

Marketing of Information Products and Services in Self-Supporting Engineering Libraries in Namakkal and Erode district (Tamil Nadu): An Attitudinal Assessment of Library Professionals

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Abstract

This study was to determine the attitude of self-support Engineering College library professionals and the current status of marketing activities of their library products and services. The findings revealed that the librarians have positive attitude towards the purpose of marketing the library products/services and admit that each library should have a mission statement, separate fund and full time professional to handle marketing-related activities; but in practice, no library under study has specifically designated personnel, separate fund for marketing-related activities and few libraries have mission statements. The study also explores the possibility of adopting marketing related activities and provides value-added services to the users.

Keywords: Information marketing, Library marketing, Promotional activity

Introduction

Marketing of information products and services is an integral part of library administration, especially to improve user satisfaction and promoting the use of library services in current and potential users. The new information products and services really challenges for library and informational professionals. The present study has been undertaken to assess the attitudes of librarian towards the marketing of information products and services of engineering college libraries. A detailed study was conducted as regarding the purpose and need of marketing plan in context to information products/services and promotional activities of these libraries.

Review of literature

Rathore (1995) in a study of agricultural research institutes under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi revealed that the research institutes of ICAR had a lack of total application of marketing concept such as written statement of marketing plan, separate budget for marketing of information products/services and segmentation.

Mohan (1998) in a survey of special and university libraries and information centers of India found that though the librarians had positive attitude towards the marketing of library and information services, they perceived some barriers in applying the concept of marketing in libraries such as lack of knowledge, skills and exposure to the concept of marketing and lack of manpower and financial support.

Kanaujia (2004) in a survey of India research and development libraries and information centers revealed that though the librarians had a positive attitude towards marketing of library information products and services, there was less evidence of the systematic and planned use of marketing in the service design, pricing and delivery of information products/services.

Scope of the study

Survey method was used to collect the primary data for analysis. There were 49 Self-supporting Engineering Colleges were (including five autonomous engineering colleges) existing in Erode and Namakkal districts, in Tamil Nadu. The sample consists of 33 engineering college libraries (including four autonomous colleges), which were initiated before the year of 2008. The fresh engineering colleges were took four years to reach their essential infrastructure facilities. So the institution which was completes their four and above years was included in this study. The age of the institutions falls between 5-28 years.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the attitude of engineering college librarians towards the purpose of marketing.
2. To examine the existing marketing status, basic and advanced resource facilities of the libraries.
3. Pricing pattern of the information products and services of the libraries.
4. Determine the extent to which the principles of marketing are put into actual practice in the libraries under study.

Research Methodology

A well designed structured questionnaire was used for this study. The questionnaire has two parts. Part I consists of sets of statements which are designed to measure the attitude of library professionals towards different aspects of marketing of information products and services and it asks the librarians to respond on a scale as to their

agreement or disagreement. The statement by using the five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Part II makes a request for providing information about the basic and advanced facilities, services and also contains a list of various promotional activities which may be employed in the library. The questionnaire was pre-tested before using it with the survey population.

Data collection

The present study was carried out from 33 engineering college library professionals of Erode and Namakkal district. Mail questionnaire was sent to each engineering college librarians through mail under the study. Table 1 gives the response rate of the respondents. Of the response, 24 (72.7%) were received out of 33. The purpose of the survey was explained to the respondents through Telephone.

