Modeling a social media-based solution for Marketing Library Services in Sri Lanka: A User-Librarian Collaborative Model (ULCM)

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Abstract : The use of social media platforms is in a very low capacity in the provision of their services in university libraries of Sri Lanka. Though a very limited number of university libraries utilize social media concepts, they do not use it as a marketing tool. The library is the place where all new information and knowledge is deposited. However, most of the students are unaware of or have little knowledge of what is available in the library. Social media can be used to increase the awareness of the library's services among university students. This paper attempted to introduce a social media-based solution for marketing library services in Sri Lanka. To support this, a research study was carried out to look into the possibilities of using social media to market university libraries. A survey method was adapted and questionnaire was used to collect the data from the academic library professionals working under higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. A total of 123 library professionals (N) were invited to respond to a survey questionnaire that was given to them through email. The totally field completed surveys were returned by 113 library professionals (n) who work at various libraries. The study identified Facebook as the most important and powerful tool used by the library professionals in Sri Lanka. Facebook was also revealed to be the most effective platform for marketing university libraries. This positive attitude of academics on Facebook can be converted into a usable tool to market the services and resources in the libraries. A User-Librarian collaborative model which can be implemented to market university libraries in Sri Lanka through social media platforms was suggested as a result of the research findings of this study. The proposed model, connects the major parties of the library, users, and library management, efficiently and effectively to function daily activities of the system smoothly. Further, it would address the basic requirements that should be fulfilled and satisfied by both parties in the process. Additionally, the model provides some functions from both points of view.

Key Words: Social Media, Collaborative Model, University Academics, Facebook, Library Marketing, Awareness, University Libraries, User-librarian

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has affected differently the academic, professional, and day-to-day life activities of the professionals who are working in university libraries all over the world. The role of the library staff has changed as a result of this, and it has created a vast number of new duties to understand, implement, and operate in libraries to serve the users. On the other hand, education has transformed to digital

mode and one of the major aspects of it is information and knowledge management. In this context, social media has become much popular knowledge and information sharing mode of the society. Most of us are familiar with social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Linked In, etc. These platforms help us connect with friends and encourage knowledge-sharing and are all about personal, human-to-human interaction. And these tools are also very common in modern libraries as a tool to be used in marketing their services and disseminating information (Yi, 2013).

Evan (1999) identified a library collaborative model as a method that can be used by the librarians to promote library resources among the users of the library. Vygotsky (1978) defined the process of collaboration as a construction method which is a cumulative effect of a series of discussions among the members of a group. This can be considered as a collaborative model that is ideal for university libraries in Sri Lanka to market their services. The relationship between the two parties can be built up using different communication techniques such as emailing, text messaging, and calling over the phone, etc. Since most of the university libraries in Sri Lanka provide introduction programs and, comparatively, individual-based services to their customers Wijayasundara (2008), students' library collaboration projects are functioning at a minimum level. Here, the study focuses on the following objectives (1) to look into possibilities of using social media to market university libraries and, (2) To examine the services that can be provided using social media for the library clientele and (3). To propose a User-Librarian Collaborative Model (ULCM) using social media in Marketing the Library Services in Sri Lanka.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research studies on social media and universities have focused primarily on the type of social media channels used by university students and teachers for their academic purposes, rather than on how the activity has been adopted in universities. There are, however, some viewpoints and research discussions through some extended links on the adaptation of social media as a medium for the marketing of libraries in universities. Serantes (2009) categorized the relationship between the library and social media under three perspectives. The first viewpoint explores how to implement

Web 2.0 directly. The second was based on designing Library 2.0, considering the missions and activities of the library and establishing an independent concept. Third, consideration was on the method for using the Library 2.0, which would promote several ideas for adapting and understanding social media as a marketing tool. According to the Carlsson's (2012) description, Library 2.0 offers two options: to conform to technological adjustments or to make them obsolete. Carlsson (2012) described libraries as active technology co-constructors.

