APPLICATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In a traditional setting, marketing Library and Information Services (LIS) had been a challenge. Social Media (SM) has opened new platforms for librarians and information professionals to market library and information services. The purpose of this paper is to explore how libraries and information centers are using Social Media applications for marketing library and information services world-wide. The paper reviews empirical studies on the utilization of Social Media for marketing, discusses the most widely used Social Media tools, and, analyses the general guidelines for the utilization of Social Media applications in libraries and information centers. Finally, the paper presents a framework for the successful design and utilization of Social Media applications in marketing libraries and information centers. This paper is based on an in-depth desk-top review of literature and the author's own points of view.

Keywords: Social Media and library marketing, online marketing, Web 2.0 marketing, Social Media marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Social Media provides several opportunities to reach and interact with the community. Hence, Social Media and Social Networks have grown astoundingly over the past few years. According to a recent Social Media statistics, there are over 1.15 Billion Facebook users compared to 700 million in 2011; over 500 million Twitter users compared to 250 million in 2011; over 238 million LinkedIn users compared to 115 million in 2011 and there are over 500 million Google Plus users opposed to 25 million users in 2011 (Digital Insights, 2013; Rafiq, 2011). There are over 1 billion monthly visitors on You Tube; 4.2 billion people use mobile device to access Social Media sites; more than 23% marketers are investing in blogging and social Media. A majority of 60% of consumers say that the incorporation of Social Media makes them more likely to buy product and services. Seventy four (74%) of marketers believe Facebook is important for their lead generation strategy. Forty (40%) of marketers use Google+, 70% desire to learn more and 67% plan to increase Google+ activities. Social Media generates almost double the marketing leads of trade show, telemarketing, daily mail, or PPC (Digital Insights, 2013). Like other organizations, increasingly, all types of libraries around the world are moving towards Social Media and Social Networking through various platforms; Blogs, Facebook, YouTube twitter, Myspace, Pinterest, Google Plus, Instagram, Mashup, Flickr, LinkedIn, Wikis.

Social Media is being used world-wide for diverse purposes in libraries and information centers: marketing, branding, building customer relationships, reference services, quick dissemination of

news. This paper focuses specifically on the application of Social Media in marketing libraries and information centers.

Librarians and information professionals constantly debate and recognize the importance of marketing and have come up with new strategies to market their services and products. Traditionally, marketing was primarily done to promote information services and other resources in order to ensure their optimum usage. Today technology has endowed information seekers with varied options to satisfy their information needs. Libraries no longer have the traditional monopoly of being the only information providers. New technology has confronted librarians and information professionals with a huge challenge to survive and thrive in this digital age, where user community can access online information resources at any time of the day from where ever they are. Therefore all types of libraries and information centers need to be marketed more than ever before. Traditional marketing was tiresome and costly, in terms of time and money both. This has evolved into online marketing, which is both time and cost-effective. Through Social Media, every librarian can connect straight away with their community using a range of Social Media channels (Du Toit & Mulatiningsih, 2013). In America 88% libraries are promoting general library services; 72% are promoting specific programs and/or services; 75% are providing quick updates to library users; while 54% libraries are reaching a new audience of potential users using Social Media tools (Fourth Annual Survey, 2011). This paper is inspired in the above context intending to explore the usage of Social Media in marketing libraries and information centers.

Purpose & Objectives

The overall purpose of the paper is to explore and analyze how Social Media is being used in marketing libraries and information centers worldwide. The paper pursues the following objectives:

- Review empirical studies on the utilization of Social Media platforms in marketing libraries and information centers;
- Discuss the most widely used Social Media platforms used in marketing libraries and information centers;
- Analyze the general guidelines for the utilization of Social Media applications; and,
- Recommend a framework for the successful design and utilization of Social Media applications in marketing libraries and information centers.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media has been defined in several ways. Oxford Dictionary (2013) defines Social Media as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in Social Networking". According to Bradley (2012) the term Social Media refers to "the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue". Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 61) have described Social Media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". Brian Solis, one of the most published authors in new Media, defines Social Media as "the democratization of information,

transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers" (Solis, 2010). Based on the above definitions and the author's own understanding Social Media can be described as a group of web-based and mobile applications that allow users to share and create knowledge in a real time social interaction. It is user-centric, multi-purpose and it is not time and location bound. Social Media consists of various user-driven marketing channels, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blogss, YouTube, Flickr and, it has a number of benefits over traditional marketing as displayed in Table (1) below:

Table 1: Traditional versus Social Media marketing

Traditional Marketing	Social Media Marketing
Time consuming	Time saving
Expensive	cost-effective
Monotonous	Exciting & stimulating
Limitation to reach the community	Reachable to the community instantly
Static	Creative
Limited means for marketing	A range of Social Media channels for marketing
Allows little or no interaction with user community	Brings librarians closer to users and vice versa
One-way	Collaborative
Passive	Interactive
Time-bound	No time limitation

It is apparent from the above Table (1) how Social Media has transformed traditional marketing to beyond the library walls any time anywhere.

LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION

There is empirical evidence at International level regarding the use of Social Media in libraries to market their services and products.

In America, most libraries and information centers are using Social Media tools to promote library services to their library community. Social Media tools like Twitter, Blogss, Flickr, Podcasts, Online videos are being used, but Facebook (71.4%) is the most popular (Rogers (2009). Again, at South Carolina State Library Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, YouTube, Flickr, Google Docs, Wikis are all used; the most common are Facebook (88.8%) and Twitter (46.8%) (Macmanus, 2012). According to American Library Association report (2012:34), "Social networking is used to publicize library events such as gaming nights; to alert users to additions to collections; to provide links to articles, videos, or Web content that might prove relevant or helpful to patrons; and to provide a conduit for community information. Social Media also plays an important role in fostering relationships with the community by allowing patrons to ask questions or provide feedback about library services."

In Pakistan, Khan & Bhatti (2012) investigated the librarians and LIS (Library and Information Science) school academicians' attitudes towards the usefulness of Social Media in marketing of library. The study suggests that Social Media is integral to market library services and products among online users; it captures potential users of library and it offers various benefits to libraries and user communities. The study recommends that online news groups/forums, video sharing (YouTube), Social Networking (Facebook, MySpace), Wikis, professional networking and Blogging are good venues for marketing libraries' different services. These tools are used to spread news and service alerts, to provide quick updates to online users and to publish library news and press releases among online users.

In Nigeria, Ezeani & Igwesi, (2012) examined how Nigerian libraries can leverage on Social Networking and Social Media skills to provide dynamic library services. The authors acknowledged that Social Networking and Social Media provide important opportunities to libraries. Librarians can use these platforms for marketing library and information services. The study identified the challenges faced by Nigerian libraries in the use of Social Media as: lack of awareness of Social Media, lack of trained staff, lack of Government intervention, bandwidth problem, technophobia, and unreliable power supply.

In China, Luo; Wang & Han (2013) carried-out a study using a case study of an online video marketing project at academic libraries. The video series was posted to Youku, a popular video sharing site in China, which received about 160,000 visits within 20 days, averaging 8,000 visits per day. A majority of 97 % students acknowledged that the video format marketing was a good method to engage library users.

In Germany, Mundt (2013) carried out a survey study among German public and academic libraries to evaluate the marketing success of libraries' social media presences. The study established that Social Media is used to market library. However, of all Social Media tools, Facebook is the platform most libraries use. Facebook is particularly considered useful for selecting suitable methods to evaluate the marketing success of Social Media presence. The study identified barriers to Social Media utilization as: lack of staff resources or competence, privacy issues and a general hesitation about the potential benefits of social media, and lack of Social Media policies. Less than one third of the libraries have developed and implemented Social Media policies.

In Hong Kong, Chu & Du (2013) investigated the use of Social Networking tools in academic libraries and examined the extent of their use and library staff's perceptions on their usefulness and challenges. Like other empirical studies, Facebook and Twitter were considered the most successful tools. Most library staff had positive opinions on the usefulness of Social networking tools, but hesitancy among library staff and limited participation of users (i.e. students) were barriers to usage. This study offers insights for academic librarians to make informed decisions in applying Social Networking tools. Table (2) provides a summary of empirical studies:

Table 2: Summary of Empirical Studies

Location	Types of library	Tools/Application	Findings	Source
USA	Academic & Public	Twitter, Meebo, Blogss, Flickr, online videos, Facebook etc.	Facebook most popular Social Media platform. Barriers: inadequate and unqualified staff and time constraints.	Rogers (2009)
USA (South Carolina University)	Public	Social Media/Web 2.0 tools: Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, You Tube, Flickr, Google Docs, Wikis	Facebook and Twitter most used in publicizing online collections	MacManus (2012)
Pakistan	Academic	Social Networking (Facebook, MySpace), YouTube, Wikis, Delicious, Twitter, Blogging, Flickr	Social Media integral to market library resources & services. Barriers: electricity failure, lack of time, privacy issue, too many Social Media tools to learn, lack of knowledge, slow speed of internet, inadequate funds and inadequate staff training	Khan & Bhatti (2012)
Nigeria	Libraries in general	Facebook, MySpace, Blogs, Wikis, Linkedin, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, Library Thing, Ning	Social Networking and Social Media important platforms for marketing library services. Barriers: lack of awareness of Social Media, lack of trained staff, lack of Government intervention, bandwidth problem, technophobia, and unreliable power supply.	Ezeani & Igwesi, (2012)
China	Academic	Online video marketing	Video format marketing good to engage library users and marketing.	Luo; Wang & Han (2013)
Germany	Public and academic	Facebook, Blogs, Wikis, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, etc	Facebook most popular platform. Barriers: lack of adequate staff and competence, privacy issues, lack of Social Media benefits appreciation.	Mundt (2013)
Hong Kong	Academic	Facebook and Twitter	Most accepted Facebook and Twitter. Barriers: hesitancy among library staff and limited participation of users.	Chu & Du (2013)

Most widely used Social Media platforms

Social Media provides more opportunities to reach the user community, target specific audiences and give users a chance to interact with library. Statistics of Social Media usage in libraries shows that there are nearly 700 million active Facebook users, over 100 million LinkedIn members, 5 billion+ images on Flickr, 24 million pages on Wikipedia, 300 million Twitter users posting over 7,000 tweets per second, over 2.9 billion hours of YouTube watching per month (Tortorella, 2012). Libraries can market their services and products using different Social Media platforms; for example, publicize their different upcoming events and newly acquired information materials through the Facebook. Different programs such as, conferences and workshops can be marketed by uploading videos on the YouTube. The pictures of different library events and services can be shared using Flickr. Blogs can be used to market library services among distance learners. Twitter and IM (Instance Messaging) can be used to market a library's reference/research services. Using such tools, libraries can publicize newly acquired material and create service alerts (Khan & Bhatti, 2012). In marketing library and information services, the most-widely used Social Media platforms follow.

Facebook: Facebook is the most popular Social Media platform for creating library awareness and marketing (Chu & Do, 2013; Du Toit, 2013; Dowd, 2013; Mundt, 2013). Facebook is a popular and free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues (Rouse, 2009). Facebook can be used for marketing libraries and information centers in several ways. Through the Facebook page/account librarians can draw users' attention to useful hidden treasures of the library that library users have forgotten or are not aware of, such as grey literature. If time is limited Facebook can be populated via other platforms such as Twitter feedback, the library calendar, a library Blog. OPAC search can be embedded on the Facebook page for ease of library users (Potter, 2013). Using Facebook user community can be made aware about all the library events by creating descriptive hashtags (e.g. #awesomelibraryevent!) that can be used on sites such as Twitter and Facebook and encourage people to attend and live Blogs or tweet. Facebook can also be useful for selecting suitable methods to evaluate the marketing success of Social Media platforms (Mundt, 2013). Gallardo (2013) suggests best practices for librarians' Facebook page: stay to the point, pin important posts to the top of your page, be casual and conversational, use images, post consistently, post the same types of content on the same day of the week, give fans access to exclusive information or content, find your optimal time to post, and take advantage of Insights.

Twitter: Twitter is the second most popular Social Media platform. It is micro-blogging network of real posts and all the posts are limited to 140 characters and less. Twitter can be used to keep library staff and patrons updated on library's daily activities, for example, frequently updated library collections. Users can utilize this platform to type in short messages or status updates. Twitter can create library service alerts (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). Often library users prefer Twitter to interact with librarians because Twitter is more influential than other Social Media platforms and what happens on Twitter does not stay on Twitter. For making it more distinguished, it is important to give it a personal touch. For instance, add pictures to your Twitter account page's wall paper. Set-up searches for your Twitter account to save and retrieve them quickly, e.g. set up a search on the name of your library, or set up a geo-locational search. If ever a human error occurs in posting a message, respond quickly and apologize seriously. There are over a million Twitter tools, stick to ones that give actionable results (Potter, 2013).