Table 1: Response rate of the respondents

Number of questionnaire distributed	Number of questionnaire received	Response rate (%)
33	24	72.7%

Data Analysis and findings

Table 2: Year of Institutions Established

S. No	Established years (Range)	Number of colleges established	Percentage
1.	1984 - 1988	1	3.0
2.	1989 - 1993	-	-
3.	1994 - 1998	5	15.2
4.	1999 - 2003	9	27.3
5.	2004 - 2008	18	54.5
	Total	33	100

The table 2 shows that the year of establishment of the self supporting engineering colleges in Namakkal and Erode District. The Kongu engineering college f was the first technical institution started the year of 1984 in Erode district. Unfortunately, none of the self supporting engineering college was established between the year 1989 and 1993 in these two districts. The 18 (54.5%) self-supporting engineering colleges were initiated from the year 2004 to 2008. It was concluded from the study that the awareness of people about the technical education, foreign job opportunity, technological advancement etc. were the primary factors to arise more demand. To fulfill their needs and promote the technical education in our country, the central and

state governments policies were encourage introducing the self supporting technical institutions.

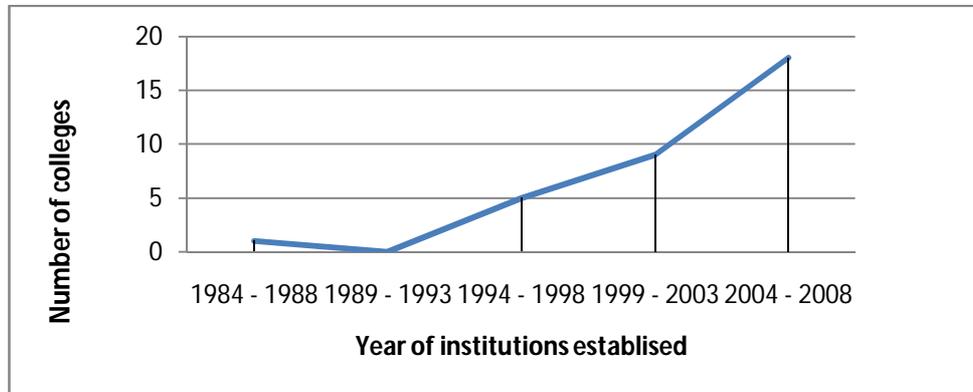


Figure1: Year of Institutions Established

General information of the respondents

The General information related to the respondents gender, qualifications, experience and number of workshop/seminar was attended were discussed in table 3. Of them 17 (70.8%) were males and 7 (29.2%) were females, 11 (45.8%) respondents possess M. Phil. Degree and 3 (12.5%) have Ph.D, 12 (50%) librarians have more than ten years professional experience and 10 (41.7%) attended more than ten workshop/seminars.

Table 3: General Information of the Respondents

S.No.	Description		Number of respondents (Percentage)
	Gender	Female	7 (29.2)
		Male	17 (70.8)
2	Qualification	MLIS	10 (41.7)
		M.Phil	11 (45.8)
		Ph.D	3 (12.5)
3	Experience	1 – 5 years	5 (20.8)
		6 – 10 years	7 (29.2)
		11 –15 years	9 (37.5)
		16 & above years	3 (12.5)
4	Number of Workshop/ Seminar attended	1 – 5 Times	11(45.8)
		6 – 10 Times	3 (12.5)
		11 –15 Times	7 (29.2)
		16& above Times	3 (12.5)

Purposes of marketing the library products/services**Table 4:** Purposes of marketing the library products/services

Attitudes about the Purpose of marketing	SA (%)	A (%)	SA+A (%)	UD (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	DA+SDA (%)	STDEV	WAM	RANK
1.To identifying the user's information needs and expectations	6 (25.0)	13 (54.2)	19 (79.2)	1 (4.2)	4 (16.6)	-	4 (16.6)	5.1	3.9	6
2.To improve the library resources and services	8 (33.3)	12 (50.0)	20 (83.3)	3 (12.5)	1 (4.2)	-	1 (4.2)	5.0	4.1	7
3.To promote the usage and providing user friendly service	8 (33.3)	14 (58.3)	22 (91.6)	1 (4.2)	1 (4.2)	-	1 (4.2)	6.3	3.6	3
4.To improve the quality of information products and services	6 (25.0)	14 (58.3)	20 (83.3)	3 (12.5)	1 (4.2)	1 (4.2)	-	5.6	4.0	5
5. To create need and awareness of users about the library products and services	5 (20.8)	16 (66.7)	21 (87.5)	1 (4.2)	2 (8.3)	-	2 (8.3)	6.9	3.9	2
6. To justifying the cost involved in generation of products or services	7 (29.2)	12 (50.0)	19 (79.2)	4 (16.6)	1 (4.2)	-	1 (4.2)	5.9	4.0	4

