



Marketing Initiatives of Rabindra Library, Assam University: An Assessment

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Abstract

This study aims to assess marketing initiatives undertaken at the Rabindra Library of Assam University, focusing on marketing strategies, tools and techniques used, user satisfaction, users' perception of marketing and a SWOT analysis. The survey method was adopted for the study, along with a structurally designed questionnaire to collect data from the librarian and the user community. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed randomly within the library premises, and 184 duly filled-in such questionnaires were received. The study found that the library practices traditional marketing techniques, such as orientation programs, outreach, pamphlets, etc., and modern techniques, such as websites, social networking sites, e-mails, etc. The assessment also reveals that the users have a strong perspective on marketing the library services and products. The study suggested conducting marketing surveys regularly to understand users' need, appointment of well-trained library professionals with marketing backgrounds and to improve the library infrastructures, products and services to attract users.

Keywords: Library Marketing, Marketing Initiatives, Rabindra Library, Assam University, Assessment.

1. Introduction

Marketing, traditionally associated with profit-making sectors, has now been considered vital to the management of libraries (Kaur & Rani, 2008). Marketing in a library context is the process of planning, promoting, and advertising library resources and services to meet users' needs and expectations (Cox Norris, 2005). Over the years, Academic libraries have transformed into a centre for information, research support, and learning. However, marketing has become crucial in the academic library because of technological development, competitive environment, shrinking parent

organization support, users' complex information needs, and declining clients (Iwu-James et al., 2020). Today, effective marketing strategies and the use of social media are essential to attract users, spread awareness of resources and services and connect with potential users, particularly young tech-savvy users (Jones & Harvey, 2019). Market research in libraries allows librarians to anticipate user needs, design an effective marketing strategy, and satisfy users' information needs. In this present study, an attempt has been made to assess the marketing initiatives of Rabindra Library of Assam University, Silchar, focusing on its products and services. This study would be beneficial



methodologically for researchers interested in market research and practically to academic librarians.

2. Review of the Related Literature

There are various articles on the marketing of library products and services. Kaur & Rani (2008) pointed out that marketing the library is an approach towards user satisfaction. In their study, David & Sagun (2012) highlighted "the need for marketing programs among users community to increase resource utilization". "Atuase & Maluleka (2023) investigated "the impact of marketing on library usage and found marketing increased awareness and motivated students to use them. It is necessary to adopt marketing in libraries as innovation is accelerating (Robinson, 2012), changing the user base ' (Velasquez & Campbell-Meier, 2018), and staying relevant in this competitive environment(Rao, 2014).

Marketing strategies are essential for successful marketing. A study conducted by Agbo & Eyinnah (2022) identified effective marketing strategies such as " exhibitions, training, seminars, workshops, and media releases". ' Theodorou & Tsoubtrakakou (2017) identified marketing techniques such as "branding, public relations, publicity, and advertising to convince users that their existence and services are not a necessity but a privilege and opportunity". Balaraman & Dutta (2023) pointed out the need for Web marketing. " Del Bosque et al.(2017) highlighted "effective planning of outreach". Today, social media is becoming an important marketing tool as it helps create, deliver, and share information resources, and increase user awareness of their services (AlAwadhi & Al-Daihani, 2019). In their study, 'Anwar & Zhiwei (2020) highlighted the profound impact of social media on libraries". In their study, Jones & Harvey (2019) highlighted the increasing trend of libraries using social

media to connect with potential users, particularly the younger demographic. Moreover, marketing the library is not free from barriers. Ofori et al. (2020) also highlighted obstacles such as limited funds, lack of marketing knowledge, and poor marketing policy. In another study, Waral L et al. (2021) revealed barriers such as poor SM marketing skills, limited funds, and high printed and E- document prices. The brief literature review has revealed that, while marketing is crucial in this era, many studies highlighted the transformative potential of social media in library marketing and the complexities and challenges involved.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are to:

- ❖ Investigate whether the library is marketing its services and products
- ❖ Identify tools and techniques used by the library for marketing
- ❖ Investigate users' satisfaction with library services and products
- ❖ Observe the user's opinion on marketing of library services and products
- ❖ Assess the feasibility of social media in marketing the library
- ❖ Conduct SWOT analysis.

