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Marketing Features on University Library Websites in Pakistan

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Abstract

The purposes of the study are to identify marketing key features through content analysis of university library websites in Pakistan. Also compare the public and private sectors university library websites in terms of marketing activities. Similarly, expose marketing key features that lacks in public and private sector university library websites. Based on the adopted criteria, a checklist of marketing features was designed. A purposive sample of 53 main (Central) libraries websites of public and private sector universities having at least one marketing feature was selected for detailed analysis. The study reveals that the overall situation of university library websites in terms of marketing features is not good. However, public sector university library websites are comparatively better in this regard than the private sector. The results of the study help libraries to design and implement a strategic marketing plan that will ultimately create awareness about library resources and services via websites and help to improve the image of universities libraries in Pakistan. This study is new in Pakistan and fills the gap in the literature on the subject. Moreover, this study will support in developing library websites equipped with marketing features.

Keywords:- University library; University library website; Marketing features; online marketing; Web marketing; Marketing strategies

Paper Type: - Research Paper

Introduction

The literature in marketing library services has always guaranteed to ask users about their needs and desires, but this practice is not common so far all over the world. Librarians generally believe that they know what is best? (De Rosa et al., 2005). It has been challenged by a continuous increase in information sources on the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW). Teachers and students no more depend on libraries only as an exclusive repository for printed material and believe that there are other sources which can fulfill their information needs. Users are turning towards search engines like Google and Yahoo etc. because libraries are losing their role as a primary information provider. Search engines are becoming an initial source of information or starting point for users to conduct their research (De Rosa et al., 2005). Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) conducted a study in 2005 and the findings of the study showed that the majority of people used search engines for information seeking instead of libraries. The study revealed that only two percent of students of the university used library website for starting their research. Millions of information consumers among the university students have been created due to ease of information acquired through WWW. So, there is a need that libraries actively promote available services and resources to their users (Mi & Nesta, 2006); otherwise, they will lose their users due to Yahoo and Google. The phenomena about users' preference to use search engines for information seeking rather than libraries is due to libraries poor role and failure to promote and market their resources and services to users and attract them towards libraries (Fialkoffm, 2006).

Promotional activities like posters, exhibitions, bulletins and display panels etc. (Ronan, 2003; Kibbee et al., 2002), radio, direct mail and newspapers ads (Girvin Strategic Branding & Design, n.d.) events for promotion (Coppola et al., 2002) were all included in traditional library

marketing strategies. The library objective at that time and even now was in support of the institutional mission. Marketing strategies are not only adopted to inform users about library services and collections but also to develop relations with the library users. These strategies start and end with library users' awareness about library usage: their concerns, their needs and their values (Kaur, 2009).

Most academic librarians agree upon the importance of marketing library services. Many libraries have accepted the need for active promotion or marketing library services and resources (Lee, 2005). The world is going toward the Internet. People and organizations are using the Web, and their number is increasing day by day. Keeping in view the importance of the Web, university libraries have also developed their websites to promote their services and collections. It has been done to attract users toward libraries and to retain their position as a source of reliable information as in the past.

Comparing to advanced countries, in developing countries like Pakistan, the development of library websites is not up to mark and progress in this regard is slow. The progress of literature produced in this area of study is not much satisfactory (Ameen, 2004).

In Pakistan, there are few studies made on university library websites, which were based on content analysis of websites. Qutub and Mahmood (2009) conducted a study to examine the content of websites of academic, public, national and special libraries in Pakistan. Mairaj (2013) conducted an evaluation study regarding the use of university library websites in Pakistan.

The position of literature produced regarding the marketing of university library services and products is not satisfactory in Pakistan. Asghar (2011) conducted a study regarding the marketing of library and information services and products for university libraries of Punjab

province and Islamabad. So, this area of study needs attention for producing more scholarly literature.

The marketing on the Web in university libraries of Pakistan still neglected, and no study has been conducted yet. This area demands attention to produce scholarly literature on this subject because the modern practice in university libraries is the marketing of library products and services through websites. University libraries in Pakistan have to develop their websites containing striking marketing features. In this way, they can attract their clients in a better way by marketing their services and products. Even Khan and Rafiq (2019) mentioned that libraries can survive in current scenario by providing library services through social media sites. So it is the need of the day to involve technology while dealing with Google generation.