7. To motivate and improve the marketing skills among the library staff	9 (37.5)	8 (33.3)	17 (70.8)	6 (25.0)	1 (4.2)	-	1 (4.2)	4.0	3.7	8
8. Various types of electronics resources required marketing	6 (25.0)	17 (70.8)	23 (95.8)	-	-	1 (4.2)	1 (4.2)	7.2	4.1	1

WAM = weight age arithmetic mean; STDEV = standard deviation SA = strongly agree, A = agree, UD = undecided, DA = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

The table 4 shows the respondents statements relating to the Purpose of marketing. Majority of the respondents either agree or strongly agree to identifying the user's needs and expectations and to justifying the cost of the products and services 19 (79.2%), to improve the library resources and to improve the quality of product and service 20 (83.3%), to proving user friendly service 22 (91.6%), to create awareness among the user's 21 (87.5%), to motivate and improve marketing skills among the library staff 17 (66.7%) and electronic resources required marketing 23 (95.8 %).

Librarians' attitudes towards the marketing plan

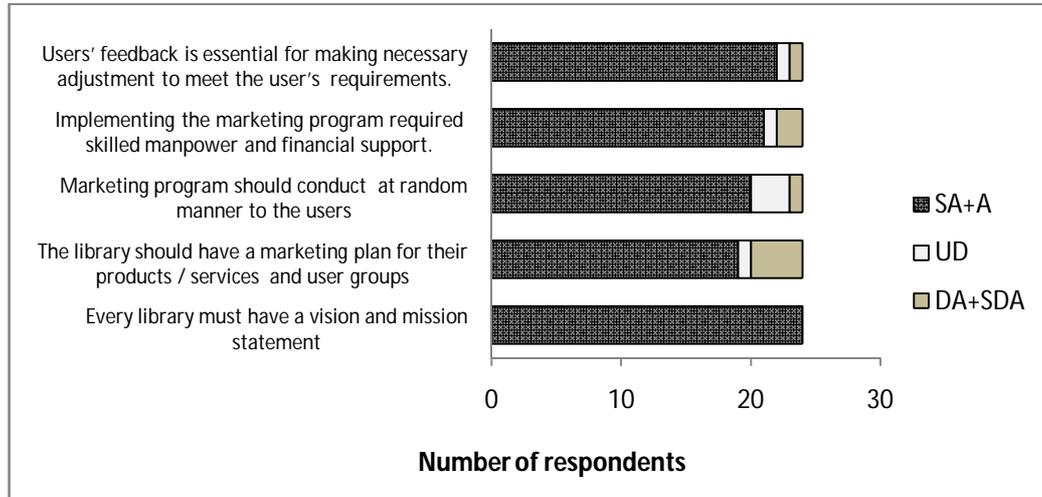
Table 5: Attitude about library marketing plan

Attitude about the market planning	SA (%)	A (%)	SA+A (%)	UD (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	DA+SDA (%)	STDEV	WAM	RANK
1) Every library must have a vision and mission statement	6 (25.0)	18 (75.0)	24 (100)	-	-	-	-	7.8	4.3	1
2) The library should have a marketing plan for their products / services and user groups	6 (25.0)	13 (54.2)	19 (79.2)	1 (4.2)	4 (16.6)	-	4 (16.6)	4.3	3.8	5