4. Research Methodology

The present study employs the survey methods and applies two structured questionnaires to collect data explicitly tailored for librarians to obtain data on the library and marketing profiles and the targeted users. The questionnaire was presented to the librarian and the users. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed among users, a total of 184 were successfully returned, which have been included in the study. The acquired



data was processed and coded using Microsoft Excel and then imported into SPSS version 26 for further analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the closed-ended questions. Likert scale data were first processed for reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha and then processed for analysis. The user's feedback is analyzed qualitatively and organized thematically. Finally, the SWOT analysis was conducted.

5. Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of data has resulted

different aspects as follows:

5.1 Marketing profile of the library

Table 1 shows the marketing profile based on the responses from the librarian. It has revealed that the library uses conventional and modern strategies for marketing. However, despite of its marketing efforts, the library lacks funds for marketing its products and services, and no designated professional is appointed for marketing jobs.

Table 1: Marketing profile based on responses

Perspectives	Responses
Name of the Library	Rabindra library
Marketing and Promotional activities	Yes
Marketing Funds	No
Marketing Professional	No
Tools and Techniques Used	User Orientation Programme, Workshop, Training and events, Outreach, Annual Report, Display Latest arrivals, Pamphlets, Face-to-Face Communication, SMS Services, Website, Social Networking Site, E-mail, Videos
Digital marketing tools	Yes
Digital tools used	Website, Mobile Application, Multi-Media (Video, Audio etc.), SMS, RSS, E-mail, Important Links, Social Networking Sites, Digital Display.
Social Networking site(s) or Social Media platform(s)	Yes
Types of social networking site(s) used	Facebook, YouTube, ResearchGate, WhatsApp, Blogging, LinkedIn
Types of information promoted in Social Networking Sites	Updates Services and Products, New books/resources, Upcoming Events, Links to related pages, Images of the Library, Maps

5.2 Library user's profile

Table 2 shows the user's profile, where most respondents (45.65%) are of 26-30 years. Of these, research scholars (85.71%)

are mostly of 26-30 years, whereas the majority age group 21-25 are dominant among postgraduates (52%). Most users (43.5%) are found to visit the library daily.

Table 2A: Users' profile (N=184)

Course	Age Group			Total
	Less than 20	21-25	26-30	
Post Graduate	36 (36%)	52 (52%)	12 (12%)	100
Research Scholars	0 (0%)	12 (14.28%)	72 (85.71%)	84
Total	36 (19.56%)	64 (34.78%)	84 (45.65%)	184

**Table 2B: Frequency of visiting the library**

No. of visit	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative %
Daily	80	43.5	43.5
Weekly	68	37.0	37.0
Monthly	8	4.3	4.3
Occasionally	24	13.0	13.0
Fortnightly	4	2.2	2.2
Total	184	100.0	100.0

5.3 Awareness about library services

Table 3 shows users' awareness of various library services. It has revealed that users are well aware of Circulation services (97.28%) and Wi-Fi services (68.48%). However, users are found to lack awareness of services such as Orientation programs

(35.86%), Remote Access (34.78%), Research Support (Grammarly) (32.60%), and anti-plagiarism services (30.43%) are moderately known. Awareness is even lower in Reference Service (23.91%), OPAC (23.91%), Document Delivery Service (19.56%), and Bibliographic Service (19.56%).

Table 3: Services known by the users (N=184)

Sl. No.	Library Services	Percentage
1	Circulation (Books issue and return)	97.28%
2	Wi-Fi	68.47%
3	Orientation program	35.86%
4	Remote Access	34.78%
5	Research Support (Grammarly)	32.60%
6	Anti-Plagiarism	30.43%
7	Reference Service	23.91%
8	OPAC	23.91%
9	Document Delivery Service	19.56%
10	Bibliographic Service	19.56%

5.4 Awareness About Products

Table 4 shows that library users are well aware of E-books (76.08%), Journals/E-Journal (71.73%) and Bulletins (58.69%). On the other hand, users are less aware of

products such as published reports from government agencies (46.73%), Conference proceedings (46.19%), bibliographical lists (43.47%), documentation lists (41.30%), and newsletters (40.76%).

