

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN LIBRARIES FOR INFORMATION SHARING AND PROMOTION SERVICES

By

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Abstract

Social media has revolutionized the various ways and means of marketing products, services, and communication in different organisations, including libraries, in this era. Today the world is shrinking socially more in virtual environment and it is very easy for people to create, share or exchange information, ideas and others are not limited to the use of day-to-day activities. These activities of pictures and videos among the virtual communities and networks in our libraries. This paper looked at the concepts of social media, social media marketing and social networking in libraries as tools for information-sharing services. The paper also focused on the benefits of using social media in libraries. This paper also pinpoints some social media products and services such as Facebook, blogs, Instagram, micro blogs YouTube, and social news sites. The challenges associated with using social media in libraries were highlighted. Recommendations were drawn on how to enhance social media marketing and social networking in our present-day libraries.

Keywords: Social media, Social media marketing, Libraries, Social Networking, Information sharing. Library services.

Introduction

Many years ago, the services and promotion activities in the libraries were done manually and physically to a large extent. As time went on people realized the need to promote library services and connect with users within and outside, colleagues, friends and well-wishers to deliberate on educational, political, social, technological, commercial, and economic issues, ideas began to open up on how to tackle these issues.

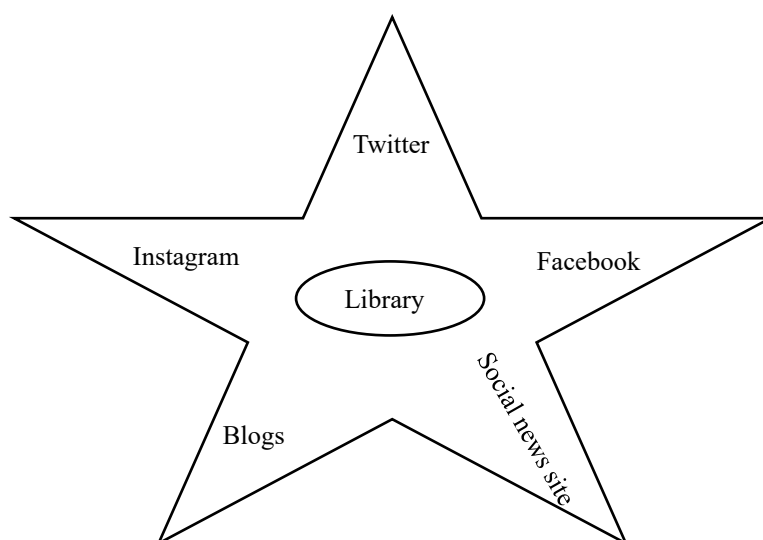
The emergence of the technological vehicles through which social media as one of its components broke these barriers in the activities that concern individuals, and organizations (libraries) to mention but a few in terms of networking and marketing of goods and services. Andrew (2014) asserts that Social Media can be effective in communication and a strong marketing tool for entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations like the library, including advocacy groups and political parties and government. To this, Social media has become increasingly familiar platforms employed in libraries to market services and resources to current and prospective patrons. Hesamin (2013), Ukachi (2017) and Connaway (2015) stated that libraries measured their successes based on completeness and balance of collections which were mainly in print formats. This is no longer the trend of some libraries in the present-day librarianship. These days' library products and services are delivered to users remotely, without being limited by space or time as was done many years back. Kaur (2016) stated that the emergence of social media and subsequent trends of change in media consumption are pushing libraries to adopt social media as one of their marketing, public relation tools, and through it how social networking can enhance library outreach and librarian's collaboration for information sharing and services.

Social media and its marketing according to Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013), opined that due to its reliability, consistency and instantaneous features, opens a wide place for connectivity and networking. Its rapid growth today has made it possible for millions of users, researchers, and other professionals all over the world to be reached. Social media marketing is the use of social media channels to promote an organization (library) and its products (library resources). This approach of marketing library products according to Hafele (2011), states that new tools are being developed and increased in turn for further activities. This is done by encouraging users to spread messages to personal contacts, in order to inject a new pattern of information dissemination and mass communication, for mass marketing of the activities in the library.