3) marketing program should conduct at random manner to the users	8 (33.3)	12 (50.0)	20 (83.3)	3 (12.5)	1 (4.2)	-	1 (4.2)	5.0	4.0	4
4) Implementing the marketing program required skilled manpower and financial support.	6 (25.0)	15 (62.5)	21 (87.5)	1 (4.2)	2 (8.3)	-	3 (12.5)	6.1	3.9	3
5) Users' feedback is essential for making necessary adjustment to meet the user's requirements.	5 (20.8)	17 (70.8)	22 (91.6)	1 (4.2)	1 (4.2)	-	1 (4.2)	7.0	4.0	2

WAM = weight age arithmetic mean; STDEV = standard deviation SA = strongly agree, A = agree, UD = undecided, DA = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

The table 5 shows the respondents response relating to marketing plan for libraries. Every library need to frame vision and mission statement 24 (100%), required marketing planning and user group 19 (79.1%). Of them 22 (91.6%) respondents agree that the users' feedback help to modifying the existing product or services, 21 (87.5%) need marketing program required skilled manpower and financial support and 19 (79.2%) wanted to conducting marketing program at random manner to the users. Mohan (1998) in a survey of special and university libraries and information centers of India found some barriers in applying the concept of marketing in library products and service. Mohan (1998) in a survey of special and university libraries and information centers of India found that the librarians had positive attitude towards the marketing of library and information services.



SA+A = strongly agree+Agree, UD = undecided, DA+ SDA = disagree + strongly disagree

Figure 2: Attitude about library marketing plan

Library facilities and promotional activities

Table 6: Basic and advanced facilities available in the libraries

S. No.	Basic and advanced facilities available in the libraries	Number of respondents	
		Yes	No
1	OPAC	24 (100)	-
2	Library Automation	24 (100)	-
3	Barcode/Smartcard	23 (95.8)	1 (4.2)
4	Scanner and printer	23 (95.8)	1 (4.2)
5	Audio visual Unit	23 (95.8)	1 (4.2)
6	Internet	24 (100)	-
7	e- journal database	24 (100)	-
8	Networking membership	22 (91.7)	2 (8.3)
9	Photocopying service	24 (100)	-
10	Inter library loan service	23 (95.8)	1 (4.2)
11	Reference services	24 (100)	-

Table 6 indicates the existing basic and advanced facilities of the Engineering college libraries. Analysis of the data shows that all the libraries 24 (100 percent) have OPAC, Automated library service, Internet service, e-journals, Photocopying service and Reference services. Of them 23 (95.8%) of libraries have Inter library loan service, book bar-coding, and audiovisual unit service, scanning and printing facilities and 22 (91.7%) have networking membership facilities.

Table 7: various promotional methods used to promote the library service

S. No.	Promotional activities	Number of libraries	Number of Respondents	
			Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Organizing library tour	24	22 (91.7)	2 (8.3)
2	User-orientation program	24	9 (37.5)	15 (62.5)
3	News letter / brochure	24	15 (62.5)	9 (37.5)
4	Personal contact	24	22 (91.7)	2 (4.3)
5	New arrivals display	24	24 (100)	-
6	Display Posters	24	9 (37.5)	15 (62.5)
7	User group learning	24	22 (91.7)	2 (4.3)
8	User survey	24	8 (33.3)	16 (66.7)
9	Suggestion box	24	21 (87.5)	3 (12.5)
10	Convey the messages from Word of mouth	24	21 (87.5)	3 (12.5)
11	Frequently used books (Conclude via. date label of the books)	24	23 (95.8)	1 (4.2)
12	Social media service-E-mail	24	13 (54.2)	11 (45.8)

Table 7 indicates that the various methods used to promote the information products and services of the libraries. More than 22 (91.7%) librarians organizing library tour for new members, Personal enquiry, user group learning and frequently used books (conclude via. Date label of the books), 21 (87.5%) respondents followed suggestion box method and face to face contact i.e. Word of mouth, 15 (62.5%) of them published newsletters / brochures, 13 (54.2%) used social media service like E-mail, 9 (37.5%) conduct a user orientation programme, and 8 (33.3%) user survey method. None of the libraries have to provide separate fund and specifically designated person for library marketing related activities.