Given the diverse requirements of catering to the users, librarians and practitioners use different software applications and resources such as YouTube, Facebook, flicker, wikis, blogs (Hinchliffe & Leon, 2011; Moulaison & Corrado, 2011). Xia (2009) studied the use of social media, gave special importance to Facebook, research institute, and university libraries as a marketing tool, and concluded that web 2.0 tools are more effective for this. Constantinides and Stagno (2011) reviewed the study based on a capacity of social media for use in higher education marketing in a national survey. This was conducted by using the prospective university students in the Netherlands, to investigate how social media tools help them to make decisions on the selection of study programs at their chosen university and eventually deciding that the idea of social media should be more widely used as a marketing tool in higher education. However, they argued that the use of this approach would be a reasonable solution as a secondary function in contrast with conventional approaches and proposed creating of marketing tools with different possibilities and opportunities.

Yi (2014) examined the approach of academic libraries in Australia to Web 2.0 tools as a marketing aid and its efficacy and found many factors that had an impact on the perceptions of web 2.0 tools. It was intended to identify the attitudes and ability of Librarians on Web 2.0 resources as a marketing tool. It stressed and recommended that appropriate and sophisticated resources with external and internal demands be used to meet the increasing needs of various parties in the library community. He also described the role of librarians in marketing their services as a key factor in performance. As an example, he stated that some librarians use Web 2.0 resources to market library services and items. The author also discussed the major effect of structural changes on service centers such as libraries, archives, and museums.

Mundt (2013) conducted a study to assess the social media marketing performance of public and academic libraries in Germany and described Facebook as the most influential medium to be used as a marketing tool. It also listed some disadvantages, such as lack of competence of current employees, issues of privacy, and general public reluctance on social media issues. He also stressed the need for universal legislation on the use of social media for future developments. According to him, only one-third of libraries have established and enforced policies on their scope. Khan and Bhatti (2012) carried out a case study based on data from Pakistan to

identify possible opportunities to encourage for the use of social media in libraries and information centers. In this research study, they sought to explore various social media applications as a library marketing tool and to discover the favorable attitudes of the library community on the use of social media sites in the library environment to attract web users to remote learning academies. They found a range of issues related to the adaptation of the idea of social media in libraries in Pakistan, such as lack of awareness and experience, lack of training opportunities, privacy issues, slow speed of internet facilities, lack of infrastructure facilities, and frequent power failures. They, therefore, suggested sufficient training in social media and their relevant applications be given as a requirement for the use of library services. They also highlighted the creation of a marketing strategy for use of social media tools for promoting resources such as news and updates, web services, and fund-raising initiatives.

Amarakoon (2012) conducted limited research using questionnaire technique with the participation of chief librarians on their use of social media and its use in library marketing in university libraries in Sri Lanka and concluded that Facebook was the most effective platform to be used as a tool. It was found that the attitude of the librarians was positive since most of them were well aware of Facebook resources and apps but restricted to Facebook.

Ezeani & Igwesi, (201) examined the Nigerian scenario of the relationship between social media skills and social networking for library services and suggested the use of social media in libraries as a marketing medium for libraries and related services. They pointed out that this would be a challenge in Nigeria as operational personnel does not have sufficient training and experience, technophobia, bandwidth issues, and problems with power supply. Chu & Du (2013) attempted to investigate the use, extent, expectations of managers in university libraries and higher education institutions on social networking applications in Hong Kong and concluded that Facebook and Twitter are the most prominent outlets with positive responses to them. However, the key obstacle to this adaptation was described as the hesitancy between users and staff. Also, it should be noted that this study has provided further insight into social media applications.

