

# Possibilities of Using WhatsApp for Marketing of Library and Information Services

## Abstract

Information Communication Technology is playing a major role in transmitting idea, thought and information between one to another. Social networking websites are the best example of communication network and it is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users. WhatsApp is a free instant messenger application that works across multiple platforms. It allows users to send text messages to each other for free. WhatsApp helps in transferring the data in different modes like text messages, pictures, audio and videos. Equipping WhatsApp, a library can effectively market Library and can explore its information services. The librarians must keep up with technical development happening in the world and can employ various social networking tools in the marketing operations of the library and its services. This will make their user more aware about the importance of information in various situations of life.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Information marketing, Information services, WhatsApp.

## Introduction

Now days Information Communication Technology is playing a major role in transmitting idea, thought and information between one to another and understanding through the interaction. There are various tools for communication that establish through the network, web technologies are creating more friendly, social and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information and one of such Social networking websites is a good example of communication network and it is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users.

The history of social networking tools began to emerge in the late nineties and its honor goes to SixDegrees.com (1997) they were the first site recognized for social networking on the Internet. After that, a number of social networking websites were developed such as (Orkut, MySpace, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter). Social networks create a virtual world, but the survival of any social network and its continuation depends on its unique service and friendly features that makes it better than others. The basic features of social networking sites are sharing service multimedia such as images, audio tracks, video clips, and on the other side it provides option to create groups that associate multiple users of similar ideas and trends.

## Review of Literature

A review of related literature provides an opportunity to assess the quality and quantity of literature generated on the theme. One of the main objectives of the literature survey was to understand the basic trends and growth in accepting marketing concepts in the library and information service, and product environment. Another important objective was to uncover related work on the research study. And the third one was to compile a comprehensive bibliography of available literature, so as to make it available for further research. Research papers on marketing of information concept have been published in different journals and other media of publication across the world.

Sewa Singh and Satinderjeet conducted a case study in Guru Nanak Dev University Library to evaluate the extent of marketing activities/process to satisfy needs and wants of users. Data collected through a questionnaire from the reference librarian for identifying the extent and level of use of marketing activities for promoting the use of its resources and services.



**Sanjay Kumar Dongre**  
Assistant Librarian,  
Bastar University,  
Jagdalpur, Chattisgarh, India

Kendadamath in a paper discussed and emphasized the need for the adoption of marketing approach by the university libraries to augment their financial resources and exploit new information technology to provide better information support to the users. The study highlighted the marketing concept and its various activities and how these activities can be successfully applied in the marketing of library and information products and services in university libraries.

Panday in a survey of M.S University of Baroda explored the feasibility of marketing library information services and products. The data collected from the users through a well structured questionnaire. The survey revealed that almost all the respondents depend upon the library for satisfying their information requirements.

Morei of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Library, Aurangabad with the objective to assess users needs in changing information landscapes about the products and services. The data was collected from various types of users through a well structured questionnaire. The study revealed that library developed products and services according to the needs expressed by their users.

Kaul and Rani had undertaken a study to assess the attitude of users towards the marketing of information services and products of university libraries of Punjab and Chandigarh.

Dineshan Koovakkai et.al. conducted a study to determine the marketing possibilities of some of the information products and services like bibliography, research in progress bulletin, abstracts of articles, copying of full text/document delivery service and current awareness bulletin.

Carole examined the increasing necessity for co-operation and compromise between library services and marketing.

Sen conducted an exploratory research as part of a study into the value and relevance of market orientation as a strategic option for library managers. The aim of the study was to define the concept of market orientation relative to the library sector.

### **History and Definition of Marketing of Library and Information services (LIS)**

At the end of the 1960s, the world famous marketing author Philip Kotler and his colleague, Sidney Levy, published a landmark paper entitled: "Broadening the Concept of Marketing". In this 1969 paper Kotler and Levy suggested new avenues for marketing in nonprofit organizations. This thought implant a slight change among the marketing specialists who previously considered that marketing mainly as the field of commercial organizations. In the 1970s, marketing in nonprofit organizations and the associated areas of public sector and social marketing received a lot of attention.

In 1977, the Library Association of the United Kingdom published the first simplified text which was entitled Marketing the Library. In this work, A. Yorke affirms that libraries and marketing are compatible and explains similarities which do exist between a library and most other organizations, irrespective of

the field of activity in which they are operating; Yorke also attempts to show how the library should try to organize itself and its activities from a marketing point of view and looks into the future.