Table 4: Awareness about products (N=184)

Sl. No	Products Free	Percentage
1	E-Book	76.08%
2	Journals/E-Journals	71.73%
3	Bulletin	58.69%
4	Published reports from Government and other agencies	46.73%
5	Conference Proceeding	46.19%
6	Bibliographical List	43.47%
7	Documentation List	41.30%
8	News Letter	40.76%



5.5 Sources of information about the services and products

Figure 1 revealed that word-of-mouth (47.28%), library staff (27.17%), library

website (26.63), orientation (25%), Notice board (20.65%) and SNS (20.65%) emerge as the primary sources of awareness of library services and products.

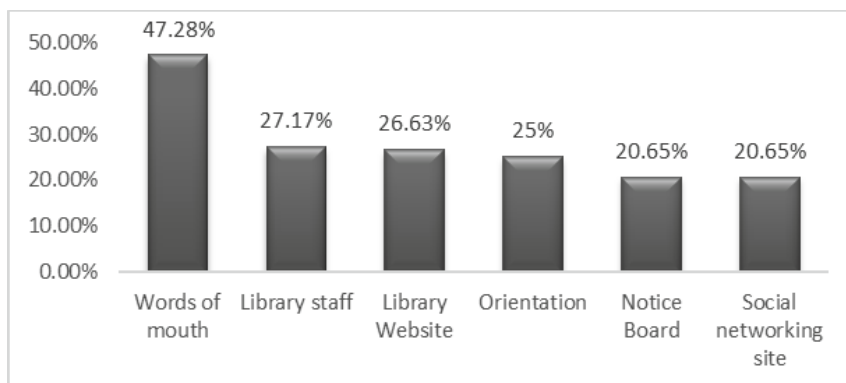


Figure 1: Sources of Information about Services and Product

5.6 User satisfaction

Table 5 shows the user's satisfaction with the services and products offered by the library. It has revealed that most users are

Neutral (42.9%). On the other hand, Dissatisfaction (23.4%) and Very Dissatisfaction (11.4%) are on the higher side.

Table 5: User perceptions on services and product (N=184)

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
4 (2.2%)	36 (19.6%)	79 (42.9%)	44 (23.9%)	21 (11.4%)

5.7 Users' perception of library marketing

Table 6 shows users' perceptions of marketing and library services and products based on seven parameters using Likert scale. The reliability statistics show a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.789, indicating high reliability for the test. The overall mean (Total Mean=4.03) indicated a strong favour for marketing the library among users. There is a strong perception of the orientation programme (Mean=4.41), awareness of

products and services will attract users (Mean=4.26), need for Users' feedback and accessibility to library staff (Mean=4.28) and the importance of developing need-based library services (Mean=4.07). Relatively lower perception can be found in statements like users knowing their information needs and where to find them (Mean=3.57). There is also a relatively lower perception among them concerning the marketing program of library products and services (Mean=3.89).



Table 6: User perception on library marketing (N=184)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Descriptive Statistics	
	Count %	Count %	Count %	Count %	Count %	Mean	Std. D
Marketing and awareness programs for library products and services are necessary	17 (36.96)	16 (34.78)	7 (15.22)	3 (6.52)	3 (6.52)	3.89	1.18
The library should organize an orientation program for new user	25 (54.35)	15 (32.61)	6 (13.04)	0 (.00)	0 (.00)	4.41	.72
Knowing the Products and Services will attract users	21 (45.65)	16 (34.78)	9 (19.57)	0 (.00)	0 (.00)	4.26	.77
I know my information needs and know where to find them in	8 (17.39)	14 (30.43)	21 (45.65)	2 (4.35)	1 (2.17)	3.57	.91
Need-based library services need to be developed	16 (34.78)	17 (36.96)	13 (28.26)	0 (.00)	0 (.00)	4.07	.80
Users' feedback regarding the library should be given importance	22 (47.83)	16 (34.78)	7 (15.22)	1 (2.17)	0 (.00)	4.28	.81
I know I can approach the library Staff to find the information I need	10 (21.74)	20 (43.48)	11 (23.91)	4 (8.70)	1 (2.17)	3.74	.98
Total Mean=4.03							

5.8 On using social media

Social media are crucial tools for marketing today. Table 7 reveals that most respondents (73.9%) agree that the university

library should have a social media platform, indicating a strong demand for its presence. However, 15.2% expressed skepticism, and 10.9% were not sure about it.