Taylor and Francis Group (2014) carried out a study on the use of social media in library environments to analyze the current situation and potential prospects, using datasets that were gathered through focus group meetings and conversations between librarians in the United Kingdom, the United States and India. Over 70% of libraries use social media resources for their everyday work, 60% maintain accounts on social media sites for three or more years, and 30% of librarians send at least one message on social media every day. This has also shown that Facebook and Twitter are the most effective networks in the world and that there are opportunities for visual outlets such as YouTube, Interest, and Snap Chat to develop. They described the distance between the library community and web publishers as an obstacle to

the use of social media. Besides, restrictions on the usage of social media platforms with various goals and strategies have been established and these limitations are expected to change rapidly. The research study, on the other hand, highlighted the positive potential of social media as a strategy for increasing resource demand by connecting bigger library populations within their faculties.

According to the report of the American Library Association (2012), social media tools are being used in events such as gaming nights, to give messages to users and to provide links to articles. These tools would help by providing information among the community in an efficient manner and build-up connections within the community as well as with other social networks. Further, they are very helpful in providing answers to frequently asked questions about the services and resources in a library.

Kuhu and Zohar (1995) claimed knowledge acquisition and exploitation as social processes in which someone can argue that the rapid development in social media concepts would lead to increase tools for acquiring knowledge. There would be an explosion of internet-based services through social media in the 21st century (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). They further mentioned that various aspects such as awareness, information acquisition, purchase behaviors, and evaluation of consumer behavior would be a major factors in this case. To understand the users' requirements, there should be a better methodology for the communication process between librarians and the users (Tapscott and Williams, 2006). Finally, it can be concluded that there is a greater challenge for conventional management services of libraries with the development of technological aspects. Therefore, there is a much felt need to conduct more research studies on the role of librarians and their applications in this information era.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher obtained the names and e-mail addresses of all academic library professionals' from available websites based on their availability. Upon the selection of participants, 123 library Professionals (N) were asked to complete the survey questionnaire sent through email. 113 library professionals (n) who work at various libraries were approached and returned the fully field completed questionnaires. The descriptive survey methodology was employed in the study. The overall sample included 70(61.9%) females and 43(38.1%) males. Non-probability sampling methods were utilized for selecting the participants in a non-random manner. The non-probability purposive sampling procedure was used to select the respondents since it is more common in business research, mostly in marketing research in social sciences and inherent characteristics such as economical, faster, and beneficial in empirical research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). The type of non-probability sampling method used in this research was the convenience sample method. SPSS was used to analyze the data. One-way Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) technique was used to compare three or more samples using F-distribution and to verify the statistically significant

differences between the means of three or independent groups. In addition, Pearson Correlation Coefficient (PCC) was used to analyze the importance of the use of social media by connecting demographic and library variables. The main focus was on the frequencies, percentages, correlations, and cross-tabulations which are presented in the form of tables, graphs, and diagrams.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Participants' comments regarding the possibility of using social media sites or resources to market Sri Lankan university libraries were gathered through their responses to the questionnaire. Also, as another objective, the study tried to explore the resources that could be offered to the community or library users by integrating the library system with social media. While not all social media platforms are in an active mood or could be used realistically, the data collected may be based on the knowledge and experience of the respondents.

Accordingly, the responses regarding different platforms would be analyzed as follows.

Table: 01 what ways to use in the library setting

Type of Social Media	What ways to use in the library setting	Co-relationship
Wikis	-As a platform for creating collaborations. -Encouraging ideas, and sharing work	Co-relationship between the response to this factor and the work experience of library professionals (F=4.904, p<0.01).
Facebook	-Facebook can easily be used to promote libraries. -The probability of using the Facebook platform as a marketing tool -To maintain a good link between the library and its customers -Used for making the library more visible -Used to market events and resources -To keep up to date with services and library products	Co-relationship between the response to this factors and Work experience of the respondents (F=3.962, p<0.01). Co-relationship between the response to this factors and respondents experienced the use of social media (F=4.455, p<0.01)
Blogs	-To encourage and publicize programs and innovative resources. -Used as a platform to promote and publicize the programs and new tools of the library system. -Quickly to update details to users. To keep connect with developments in the field of librarianship.	There is a positive response to this factor and experience in the use of social media by library practitioners (F=3.608, p<0.01).