This study will be helpful to cover the gap in the literature on the subject in Pakistan. Therefore, this study will be helpful for university libraries in Pakistan to develop their websites having marketing features.

Research Objectives

- 1- To identify the key features of the public and private sector university library websites for marketing in Pakistan.
- 2- To make a comparison of the public and private sector university library websites in terms of marketing.
- 3- To identify those marketing features in which the public and private sector university library websites in Pakistan are lacking.

The significance of the Study

This study examines the current status of Pakistani university libraries regarding marketing through websites. The results of the study will help libraries in planning to design and

implement a marketing strategic plan to reach and serve their users in a better way and to improve the image of libraries.

The study is new in Pakistan and fills the gap in the research as no study has been conducted so far on this topic. Therefore, it will be helpful for university libraries to design their websites having marketing features.

The trend of developing websites is in progress in university libraries in Pakistan for marketing their resources and services in order to serve and reach their users in a better way. The study will also be helpful for those university libraries which are planning to develop their websites. They can consult this study in order to design their websites having powerful marketing features.

Delimitations of the Study

1. This study included both public and private sector universities recognized by Higher Education Commission (HEC) only; and excluded HEC recognized Degree Awarding Institutes (DAIs).
2. The study included only main/central library websites or web links of the public and private sector universities of Pakistan.
3. The university library websites having marketing-related features were included.

Literature Review

Without users' willingness response, the development of library collection and provision of online services are meaningless. Users' feedback is essential and useful for an academic library (Kaur, 2009). A group of researchers carried out one such type of attempt by analyzing 69 academic libraries websites. They wanted to find out how important collections and services are promoted to faculty members through the website. There were modifications made in the

methodology of coding that was used by Detlor and Lewis in 2006. Their study reported that most of the libraries believed faculty Web pages as an essential outreach source for promotion of library services for research and teaching. However, those libraries did not explore sufficiently the opportunities of contribution to scholarly communication through institutional repositories, open access and digital library initiatives besides essential services like reserves, lending, and access to online catalog and databases, and document delivery (Gardner et al., 2008).

Welch (2005) reported a survey of 106 academic libraries conducted in the US to study the placement of marketing and public relations links on the homepages. In that survey, four categories were used to analyze the university and library homepages based on primary goals of library marketing and public relations. Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in its study in 1999 reported four categories as below:

- Visibility increasing – direct link for library website from the homepage of the institution.
- Fundraising – direct links to donations/gifts and friends/associates group pages.
- Consultation and Comments – direct links to "Ask-a-librarian," comments or e-mail pages.
- Information – direct links to exhibits, exhibits news, new collection or “what’s new” pages. (p. 227).

This study results showed that academic research libraries were doing well for visibility, consultation, and comments, but lacking in terms of fundraising and information (Welch, 2005).

Detlor and Lewis (2006) conducted an evaluation study of 107 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) websites. The study proposed that libraries should spend more resources to market the library website to the campus community.

Kaur (2009) reported a study focused on 22 websites of universities and their libraries. The study was conducted in Malaysia in 2008. The study examines to what extent the university and university library websites are being used for marketing library services and collections. The adopted criteria for determining marketing strategies were the same as used by Welch (2005). The results revealed that academic libraries marketing practices focuses on library collection and services. The academic libraries had made efforts to improve visibility, but there was a need to raise awareness about coordination and resource sharing, and to create open and convenient channels of communication to buildup relationship between libraries and users.

Konnur, Rajani and Madhusudhan (2010) conducted an evaluation study regarding academic library websites in Bangalore city of India. The study revealed that very few websites provided information regarding the date of the last updating. It was also found that very few websites provided a link to other Web reference sites and a moderate number of websites had feedback forms for comments. On the other hand, a good number of websites were efficient for loading icons, images, and graphics, while a large number of websites had incorporated a Web OPAC.

Madhusudhan (2012) conducted a study in India that was related to Web-based library services in the university libraries. The results of the study revealed that many university libraries did not fully utilize their websites and lack in their practical usage. A few libraries were offering innovative web-based library services in their different sections. The study also revealed an urgent need for developing dynamic library websites with integrated Web 2.0 technologies.