Carscaddon & Chapman (2013:12) have extensively discussed Twitter as a marketing tool for libraries including tips, best practices, evaluation and assessment of a Twitter account. The above two authors have suggested Twitter vocabulary as follows:

Twitter Vocabulary
- *Tweet:* a message of up to 140 characters posted on Twitter
- *Twitter stream*: series of tweets from a Twitter account
- *Retweet (RT)*: a tweet forwarded by someone to his/her followers
- *Followers:* these are individuals or organizations who choose to follow your Twitter
- account and receive all your tweets
- *Following*: these are individuals or organizations that you have chosen to follow on your Twitter account; you will receive their tweets
- *Mention*: using @username to talk to or mention a specific Twitter account in a Tweet.
- *Hashtags*: words or phrases preceded by # used as tags. Clicking on a hashtag will search for all public instances of its use; hashtags can also be included in saved searches (Carscaddon & Chapman, 2013:12).

Blogs: Blogs are one of the oldest social media channels. A blog (also called a weblog or web log) is a website consisting of entries (also called posts) appearing in reverse chronological order with the most recent entry appearing first (similar in format to a daily journal) (Gunelius, 2014). They are popularly used in libraries to broadcast library news and market other library resources. The Blogs are an invaluable part of New York Public Libraries social content marketing, with librarians acting as internal advocates and most of the traffic coming from Google searches and Blogss serve as a point of entry for customer service (Dankowski, 2013). Potter (2013) suggests some quick ways to increase Blog engagement as: i. Put a number on it; ii. Ask a question either in the title of the post or at the end and give them a voice via the comments session; iii. Use the hashtag in the title. Every time someone tweets a link to it, a wider audience will be able to read it; iv. It is important to register the Blog; v. Make it infinitely sharable via Twitter, Facebook, email etc. (Potter, 2013). Librarians can also develop subject-specific Blogs and play a leading role in advocating the use of blogs for scholarly communication and commenting on research findings (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). Increasingly, libraries are using blogs for publishing library news and events; providing information about new acquisition; and, encouraging use of library services (Walia & Gupta, 2012).

Flickr: Flickr is a website for photo and video management/sharing, where you can easily and quickly post and share photos and videos up to 20 MB a month for free. It is an excellent marketing tool. Librarians can use it to market general library services to their users. Most students/users are not aware of the different services offered in the library such as reservation of books, reference services and Strategic Dissemination of Information (SDI). Flickr is good to sensitize users with library services. It can also be used to create current awareness services (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). Flickr provides great opportunity to users to own library contents by allowing them to upload pictures to a particular collection and curate a collection of user pictures on a particular subject (Potter, 2013). Flickr may allow archives and libraries "to generate new means of access to an interaction with their patrons, as well as broaden the knowledge of such heritage to a larger and more diverse audience" (Thanuskodi, 2011:70). Flickr websites can be used for sharing photos of library events, historical moments etc. (Walia & Gupta, 2012).

Pinterest: Pinterest is a free; graphical and an emerging Social Media tool. It is "an online pinboard that allows you to organize and share things" (Gallardo, 2013). Pintrest provides great venues to market library resources. A library can make its own profile and create boards, pinning photos and video showcasing the library. The Westerville Library has an extensive collection of boards and pins, such as, *Unexpected Library Marketing*, and *Quotes about Reading,* because they provide fun visuals into the world of libraries (Szkolar, 2012). In rural Missouri, Central Methodist University (CMU) college library markets its popular DVD collection through a pinboard, which is very helpful to students and it cuts down on repetitive questions asked from library staff and provides an excellent visual representation of what is in the collection (Dudenhoffer, 2012).

New York public library is using Pintrest to market library events, library collection, library educational resources, New York history etc. in order to inspire life-long learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen community (Valentine & Oleniczak, n.d.). Gentry (2014) presents examples of 259 pins from academic and special libraries and archives how various libraries are using Pintrest to market libraries. Gallardo (2013) suggests various ways of using Pintrest in libraries such as pinning book covers; showcasing historic archives, learning-related infographics, creating reading lists, sharing new acquisitions, craft projects, etc., promoting library activities (add fliers, etc.), collecting ideas, materials, library displays, etc., highlighting library staff and, showing off things in the local community/library pictures.

General guidelines & tips for successful Social Media marketing

Literature reveals guidelines and tips for successful Social Media marketing in library and information services. Burkhardt (2010) provides a guide for college and university libraries; NLA (National Library of Australia) has published Social Media guideline; and, Mundt (2013) proposes a set of key performance indicators to evaluate their marketing success and Social Media Policy. The major guidelines and tips for effective Social Media are:

1. **Decide the purpose of Social Media marketing:** First of all, it is important to decide the purpose and goals of Social Media marketing based on the specific needs of a particular library (Burkhardt, 2010; Potter, 2011).
2. **Preparation work:** This includes personalizing the Social Media, linking it to the library website, creating a welcoming and informal description of the library, customization by changing colors and backgrounds in Twitter and custom tabs and boxes in Facebook to make the library profile unique (Burkhardt, 2010).
3. **Think big, start small:** Pick one of the major outlets such as Facebook or Twitter create an outstanding presence of it, and, using that experience move on to other Social Media outlet (Kroski, 2013). Doing one thing properly is better rather than having lots of neglected profiles all over the web (Potter, 2011).
4. **Decide on what to post:** It is critical to decide on what to post on your Social Media platform, whether to post library news and events, new additions to library collection, links to articles, videos, community information, pictures or anything else? (Burkhardt, 2010).
5. **Promote events:** A great way to market the library is to let everyone know about all the events of your library by creating descriptive hash tags (#awesomelibraryevent!) that can be

used on sites such as Twitter and Facebook and encourage people to attend and live Blog or tweet (Kroski, 2013).

6. **Get the tone right:** Use informal but not overly familiar, friendly but not overly personal, colloquial but grammatically, syntactically and orthographically correct language for your Social Media platform (Potter, 2011).

7. **Combine content creation & content curation:** There is no need to create all original content for your Blog, Tweets, or Facebook, it is better not to do so. By curating and linking to other people's content, readers are not only referred to recommended resources on your Social Media, but also get opportunity to network with the content's original creators.

8. **Maintain constant communication:** Having a Social Media is like real life commitment that requires constant communication to maintain the relationship between the librarians and user community (Burkhardt, 2010). Ensure you spend as much time following and listening to other people as posting information about yourself to show your genuine interest in them (Potter, 2011). Be diligent about keeping up with all the posts on your library's Facebook page and respond to them in a timely manner (Kroski, 2013).

9. **Create connected and consistent brand Channels:** Create a consistent presence on all of the Social Media platforms of your library. Use the same logo and the same color scheme to show the users your brand and connect all your profiles on each Social Media channel and link all the Social Media accounts on the library's website (Kroski, 2013).

10. **Claim your location:** Think about Social networks such as Foursquare and Facebook places where you would want to claim your library's location (Kroski, 2013).

11. **Engage patrons with contests:** To reward the people many Social Media sites offer great opportunities for contests and challenges for creative libraries, e.g. Foursquare allows locations to offer awards to the person, who checks into a particular location the most (Kroski, 2013).

12. **Feature patrons**: Whether it is a Facebook page, pins on Pinterest, or videos on YouTube, spotlight your library patrons, who are enjoying your library events or using your library services, to show them your appreciation.

13. **Strategize to market Social Media presence:** Get the message across, making your Twitter feed (or whatever) more interesting to be followed by more people and get the message across to a wider community to market your library (Potter, 2011).There are several strategies to market Social Media presence, for instance, linking wherever possible; talking to people; printing advertising; Web ads; building a contingent of friends; following and be followed in return; giving it time to grow into an active community (Burkhardt, 2010).

CONCLUSION

This paper explored how libraries and information centers are using Social Media applications in marketing libraries and information services. From the ongoing it is apparent that Social Media is well-recognized and well-accepted forum for marketing library and information services. Growing population of patrons and librarians using Social networking is an indication that "it is an ideal vehicle for marketing the services of libraries to patrons" (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012:4). Thus, Social Media is not a fad, it is here to stay. However, "The phenomenon of social networking tools is likely to continue evolving rapidly" (Chu & Du, 2013: 10). Hence, it is vital that all types of libraries create and use Social Media tools successfully. The paper concludes with Hicks (2012:190), who emphasizes, "Social Media forms part of the rich environment of

scholarship within which researchers work in the 21st century, and a librarian who does not take the time to grasp these changing conceptions is doing herself and her patrons a disservice".

RECOMMENDATION

In recommendation the paper presents the following framework for the successful design and utilization of Social Media applications in marketing libraries and information centers.

Figure 1: Recommendations to utilize Social Media to its optimal potential

Personal Level

- Persistence to change
- Awareness of Social Media Presence
- Endeveour to remove negative perceptoins associated with libraries
- Use self-directed approach
- Adopt new culture of constant learnin

Marketing Musts

- *Make the Social* Media platform interesting and eye-appealing
- Stay connected with consistent branding
- Use appropriate language

Organisational Level

- Develop and implement OA policy
- Provide adequate technological infrastructure
- Provide sufficient budget for staff training and development

Constantly Interact with Patrons

- Spotlight patrons to show your appreciation
- Use contests to attract and interest a wider community
- Maintain constant communication to establish close relations

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