Data was collected under the question which is the effective level of the platform can be used to market library resources". The collected data was analyzed under different types of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Wikis, etc.).

Table: 02 Co-relations of the effective level of social media and gender, age, working experience, and profession

			Face book advertisin g	Twitter	Blogs	Tagging	Wikis	Podcasts	Instant massagin g	You tube
Gender	Pearson C	1	0.02838	0.010392	0.079917	0.032803	0.12647	0.08506	0.114406	0.006702
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.765404	0.913008	0.400105	0.730158	0.181938	0.370372	0.227588	0.943836
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
Age categ	Pearson C	1	-.457**	-.187*	-0.087	-.335**	-.363**	-.447**	-.331**	-.328**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0.047	0.357	0	0	0	0	0
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
Working e	Pearson C	1	-.445**	-0.178	-.191*	-.341**	-.271**	-.459**	-.292**	-.422**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0.059	0.043	0	0.004	0	0.002	0
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
Profession	Pearson C	1	0.181	-0.076	0.006	.359**	.254**	.384**	.234*	.262**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.055	0.421	0.949	0	0.007	0	0.012	0.005
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It is clear from Table: 02 that there was no significant relationship ($p > 0.01$) between respondents' gender and answers of the effectiveness level of social media platforms. There was a positive and significant ($p < 0.01$) relationship between respondents' age and answers of the effectiveness level of social media platforms. Especially, wikis, podcasts, instant messaging, and YouTube. Further it indicates that there was a positive and significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) between the working experience of respondents and answers to the effective level of Facebook advertising, tagging, podcasts, and YouTube. There was no relationship between working experience and answers to the effective level of social media platforms such as Twitter, blogs, wikis, and instant messages. There was a significant relationship that can be seen between profession and answers to the tagging and podcasts, whereas Pearson's co-relations are at < 0.01 level.

V. DISCUSSION

According to the results, the Facebook platform can be considered the most important tool and can be used to keep up to date with the services and resources provided. As a second theme, it has been reported that users of the library can provide their feedback on library information through the Blogs platform. Furthermore, it has been reported that, by using blogs, libraries can promote their resources and services and use blogs as a medium for advertisement. According to

the details, the picture of the library can be uploaded using the flicker as a tool. The professionals discussed that an instant messaging tool could be used to communicate between the staff of the library and the clientele as a social networking service. Further, they had mentioned that the libraries can market their collection of resources through YouTube, it can be communicated efficiently with the clients using Twitter, RSS provides facilities for promoting distance learning, library online catalogs can be developed and tagged using the social bookmarking websites and LinkedIn can be used for professional purposes in the libraries as specialized services provided by different social media platforms.

Based on these findings, the following User- Librarian Collaborative Model (ULCM) can be proposed as a possible tool to be used in marketing university libraries in Sri Lanka.

Dimensions

In designing the user dimensions of the model, it was, totally, based on the review of literature, findings of the research, and current management practices in the Sri Lankan university library profession. The dimensions of the librarians were designed using the empirical research findings. The figure shows the foundation of the dimensions of the proposed model.

Figure 1: Method of identifying the dimensions

User- Librarian Collaborative Model (ULCM)

The model represents a User-Librarian Collaborative Model (ULCM) which can be applied to market university libraries in Sri Lanka (figure.2). From the users 'perspective, interactivity, attractiveness, satisfaction, availability, effectiveness and efficiency, friendliness, satisfaction, fulfillment, and methodology to solve problems in day-to-day uses of libraries are the main requirements. Further, librarians want a methodology to maintain the libraries with the requirements of effectiveness, efficiency, feedback, e-reputation, modern impression, and motivation towards library development. Therefore, in supporting the above two points of view, social media platforms can be used as a tool to market libraries in the following model.