Status of Web Marketing in Academic Libraries of Pakistan

The studies on Marketing on the Web in university libraries in Pakistan do not exist. This area of study is lagging. Many studies have been conducted to investigate ICT applications in academic libraries, and few were related to the Web. A few studies conducted on the subject were based on content analysis of the university library websites. The examples of such studies are being described one by one.

Mahmood (2008) conducted a study on library web OPACs in Pakistan. The study revealed that indigenous Web OPACs were at an initial stage of development and offering basic facilities to their users. They were not providing facilities like advanced countries. The shortcomings included an absence of MARC format and Z39.50 protocol. The study also revealed that only a few catalogs could accommodate non-Roman scripts like Urdu and other local languages.

Qutub and Mahmood (2009) conducted a Web-based study on library websites in Pakistan. The study revealed that a few Pakistani libraries had developed their websites. No directory was available from where library websites could be located. The study also revealed that there was no scholarly literature produced on the topic before the study. There were no specific standards for the selection of content for the development of the library websites, so there was a lack of uniformity.

Mirza and Mahmood (2009) conducted a study on web-based services in university libraries of Pakistan. The results showed that in General University Libraries (GUL), Web-based services were in their infancy stage. The study recommended that LIS professionals must understand the need and importance of Web-based services and should take initiatives for this

purpose. Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, Library & Information Science schools and professional associations should provide training opportunities to librarians.

Mairaj (2013) conducted an evaluation study on the use of Pakistani university library websites. A total of 17 universities were selected including eleven public sectors and six private sector universities. The study revealed that the use of university library websites was satisfactory in Pakistan.

Khan, Zahid and Rafiq (2014) conducted a study to assess the University of Management and Technology (UMT) library website and mentioned that the scope and contents of the library website were appropriate in library users' perspective. However, the structure and organization of the library website were found unsatisfactory in users' perspective and need more attention for improvement.

Khan and Ameen (2020) conducted a study "*An Assessment of Effectiveness of GCU Library Services in Fulfilling Users' Needs and Demands*" and suggested some strategies for the improvement of less used library services by mentioning to upload library services video on official library website to make awareness among library users about library services. Also, suggested to preparation of social media library site to register library users for library services and announcements.

Research Design and Methodology

The target population of this study was the library websites of public and private sectors universities in Pakistan. The website of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) (www.hec.edu.pk) was used to identify where a complete list of public and private sector universities recognized by HEC and approved by Federal Government of Pakistan was available. There were (72) public sector universities and (45) private sector universities which were

recognized by HEC. The Degree Awarding Institutes on the list recognized by HEC were excluded. Therefore, the initial population of the study was 117 public and private sector universities and their main library websites.

The criteria adopted by Welch (2005) in his study regarding academic library website as a marketing and public relation tool were mainly used as an instrument to collect the data as follows:

Visibility:	direct link from the institutional home page to the library web site.
Fundraising:	direct links to friends/associates group pages and gifts/donations.
Information:	direct links to news, exhibits, new collections, or "what's new" pages.

Consultation and Comments: direct links to "Ask-a-librarian," e-mail, or comments pages.

Kaur (2009) in her study used the same criteria to investigate Web marketing in university libraries of Malaysia. She further included more features and sub-features for different strategies (visibility, networking, information, consultation, and comments) of the used criteria. These features and sub-features have also been included in the adopted criteria with some changes such as visibility for "language options." English and Urdu are included, for "direct links to associate groups," Pakistan Library Association and Provincial Library Association links are included. In the fundraising category "for direct Links to funding organizations, friends groups," Higher Education Commission link is included. For the Information category, link to HEC Digital library is included.

Keeping in view the criteria, a checklist of features was compiled to examine university library websites and to find out what features were included and what was not included for marketing of library services and collections. The 53 selected university websites and their main

library Web links including 38 from public and 15 from the private sector were analyzed. Purposive sampling was made for selection of 53 universities and their main library websites on the base of the active or working position of websites at the time of analysis.