However, since social media is a form of electronic communication which is a website for social networking and micro-blogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos, has the features to take libraries to heights and hills. All the features mentioned in the above statement help to bring in social networking which is the creation and maintenance of personal and business relationships, especially online ones. Social networking puts the library in the limelight because social networking ultimately is to build a network of fans/followers which are in other words the library users who through the various social networking sites get acquainted, receive services, and access the libraries.

According to Ukachi (2017), social media tools in library services are now a global trend which has gained acceptance following the marketing participatory and feedback opportunities it provides. Through social media, librarians have succeeded in breaking communication barriers of getting to reach one another, interacting freely at any time and connecting for research writing, knowledge sharing and mutual relationships not minding their geographical locations. On all of these, the library is at the centre and the promotion of their resources is a salient target.

The library according to the authors is like a star-bearing branch that speaks to different locations that the arms are stretched out to. A simple diagram of the star showing its tentacles having some types of social media platforms as shown below was discussed in this paper. These were represented to further explain why it is important to have the library built, and furnished and reach out to the users to take advantage of the treasures in the libraries.



Source: The authors (Alex-Nmecha & Wagwu)

Just like the star shines from a far for people to see its brightness, so are the libraries wherever they are. These tools for library promotion and services make the library be heard from far and wide, thereby bringing the users closer to the library.

Literature Review

The Concept of Social Media

Social media is a tool used by people for several online activities like networking, social interaction, chats, exhibitions, adverts, and so on. The social media is internet-based tool for sharing and discussing information among human beings. Social media according to Kaur (2016) is all about networking and networking in a way that espouses trust among parties and communities involved.

In a similar vein, Zefarani, Liu and Ali (2014) observed that social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media.

The social media networking according to Chopra (2016) has come from a long lineage of primitive predecessors to this era that have become computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share and exchange information, ideas and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Boyd (2016) defined Social media networking as a web-based service that allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. Social media is the most popular media in the present age attracting users irrespective of age and surprisingly the users' time spent on it has almost doubled, he added. Boyd however, buttresses this point by saying that it took 3 years for radio to reach 50 million users, 13 years for television to attract the same number and 4 years for the internet to do so, but it took Facebook 12 months only to gain 200 million users. This is why the library also deems it fit to use social media to reach quite several users because some media unlike the past when they never existed in our homes, offices and libraries have reached millions of people within no time, but with accuracy, longevity and affordability.

Social media according to Qualman (2012) can be considered as an open arena where anybody can participate and the complete universe is approachable. It is imperative to note that social media is a broad one that encompasses a vast array of online resources. Its applications are highly valued for their ability to connect libraries with users who may be unaware of their existence. Social media presence is fundamental to remaining pertinent and meeting user

expectations, particularly with younger users. Social media serves a variety of different purposes. Although it was primarily used to communicate information to current and prospective users, the rate of activity, manner of content creation and methods of delivery varied according to each institution (Collins & Quan-Haze, 2013).

Therefore, the authors decided to discuss on some types based on their usage and popularity. These categories are Facebook, Blogs, Instagram, Microblogs (Twitter is considered here), YouTube and Social News sites.

Facebook:

This is a social networking site used to connect users with similar backgrounds and interests. Most social networks according to Ross (2009) have the same features, personal profile, the ability to add friends, photo albums and a variety the ways to interact with friends, fellow professionals and their content. A typical example of this site is Facebook which is the most popular social network. Facebook is a place people go to relax and chat with friends, so keep your tone light and friendly. Most libraries today make use of Facebook to reach large audiences in advertising the library resources advocacy and other which activities of the library which they deem fit for the public to know and benefit from. Libraries like Donald Ekong Library, University of Port Harcourt, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Covenant University Ogun State, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State are some of the libraries that use Facebook to inform the public about activities from inaugural lectures, call for their universities ranging papers, institutional repositories, acquisition and arrival of new production their libraries for the users to be aware. Apart from these few libraries named above, some universities according to the study carried out by Ukachi (2017) on ‘Use of social media for enhanced service delivery by libraries in Nigerian universities: challenges and solutions are making use of social media marketing in their libraries. See the table below:

Social Media Tools	ABU Zaria Lib	UNIJOS Kenneth Dike Lib	UNILAG Lib	NAU Lib	UNN Lib
Facebook	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Twitter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blog	-	Yes	-	-	-
Youtube	-	-	-	-	Yes
RSS Feed	-	-	Yes	-	-
Printerest	-	Yes	-	-	-
Flickr	-	Yes	Yes	-	-
Instagram	-	-	-	-	Yes

This shows that the awareness of the use of social media in marketing our library materials is making waves in the libraries in Nigeria as a great deal. Most users today prefer to go online to access the university libraries and the information they have. Through these platforms if given the needed attention, the libraries will be heard from every nook and cranny of the society.