Table 8: Pricing pattern for the user services

S. No.	Services	Charging for the services	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Photocopying service	24 (100)	-
2	Inter library loan service	24 (100)	-
3	Scanning and printing services	24 (100)	-
4	Networking membership services	24 (100)	-
5	Inter library loan service	24 (100)	-
6	Reference services	-	24 (100)
7	Bibliographical service	-	24 (100)
8	Online Journals services	-	24 (100)
9	Internet service	-	24 (100)

Table 8 shows the pricing pattern of the libraries. Moreover all libraries collected nominal charges for photocopy, inter library loan, scanning and printing, networking membership services and the services like reference, bibliographical service, e-journals and internet facilities are providing without charge. Indexing and abstracting services are not available. All this shows that the librarians are still reluctant in introducing the charges for most of the services.

Table 9: Librarians opinion the facilities required to promoting the library services

S. No.	Facilities required to promote the library services	Agree (%)	Rank	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
1	Print collection development	17 (70.8)	5	6 (25.0)	1 (4.2)
2	Technological facilities	20 (83.3)	2	1 (4.2)	3 (12.5)
3	Budget allocation	22 (91.7)	1	-	2 (8.3)
4	Digital collection Development	19 (79.2)	3	3 (12.5)	2 (8.3)
5	Human resource development	16 (66.7)	5	6 (25.0)	2 (8.3)
6	Environment of library	9 (37.5)	6	13 (54.2)	2 (8.3)

Table 9 indicates that the respondents' opinion about the facilities required to implementing the marketing programme and promoting the information products and services. More than 22 (91.7%) librarians suggested that the sufficient fund and 20 (83.3%) technical facilities essential to introduced new programme. Of them 19 (79.2%) digital collection development, 16 (66.7%) human resource, 17 (70.8%) need to increase print collection and 9 (37.5%) environment of the library.

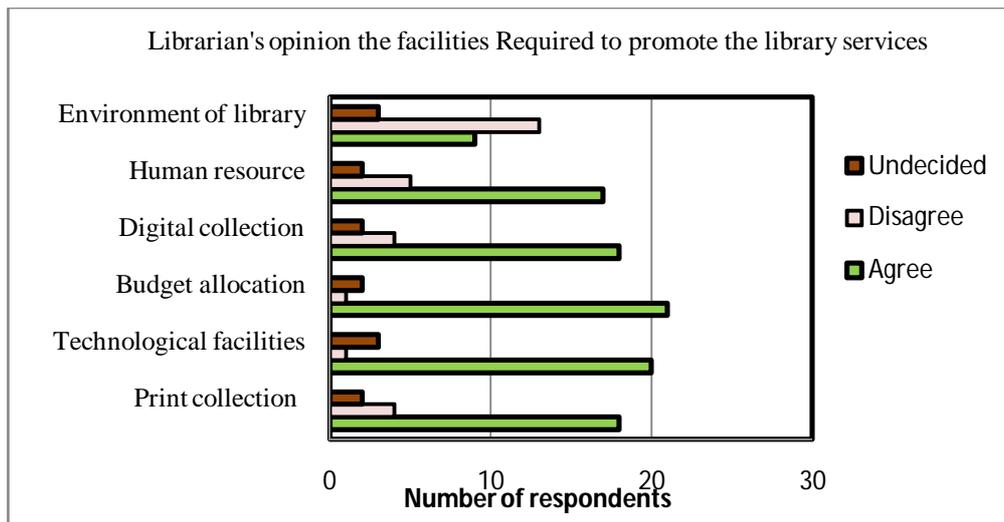
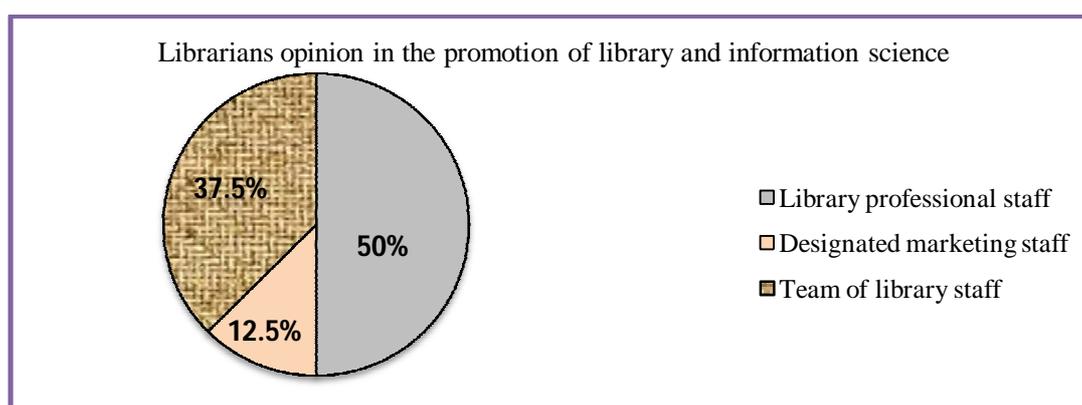