The criteria used in the study have already been followed in previous studies; Welch (2005) and Kaur (2009) and reported in peer-reviewed journals, so there was no question regarding validity and reliability of the instrument used. For data collection, a form was designed. The content of all university library websites was analyzed following the criteria. The data gathering was self-administered, and the researcher personally gathered the data by exploring and analyzing the content with the help of the checklist.

Results and Discussion

The data has been analyzed by four marketing strategies including visibility, networking, information, consultation, and comments.

Visibility

Visibility means the presence of a direct link to the library website on the university main web page. A direct link means library link which is visible immediately on the university homepage. Any pop-up or pull-down links and mouse over links were taken as indirect links (see Table I). The visibility included four main features such as a link to a library from university main web page, language options, direct link to associate groups and a direct link to "library news" (tailored message to library users). The tailored message means the message which was created by library administration for library users regarding library services or collection. In the link to a library from university main website, two sub-features were included: Direct link (immediately visible), no direct links (drop-down menu, mouse over, second page...).

For direct link (immediately visible), data showed that 39 (73.58%) university library websites had a direct link on the university main web page of which 29 (76.31%) library websites were from the public sector and 10 (66.67%) from the private sector. The results showed that the majority of the university library websites had direct links to university homepages. However, library websites of public sector universities had a better percentage. Similarly, data indicated that 14 (26.41%) university library websites had an indirect link (drop-down menu, mouse over, second page...) on their respective university websites of which nine (23.68%) websites were from the public sector and five (33.33%) from the private sector. The results revealed that public sector university library websites were less in percentage than private sector university library websites regarding this feature. For a link to the library from the university main web page, the results are similar to the findings of the studies conducted by Kaur (2009) and Welch (2005).

For visibility, the second factor or feature was readability of the university library websites. The national language of Pakistan is Urdu, and English is taken as the official language. The University libraries have both local and international clientele, so it is necessary that their library websites be in both languages for more readability by a majority of the students or clients. Both languages are very important for information dissemination and effective marketing. There were three options for library website language. In the first option "English language only," the results revealed that the situation regarding this feature in both public and private sector university libraries was perfect.

Table I: Visibility

Criteria	Description	Public University(38)		Private University(15)		Total (n=53)	
			%		%		%
Links to a library from university main page	Direct link(immediately visible)	29	76.31	10	66.67	39	73.58
	No direct links (drop-down menu, mouse over, second page...)	09	23.68	05	33.33	14	26.41
Language options	English language only	38	100	15	100	53	100
	English and Urdu language	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Urdu language only	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct Links to Associate Groups	Pakistan Library Association	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Provincial Library Association	0	0	0	0	04	07
	Other Local University Libraries	0	0	0	0	0	0
Direct link to” library news”(tailored message to library users)	Library programs	04	10.52	0	0	04	07.54
	Exhibitions	03	07.89	01	6.6	04	07.54
	Library updates/information	18	47.36	11	73.33	29	54.71
	Photographs of events	05	13.15	00	0	05	09.43
	Online bulletin	06	15.78	02	13.33	08	15.09

For the second option "English and Urdu," the data indicated a desperate situation as there was not a single public or private sector university library website that had a binary option of Urdu and English language.

The third option was "Urdu language only", the data equally showed a desperate situation. Not a single university library website of the public and private sector universities had Urdu option or Urdu version.

The results of the study regarding this feature (language option) match with the findings of Kaur (2009) study; both studies results are useful for English language option but poor for dual languages.

For the third feature of visibility, "direct links to associate groups," there were three sub-features. First, sub-feature was a direct link for Pakistan Library Association. The data showed that no university library website from both the public and private sector had a direct link to Pakistan Library Association (PLA).

Fundraising

Fundraising was defined as direct links of funding organization and friends groups for fundraising to financially support the library. Direct links for gifts and donation were also included (see Table II).

The first feature for fundraising was "direct links to funding organizations, friends groups." It had two sub-features. First one was "link for parent organization," there were three options for that sub-feature. For the first option direct link to parent organization, the data showed that 43 (81.13%) University library websites had a direct link to their parent organizations, of which 28 (73.68%) were from the public and 15 (100%) from the private sector.