Another significant trend was opted during the 1980s; it was a combination of strategic planning and marketing. In 1983, Wood wrote an article "Strategic Planning and the Marketing Process: Library Applications," in it she stressed providing programs which support the library's mission. She considered that libraries must consider adopting business concepts, such as marketing and strategic planning, if they were to survive the challenges of the 1980s. In the following years Wood expanded her article into a full-length book entitled Strategic Marketing for Libraries: A Handbook. In her introduction, she noted that the combination of marketing and strategic planning "promotes not only strength in the short run, but also the kind of long-term viability needed to work towards each organization's vision of the future." Darlene Weingand also published a monograph entitled Marketing/Planning Library and Information Services in which she integrated the ideas of planning and marketing. She emphasized that marketing and planning must be integrated if either is to be effective. Marketing and planning should be integral functions within a library and marketing and planning must be combined in to a "unified whole." Throughout the book, Weingand stressed that "to be effective, the marketer must understand his environment, must design the products and services the environment needs, must monitor and evaluate their use, and then must build on this process for future planning." According to her, marketing is a managerial process that must be carefully formulated and thought out. There are many other works which deal with marketing-planning combination in libraries.

Later on, librarians began to consider relationship marketing that is, integrating marketing with customer services and quality into one stream. Relationship marketing is based on a notion of establishing trust and cooperation with known customers. As a library operates routinely with a known set of customers, this concept is seen as very important in the marketing of LIS. A library also operates on trust. Essentially, it is based on the idea that when a client walks into the library, he trusts that the service provider will find the material or information that he needs. The library in turn, trusts that the client will return the items he borrows within the specified borrowing period.

With the fast involvement of technologies and other environmental changes, the role and concept of library services are changing rapidly. The range of services that take place outside the physical library is expanding due to the new technology, and it is likely to expand further. Additionally, the scope of some services has become nearly unlimited. Some forms of service can be offered almost as easily around the globe as around the town. Libraries serve and will serve far beyond their walls. All business activities may be seen through marketing lenses. Marketing in case of libraries is necessary to offer benefits to users want, reduce barriers to use and

access, persuade and inform the users, and carefully plan to satisfy users' needs effectively. "Marketing is so basic that it cannot be considered a separate function within the library. Marketing is a central dimension of the entire library. It is the entirety of the library's operations and services seen from a point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer's point of view."

#### **Stages of implementing Social networking tool for marketing of LIS**

The process of marketing in different ways includes what is traditional such as using ads in magazines, newspapers and publications or modern methods using ads on television or on the Internet. The Web 2.0 technologies allow us to communicate online via various social networking tools over the internet. These tools used in the marketing process for the uniqueness of their nature. The most unique characteristic of these tools is group of individuals who share the same interests or same idea and made marketing easy because the target group is predetermined.

This evolution in technology and social networking tools put librarians in front of many options to choose the right tool in the marketing operations to achieve the goals efficiently and at the lowest cost. The selection of appropriate social networking tool for marketing library services must pass the following stages before the selection process.

**Stage 1. Determine the type of library:** We can choose the appropriate application by determining type of services is to be delivered by social Networking tools. The user type is different for each type of libraries and varies with the Culture. As beneficiaries of university libraries are different that those of children's libraries, both in the use of language or culture technique.

**Stage 2. Budget:** As is well known that the budget for the library does not have a steady and specified income because libraries offer services for free or almost free and adopt its budget in the habit of governmental sponsors, private institutions and community members. It is through the budget

**Stage 3. Determine the type of library:** We can choose the appropriate application by determining type of services is to be delivered by social Networking tools. The user type is different for each type of libraries and varies with the Culture. As beneficiaries of university libraries are different that those of children's libraries, both in the use of language or culture technique.

**Stage 4. Select a category of Consumer:** Just selecting the type of library cannot identify the category of consumers as there can be many types of user in the same library. It is very necessary to identify the information need of potential consumers because we cannot deliver the same service to every

user. The information need of a research scholar is far different from a Post graduate student.

**Stage 5. Setting goals:** Goal setting helps in choosing right tool that is commensurate with the goals to be achieved and put the right plan for implementation. It also helps in time management in order to achieve successful marketing to the target group in a timely manner.

**Stage 6. Choose the appropriate application:** The process of selecting the application is the last stage before the actual implementation of the plan, and the process of selection should be done in the appropriate way to ensure the success of the objectives of the library. We cannot see the success of the marketing plan before the implementation of the plan and getting feedback. The tool that is selected must be characterized by:

1. The social networking tool that is going to use between the library and the consumers are identified either through observation or work study and questionnaires to find out.
2. Easy and practical to use both for the librarian or the consumers to achieve effective communication. Whenever complexities are less, speed and TINT in the user device are more, the more the popularity of the application.