Figure 3: Librarians' opinion the facilities required to promoting the library services

Table 10: Librarians opinion in promotion of library and information services

S. No.	Responsible persons to promote the library services	Number of Responses	Percentage
1	Library professional staff	12	50.0
2	Designated marketing staff	3	12.5
3	Team of library staff	9	37.5
	Total	24	100

Table 10 depicts the role of library professionals to promote the library products and services of the library. All the library professional staff has to take responsible 12 (50%) to promote the library service, 9 (37.5%) suggested team work is required to improve the service and only 3 (12.5%) recommended designated marketing staff appointed for marketing related activities.

**Figure 4:** Role of library professionals in promotional activities

Findings

1. More than 80 percent of respondents states that the purpose of marketing help to identify users' expectation, to improve library resources and services, to promote library usage, to upgrade the quality of services, to create awareness among the users and to expose various electronic resources to the users.
2. Nearly 80 percent of the librarians think that the Engineering college libraries should have vision and mission statement and designated personnel to handle the marketing activities, but none of the libraries has separate funds, specifically designated personnel for marketing related activities. Rathore (1995) and Kanaujia (2004) obtained similar results in the studies carried out by them.
3. All the self-supporting college libraries, head of the institution are the decision making authority, and shows that librarians are not getting the chance to apply their knowledge into marketing practices and application planning for the

libraries.

4. More than 90 percent of librarians identified the user's needs by monitoring and enquiries, and frequently used books (via date label); more than 80 percent of the libraries followed personal contacts and suggestion box method. Most of the Engineering College librarians give less importance (33 percent) for survey method to finding the users requirement.
5. The AICTE (appendix-1) mandated for tangible and intangible products for libraries. According to the norms, all engineering college libraries have Internet facilities, e-journal database, photocopying service, scanning and printing facilities etc. users can utilize these facilities regularly.
6. Of them 95 percent of the libraries collect nominal charges for photocopying services, inter library loan services and scanning/printing services.
7. More than 90 percent of the librarians followed the traditional method of promoting activities like newsletters, brochures and new arrival display etc.; less than 50 percent of the librarians were used e-mail to promoting the library product/services. However, web based marketing is not so familiar among these Libraries.
8. Library professional's response to marketing planning and implementing the same to promote the library products and services.

Suggestions

1. Each library should have a marketing plan for promoting the usage of existing facilities.
2. All the libraries should develop their library web site.
3. Libraries should create their social media marketing plan and social media services
4. All library staff must be educated and trained to use social media tools for marketing library resources and services.
5. Separate and sufficient budget should be provided for efficient use of library products through marketing.

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