Table II: Fundraising

Criteria	Description	Public (38)	University %	Private University(15)	%	Total(n=53)	%
Direct Links to funding organizations, friends groups	Parent organization						
	(Direct link)	28	73.68	15	100	43	81.13
	(No direct link)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(No link at all)	10	26.31	0	0	10	18.86
	Higher Education Commission						
	(Direct link)	01	2.63	0	0	01	02.63
	(No direct link)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(No link at all)	37	97.36	15	100	52	98.11
Direct links for gifts/donation							
	(Direct link)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(No direct link)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(No link at all)	38	100	15	100	53	100

The results revealed that the position of private sector university library websites was quite better than the public sector, while the overall situation was quite good.

For the second sub-feature of "direct link to funding organizations, friends groups," that is the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan. There were three options for it; for the first option direct link to HEC, the data showed that just one (2.63%) university library websites from public sector had a direct link for Higher Education Commission. For the second option indirect link to the Higher Education Commission, the data showed that there was no university library website from both sectors that had an indirect link for the Higher Education Commission. The results revealed that the situation was very alarming in both sectors regarding this feature.

Information

Availability of information is essential for public relations. A library is required to promote its collection and services through Web, when specific features of information are provided like information regarding new library collections, link to internet resources, link to newspapers, direct link to library news regarding available resources and services such as library programs, photographs of events, library updates, exhibitions, and online bulletin (see Table III). The data showed that 13 (24.52%) university library websites had " link for new library collection (books, journals/databases)," of which 11 (28.94%) were from the public and two (13.33%) from the private sector. The results revealed that the status of public sector university library websites was better than the private sector, but the overall situation was not satisfactory in both sectors. The results of the study regarding this feature differ from the findings of the study conducted by Kaur 2009).

Table III: *Information*

Criteria	Description	Public University(38)		Private University(15)		Total(n=53)	
			%		%		%
New library collection(books journals/databases)		11	28.94	02	13.33	13	24.52
Link to internet resources(subject based resources)		16	42.10	06	40	22	41.50
Link to HEC digital library		17	44.73	06	40	23	43.39
Link to newspapers		12	31.57	0	0	12	22.64
Direct link to" library news"(tailored message to library users)	Library programs	04	10.52	0	0	04	07.54
	Exhibitions	03	07.89	01	06.67	04	07.54
	Library updates/information	18	47.36	11	73.33	29	54.71
	Photographs of events	05	13.15	0	0	05	09.43
	Online bulletin	06	15.78	02	13.33	08	15.09

For “link to HEC Digital Library,” the data showed that 23 (43.39%) university library websites had a link for it, of which 17 (44.73%) were from the public and six (40%) from the private sector. The results revealed that the situation of public and private sector university library websites was almost the poor, so the overall situation was also unfortunate. Link for HEC Digital Library should be part of every public and private sector university web links because it is a beneficial and informative source of information, where thousands of online books and journals available and government of Pakistan also spending thousands of dollars annually for subscription of online journals and books databases for this digital library.

Consultation and Comments

"Consultation and comments" is the fourth strategy of adopted criteria for measuring marketing features on a university library website. There are different features for “consultation and comments” included: direct links to contacts, library mission statement, links to search engines, copyright information, feedback/complaints/suggestions, and user survey link (see Table IV).

For “direct links to contacts” means that there should be an email address to reference librarian so that users can contact the library for guidance and consultation about library services and resources. The data showed that 19 (35.84%) university library websites had a direct link for it, of which 15 (39.47 %) were from the public and four (26.67%) from the private sector. The results revealed that for this feature the public sector university library websites were in the better state as compared to the private sector, however overall the situation was not good. The results of the study regarding this feature in contrast with the findings of the studies conducted by Welch (2005) and Kaur (2009).

A library mission statement is also an essential feature for users' awareness about library mission. In this regard, the results revealed public sector university library websites were in the better state as compared to the private sector university library websites, but overall the situation was poor in both sectors. The results of the study regarding this feature are in contrast with the findings of the study conducted by Kaur (2009).