Table 7: User of social media in library (N=184)

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	136	73.9	73.9	73.9
	No	20	10.9	10.9	84.8
	Not sure	28	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	184	100.0	100.0	

5.9 User's feedback

Table 8 presents user feedback on the library, focusing on issues encountered during

visits. The feedbacks are analyzed and summarized thematically as follows:

Table 8: User's feedback on the library

Theme	User's Feedback
Infrastructure	a. Study cabins are needed to avoid distractions. b. Limited seating capacity and charging points for laptops. c. Lack of Lighting, drinking water and hygiene. d. Canteen for study break.
Products	a. Lack of curriculum-related books. b. Regular assessment of resources to meet users' needs. c. More digitization resource is required.
Services	a. The remote access only works within the library. b. Many Databases are not able to be accessed.
Time	a. Increase study hours.



6. Major Findings

The Major findings of the study can be highlighted as enumerated below:

- ❖ The study found that Rabindra Library is marketing its products and services using both traditional and modern techniques.
- ❖ In this context, the library uses tools and techniques such as user orientation programmes, workshops, training and outreach, annual reports, displays of the latest arrivals, etc.
- ❖ It is also found that user satisfaction is neutral, while dissatisfaction is on the higher side, indicating the need for improvement.
- ❖ The users show a positive perception of marketing the library, as the seven perception parameters are positive.
- ❖ The result also revealed that most of the respondents (73.9%) favoured social media platforms for marketing library information services and products, indicating a strong demand for social media presence.

7. SWOT Analysis

Analysis of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats), a popular tool for organizations to design strategic planning and formulate policies (Namugenyi et al., 2019) has shown the following. The SWOT analysis has shown the following findings:

Strength: The Strengths of Rabindra library include:

- The library conducts marketing without allocated funds.
- The uses of social media and digital media for marketing.
- Most users visit the library daily.

Weakness: Weaknesses of the library are:

- Lack of awareness about the library services among users.
- Neutral satisfaction with library products and services.

Opportunities: Opportunities of the library are that:

- The use of social media is an opportunity to market the library, as 73.9% indicated the need for its presence.

Threat: Threats as per the analysis include:

- The qualitative analysis of the users' feedback shows the library's issues, which range from infrastructure, products, services, and library timing. Ignoring the problems can be a threat to library usage.

8. Discussion

The Rabindra library utilizes state-of-the-art marketing techniques to promote its services and products. In the meantime, it lacks funds to market its services and products. The lack of funds can hinder library marketing success (Martey,2000). Additionally, users are often unaware of various services, and their satisfaction with library services and products is also found to be neutral, indicating the need for better strategies and improvements in products and services. The use of social media can be a solution to effective marketing and to solve issues such as lack of funds (Velasquez & Campbell-Meier, 2018b). In the current digital environment, using internet-based technologies and social media is vital (Lakshmi & Santhi, 2021). It is time for modern libraries to realize the need for marketing and start investing in it. Libraries should focus on training their staff on using social media marketing and the latest technologies to market their libraries effectively.



9. Conclusion and Suggestions

It is time to take the library's marketing research seriously to ensure the optimal use of libraries and stay relevant in this competitive environment. Understanding the users' needs and satisfying their information needs should be the priority for successful marketing. On the other hand, library professionals should be trained in various aspects of library marketing to attract users and stay relevant in this competitive nature of the environment.

The following suggestions are being put forward based on the researcher's observation and SWOT analysis, where scholars can think of carrying out further research.

- ❖ The library aims to satisfy the user's information needs. As a result, marketing surveys should be conducted regularly to understand what users need.
- ❖ For effective marketing, well-trained library professionals with a marketing background should be appointed to do the marketing work.
- ❖ Improve the library infrastructures, products and services to attract users.
- ❖ Further, researchers are being called to focus on library marketing from a digital perspective, comparing libraries, the need for marketing, etc. The present assessment has given indications in this regard, which can also be applied in other similar libraries.

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