After the selection of right marketing tool, a strategy is developed for the implementation of the marketing plan on the ground. This strategy must also include a mechanism to get feedback on its effectiveness and success. There must be another alternative strategy in the event of failure of the old plan. The librarian should be ready for all possibilities and must take the opinion of the consumers so that there is no possibility of failure.

#### **WhatsApp application**

WhatsApp is a free instant messenger application that works across multiple platforms (iPhone, Android, Blackberry, Nokia and Windows Phone). It allows users to share different types of messages to each other without any charge. Users are not charged for a text sent through WhatsApp (Hindu, 2011). This is because WhatsApp sends messages through an internet data connection. WhatsApp supports many different message types, from simple text to pictures to audio files and videos. One can send messages and multimedia contents (photos, videos, audios) over data plan or Wi-Fi network. In addition, they can also make voice and video calls without paying extra money for phone calls.

Now a day WhatsApp is being used for marketing purpose among companies. The government and various non-government organizations are also using WhatsApp for creating awareness and circulating information among peoples. It was witnessed that during year 2014 in the time of Parliament elections in India, WhatsApp was aggressively used as a campaigning tool by some political parties. The impact was huge, as the parties could deliver their message to public overnight. The same marketing strategy is being used by digital

marketing experts to cash the popularity of WhatsApp and turn it into an effective marketing tool.

One of the great features of WhatsApp is that it allows a number of users to interact on a common platform through groups. However, when you consider using WhatsApp as a marketing tool, creating groups of your customers may not be a great idea. Although, the customers may have a common interest in your product or service, there is absolutely no need for them to interact with each other. Most customers are likely to delete and exit group if they find themselves amidst strangers who have no connection with them whatsoever. Thus, WhatsApp interaction for marketing purpose should always be on a one-to-one basis.

#### **Using WhatsApp for Marketing of LIS**

A library can use WhatsApp for effective marketing of its services. The librarians must keep up with technical development happening in the world and employing various social networking tools in the marketing operations of the library and its services. This will make their user more aware about the importance of information in various situations of life. The library requires following steps for implementing WhatsApp for the marketing of LIS;

#### **Collect Phone Numbers of Prospective Consumers**

It is an obvious fact that the library needs phone number of users or prospective consumers to send them message. It is not recommended to collect random phone numbers of potential consumers. There are the ways a library can connect and reconnect with people who are interested for sure in getting its services.

1. List the WhatsApp number on the library website and ask users to add this number or get in touch with the library.
2. Library can also ask its users to give their mobile number to be in touch with the library. They can also organize an exhibition and ask people to give their contact number.

#### **Create Groups and Add the User or Consumers**

After getting the numbers of users or potential consumers, libraries can create the groups and them in the groups. These groups should be based on various areas of interest and add only those people who have an interest in the concern topic or subject. Here are some Tips:

1. Group Image and Group name should be the library logo and Group name should also depict the name of the library so that the users can recognize and don't think its spam.
2. Send them a welcome Message and introduce them to the group and how it will benefit them to stay connected.

#### **Build Strong Relationships with users**

The library must share only useful information to the group. If they post too many messages there, user can leave the group by irritation. The content must useful which convey personality and interest of the group.

1. The frequency of post must be slow because getting too much message in a single day can be so irritating for the users.

2. Give them proper reply to their query. Delay in delivering service can be cause of un-satisfaction among them.

#### **Make Expert Admin to Each Group**

1. Make different admin to the different groups. This will help to maintain the quality of the content of a particular group.
2. Ask people to give feedback on the post. It will help to improve the quality of the content of the groups.

#### **Learn to Operate WhatsApp**

The admin should learn using WhatsApp by using a PC or Laptop to make your work more efficient and quick. There are many techniques available for using WhatsApp on the computer.

- Use BlueStacks in the PC and install WhatsApp to it.
- WhatsApp provide Web client facility to connect the mobile to the WhatsApp website via PC.

#### **Conclusion**

Although the idea of marketing LIS is not new, and some progress has been made in the past, more efforts have to be made if we want to see better marketing of a wide range of information services. In recent years there has been a kind of development in information technologies and these new technologies can provide a way to deliver better information services. Library and information managers need to realize that these technologies are broadening the market and therefore provide immense opportunities for them to offer services and products at the global level. WhatsApp can be very useful for marketing of LIS due to its unique features, lightness and rapid spread of information which is done by copying and pasting or forwarding. It is freely available and not costly for the budget of the library as one smartphone and one SIM card are sufficient to use in the process of library services and marketing objectives.

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