Table IV: *Consultation and Comments*

Criteria	Description	Public University(38)		Private University(15)		Total (n=53)	
			%		%		%
Direct links to contacts	Email(ask a librarian)	15	39.47	04	26.67	19	35.84
Library mission statement		12	31.57	03	20	15	28.30
Links to search engines		01	02.63	0	0	01	01.88
Copyright information		0	0	0	0	0	0
Feedback/complaints/suggestions		05	13.15	0	0	05	09.43
User survey link		0	0	0	0	0	0

Recommendations

Following recommendation are made from the results of the study.

1. The university authority and library administration should take steps to increase the visibility of their library websites by giving their direct links on university websites.
2. The library administration should take measures to design library websites in multi-languages to increase their readability.
3. Direct links to other university libraries should be provided to increase collaboration and provide library users with multiple sources of information.
4. The link of new library collection on the university library website should be provided for users 'awareness and maximum use of these information resources.
5. HEC digital library is a rich source of information where thousands of journals and books on different subjects are available. Both public and private sectors university libraries in Pakistan should incorporate its link on their websites.
6. For users' awareness, the direct link of library news such as programs, exhibitions, and photographs of events should be on a university library website.
7. Reference service is an essential service in any library, so a direct link to contact the reference librarian should be provided on the university library website.
8. Search engines are essential sources of information on the Web, so links to search engines should be incorporated into the university library website.
9. Plagiarism is a big issue for researchers and students, and in order to save them from plagiarism from this issue, the link of copyright information about different information sources should be a part of any university library website.

10. Users' feedback/complaints link should be an integral part of any university library website to know about users' feedback regarding library services and users complaints.
11. A user survey is a handy tool to know about users' needs and demands, so its link should also be a part of a university library website.
12. The results revealed that both public and private sectors university library websites in Pakistan lack different marketing features, Therefore, the authorities of public and private sectors universities especially, the private sector university should take necessary steps to make their library websites full of marketing features.
13. A survey of modern world university library websites should be conducted before developing or improving the Web link or website of a university library. The key and new features of these websites related to marketing should be included in the website to promote the library.
14. The experts having good knowledge about library marketing should also be involved in developing a new university library website or to improve its marketing content.
15. University library authorities should conduct different refresher/training courses about library Web marketing for librarians.
16. The library schools should include Web developments courses into the curriculum.
17. The criteria such as Welch should be followed while developing any university library website.
18. The university libraries have to change their traditional approach regarding marketing and promoting their services and collections using the Web as a tool. Librarians should

work on their websites to make them informative and attractive. In this way, the patrons will use the library website to know about library services and collections.

Conclusion

This study is based on criteria containing four strategies to evaluate the content of university library websites for marketing features including visibility, fundraising, information, consultation and comments. Each strategy has different features and sub-features.

For visibility perspective, there are three key features of public and private sector university library websites including, direct link (immediately visible) from university main web page, language option and direct link for library updates/information. For the second strategy (fundraising) perspective, the only essential feature is direct links to the parent organization. For third strategy (information), there are three key features of public and private sector university library websites including, link to internet resources (subject-based databases), link to HEC digital library and direct link for library updates/information.

The results of the study reveal that the situation of public sector university library websites is far better than the private sector university library websites in terms of marketing as this study is based on criteria followed by Welch and Kaur which include different features for marketing. The results show that for a number of marketing features the public sector university library websites are better than the private sector including; direct link to library from university main page, library programs, exhibitions, photographs of events, online bulletin, new library collection (books, journals/databases), link to HEC digital library, link to newspapers, link to Higher Education Commission, direct link to contacts and library mission statement etc. The results show that just for two features, private sector university library websites are better than the public sector university library websites including a link for library updates /information and

link for the parent organization. This shows a better situation of the public sector university library websites than the private sector in terms of marketing.

The results of the study reveal that there are sixteen marketing features in which both public and private sector university library websites are lacking including, dual language (Urdu and English) option for university library website, direct links to associate groups, direct link for library programs, direct link for library exhibitions, direct link for photographs of events, direct link for online bulletin, direct links to funding organizations, friends including link to HEC website, direct link for gifts/ donation, link for new library collection (books, journals/databases), link for newspapers on university library website, direct link to contacts, library mission statement, link to search engines, copyright information, feedback/complaints/suggestion link and user survey links.

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