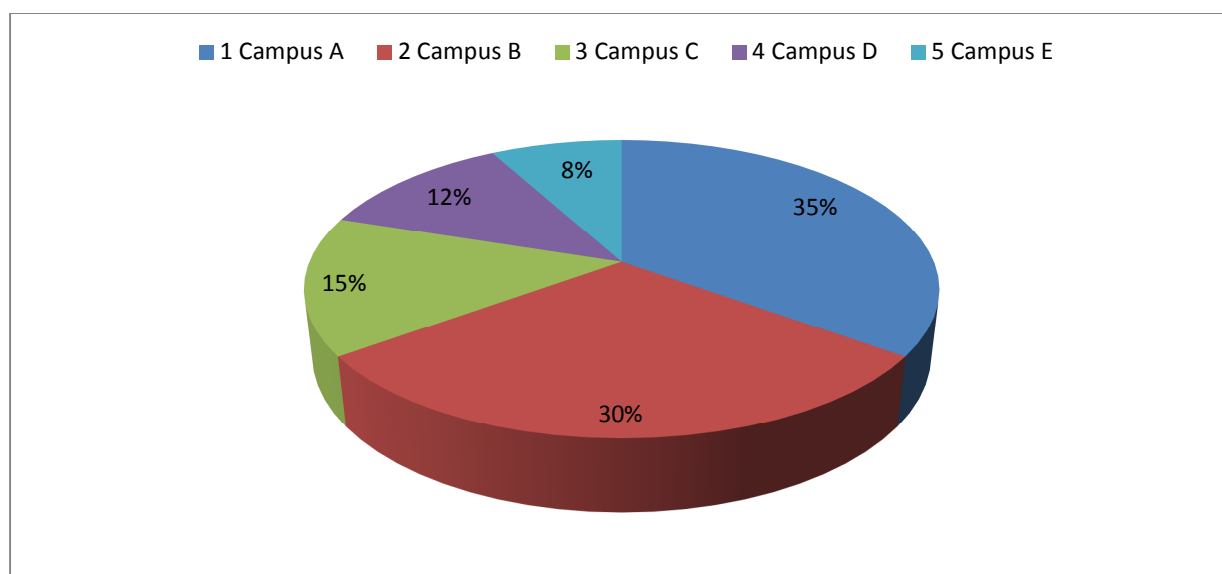
In the above two figures the responses of the representatives of different campuses' have been shown. These results have been derived on the basis of the questions that were asked about the library marketing tools. Campus A was at the top in the use of modern library marketing tools and techniques so meeting the users' satisfaction at the maximum. We can clearly see that "campus A" was managing all the desired library marketing tools and techniques unlike all other campuses which were unaware of these services or are not employing these tools. Web portal of library is a key marketing instrument for any of the institution but here we found that three of the libraries did not have their own portals but relying on the institute's portal. Two campuses did not have their accounts on social media and they were not marketing their activities through the social media web sites like Facebook, twitter or blogs etc. It was found that four campuses did not start the lib-guide and liaison services. Two campuses were conducting information literacy programs to some extent and others were below average in this area as well. As far as

printed marketing materials are concerned two leading campuses maintained their better standards as compared to the other campuses of less developed cities as they were actively printing their brochures, pamphlets, leaflets etc.

Table 2: Marketing services and user's satisfaction in percentage

Sr. No.	Campuses	percentage	Strength
1	Campus A	35%	3000
2	Campus B	30%	2500
3	Campus C	15%	1000
4	Campus D	12%	1200
5	Campus E	8%	900
6	Total	100%	8600

Figure2: Marketing services and user's satisfaction in percentage pie Chart



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The present study has been an effort on the researcher's part to analyze the situation of the users' perception, satisfaction and desired library marketing tools employed in the libraries of five campuses of Semi govt. institution in Pakistan. Being the researcher and the citizen of Pakistan I hope to promote different library marketing tools for the "born digital" users first and foremost in Pakistan and secondly, the libraries of high schools in Pakistan were the first choice of focus.

The results of the study indicated that though the library marketing tools were present in different campuses yet a significant lack of formal training among library staff in order to deal with the users was found. It was found that two libraries were well equipped that were situated in the developed cities while the rest were less equipped as far as latest marketing tools were concerned. The findings correlate with the fact that latest marketing tools, well behavior of library staff, and quality of services provided and quality environment of library all together can formulate users' perceptions, satisfaction and desires for the different marketing tools for users'.

It was strongly suggested that the staff of library should get a formal training before joining library. They must provide the quality services to the users. Though the users are “born digital” and the use of e libraries is growing more and more yet the interaction of the users with the library staff is undeniable. Moreover, it was stressed that the library should provide such a favorable environment for the users where they can sit and seek knowledge at their maximum.

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