Figure 2: User-Librarian Collaborative Model (ULCM)

Functions

The proposed collaborative model, mainly, performs four basic functions.

1. User Engagement (UE)
2. Discovery and Feedback (DF)
3. Development and Management (DM)
4. Teaching and Learning (TL)

User Engagement (UE)

University libraries are considered as the heart of the university community. Pedramnia et al. (2012), further, assured the view of Ranganathan (1892-1972), a widely known philosopher in Library and Information Science, who considered the user of the library as the core of all libraries activities. Dahan et al. (2015) stressed that libraries should

provide the right information to the right user at the right time. It means that the main purpose of any library should be serving and satisfying its user community. Therefore, libraries should utilize the maximum of their resources towards the user community. The main function of a library is to promote its resources among users. Therefore, the User Engagement (UE) part of any collaborative model in libraries is assumed as a main function of the model. To accomplish the requirements of library users, social media can be utilized for customer services. It is suggested that there is a possibility to employ social media tools as a marketing model to provide answers for frequently asked questions. Sugarman and Demetracopoulos (2001) have identified reference interviews and bibliographic instruction as the most pervasive model of collaboration in librarianship. These details can easily be provided to the user community through social media tools and platforms in a good manner.

Discovery and Feedback (DF)

The proposed model suggests that social media can be used as a maintaining connection between the library and the user. Among the resources of the library, catalogs and databases are very important. Through these resources, the user can explore the world. Therefore, libraries can be marketed through social media platforms in discovering library information. The model expects that getting feedback about their services is a very important consequence in the development of the library system. In different social media platforms, plenty of tools are there which are capable enough to get feedback from users about their satisfaction with the services provided. For example, social media tools such as Facebook can be used to build up the connection between the library and its users. Further, the wikis platform can be promoted to share the ideas and scholarly works among the user community and the library.

Development and Management (DM)

Among the functions of this model, Development and Management function is very important. The proposed model explains that social media can be used as a potentially powerful management tool. Especially, among the social media tools flicker can be used as a potential source for acquisition and upload library image. This function of the model aims to improve the image of the library and to enhance the e- reputation.

Teaching and Learning (TL)

Since the model would be implemented in university libraries in Sri Lanka, the teaching and learning function is significant. Especially, it would create a bridge between the library and university students through the programs such as information literacy which is defined as the ability to locate, evaluate and use information effectively (Diep and Nahl, 2011). It develops the abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and improving academic achievements through different types of activities such as active learning approaches, information problem solving, and evaluating information (Diep and Nahl, 2011). Since several activities are conducted on user education, teaching, and learning, social media tools can be used for this. The function of social media on literacy education has been proved by previous studies in the world. There is a high intention among the students to turn to social media to find information about what they want. Social media tools can be utilized as fairly easy to access, similar to online sources, and quite convenient and user friendly similar to human sources. Therefore, the model would provide guidelines to use social media tools to market university teaching and related activities.

a. Interactivity

Interactivity points out the degree of interaction between service providers and users. It helps the users to grasp and track the procedures on their required services (Obi, 2009). Despite the lack of direct human interaction in e-service processes, assistance could be offered to citizens by a

telephone call or an electronic mail service to handle problems and answers in any situation.

b. Attractiveness

One of the main objectives of university libraries is to attract university students to utilize various products and services. The proposed model would help attract the users' through social media platforms. According to the librarians' perceptions revealed through the current study, Facebook can be considered as the most attractive social media platform among Sri Lankan university students. This gives the users to utilize designed social media web sites for their educational requirements. So, the attractiveness of the social media tools is very important for the success in marketing approaches. Therefore, the proposed model suggests that social media tools should be designed to obtain users' attraction.

c. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is integrated with the librarian's perspective and the user's perspective. It is a judgment that would be made by the consumers on their pleasure and displeasure about the product or the service (Moliner, 2007; Masrek, 2009). This definition implies that service quality and user satisfaction are mutually integrated into two concepts. So, the model suggests that both parties: librarians and users should satisfy with the usability of social media tools for marketing in the phase of introduction and implementation.

d. Availability

It would enhance the users' loyalty if the service provider gives availability for continuous online service (Wachter, 2002). Further, system availability plays a vital role and it is a very significant element that may increase the satisfaction of the user to ensure whether the technical functions of the website are working properly or not at any time. Therefore, it is very important to maintain a guaranteed method with university library websites to check the continuity of the operation of the website to ensure their service quality. The model suggests that availability is most significant when implementing social media marketing into library operations.

e. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Gupta (2003) stated that marketing tools would help the service providers as an opportunity to check the effectiveness and efficiency of their services. Therefore, this model suggests that effectiveness and efficiency should be concerned when marketing libraries with social media tools. Since users, frequently, expect more effective and efficient services from the library, librarians should be more concerned about these marketing strategies as well as users' expectations when they design to use specific social media tools. Further, it would help libraries to improve their image and e-reputation and get attract more users.

f. Feedback and problem-solving

The concept of the use of social media can be considered as a new way to provide services through innovative technologies with user oriented two-way interaction and communication of

information. The participation of users can be controlled via a mechanism of getting feedbacks about the services and these suggestions would help maintain and develop the services orientations (Esani and Igwesi, 2012). Therefore, the model suggests that it has to add users 'feedback for future developments. From the librarians 'perspective, frequent feedbacks would be collected from the users and try to satisfy their requirements accordingly.

Application of the Model

The proposed model would be implemented at the University of Colombo which comprises nine faculties and six institutes and one campus. The students of the faculty of Arts will be used as the population to implement this project initially and the services will be extended to other faculties gradually. This project will also aim to provide facilities to all academic staff in the relevant departments in the faculty. Facebook is identified as the most influential social media platform among the students of universities in Sri Lanka, at the initial stage, it would, only, use Facebook as a marketing tool to market services of libraries. It would suggest improving the system with more social media tools in the future after frequent verifications by both parties. The basic requirements of the students' change with their faculties and degree programs.

The proposed model suggests (See figure: 3) to issue a Facebook account for every student according to the faculty, degree program, and the year of registration at the process of registration initially. These accounts would be carefully handled by the administrative officers in the university library to maintain their sole authority. Further, several Facebook groups among the students according to the above criterion. These groups would be used to share information among them. For example, in the case of new resource acquisition, the details about it can be shared among relevant user groups. In the case of a new book arrival, the message can be posted on the relevant group to notify it. Further, if a user realizes the advantage of a particular resource such as a book or a journal, he or she can suggest buying it to the library by posting it or adding a text on his or her wall. It means that this kind of model would be much beneficial to both parties. It would further clarify user engagement for future developments. Both user and administration would be entertained by the privilege to provide feedback on services and developments. This feedbacks can be posted by the user on their walls and the administration can post their views on respective groups. These would be helpful and much worthy for future developments and proper management processes.

Figure 3: Application of the model

VI.CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to identify a social media-based solution for Marketing Library Services in Sri Lanka. Through the findings of the study, Facebook platform was identified as the most significant and powerful social media tool which might be utilized to promote university libraries in Sri Lanka. In line with the analysis and findings, social media platforms like wikis, podcasts, tagging, and blogs were recognized as not effective social media tools in marketing libraries. Among the objectives of marketing libraries using social media, two functions were identified as very important: firstly, social media as a tool to improve user satisfaction and, secondly, to promote the use of services. It means the professional's idea on social media was that there is a possibility to market libraries by using these platforms. And also, social media platforms can be used to reach out and interact with potential users, to improve the image of the library, and to use as a tool for e-reputation. Usage of social media in marketing library resources is widely considered throughout the world. The model will bridge the long-existing gap between modern digital era needs and the traditional facilities available in the university library. It will help overcome the issues related to the traditional usage of library services.

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