Blog:

This is another important tool used by librarians and libraries in information dissemination and retrieval. According to Bruns (2013), blogs are web pages which can be easily updated, and published by a single person or group of people, typically as brief articles displayed in reverse chronological order. Some libraries make use of blogs to put up short notices about current happenings in the library or around the university where the library is domiciled.

Singh (2016) Opined that blogs also called weblogs or weblogs a websites consisting of entries appearing in reverse chronological order with the most recent entry appearing first with features such as comments and links to increase user interactivity. To Singh, blogs are referred to as online personal journals. He further explains that blogs provide a useful way for librarians and libraries to disseminate small snippets of information to their library users. For instance, a subject librarian in an academic library might find it useful to gather database updates, new site and service notices and events information in one place on a blog. Doing this helps to provide oneness and transparency whilst informing library news and events. Using blogs in libraries is a very timely way to offer advice and commentary on current library issues, raise the profile of the library resources, and thus an excellent way of sharing knowledge.

Instagram

Instagram is another important tool for sharing photos of happenings around and in the libraries. It's accompanied by short write-ups about the picture displayed or posted. Libraries and librarians are now using Instagram platform to connect with users in a large of exciting and innovative ways. It is one of the latest platforms that some libraries make use of. Sometimes some librarians make use of this platform to hype their library's achievements, take photos using either their smartphones, laptops or iPads and most times add hashtags before sharing for their followers to see and read or watch and maybe follow them back. According to Mollett and McDonnell (2014), Instagram is fast becoming an exciting platform through which libraries and librarians can share news, achievements, and images of everyday life on

bookshelves conclusion, they advised that with the majority of users in key universities students age brackets, libraries should consider the Instagram merits because through age bracket libraries can ask their users about their favourite authors, a show of The look of their surroundings and the collections that they have, to publicize events, show their history, show things that happen behind the scene and a connect more on their users.

Microblog/Micro-Blogging

Sharing information was never so tech-savvy before now. Today, when one needs advice, needs to share a personal experience, or be aware of the views on any topic on different libraries and their resources, all one needs is to gear up punch a few keys and get into some microblogs about the topic on information sought for. (www.shoutmeloud.com).

Twitter is the most popular micro-blogging site used by some libraries and librarians to gain knowledge, networking as it is a great way of meeting people, connecting with like-minded people, creating awareness of the activities in the library and getting a promotion on different services rendered to users and the world in general. Most libraries use Twitter because it gets reactions from worldwide and provides a place to say it (the library information) and be heard (Dove, 2010). Using Twitter for sharing information in the library according to Solis (2010) helps in storing links to any information link accessed on the web and links to the library. He went further to explain that as the third most popular social network, Twitter connects people widely and is used to report, react and engage topics of national and international concerns. Therefore, to him, any issue that needs an answer from the library or the librarians can best be answered using Twitter. On Twitter, users can find such information interesting and beneficial and follow the poster to get updates from the library.

YouTube

This site is a media storing site, librarians make use of YouTube for librarians use formation sharing. According to Colburn and Haine (2012), librarians use YouTube as a promotional tool. They further stated that libraries use YouTube for outreach purposes. It serves as a platform for sharing information that also has pictures and videos. Libraries make use of YouTube for steaming film collections and instructions on how to make videos, teaching information literacy skills and how to use library services and resources.

Social News Site

This site is sort of 'news bank'. This site in the libraries helps and lets visitors vote on content. According to Kai-Wah Chu and Du (2012) social news sites serve as a filter that separates compelling content from mundane content on the web when users find content of interest they can submit the content to a social news site. The site according to Kaur (2016) features users posted stories and such stories are ranked based on popularity, as voted on by other users of the site or by website administrators. Based on what the users posted, a library that makes use of such a site will work on the user's votes and put up interesting stories about their libraries and at times use the medium to share information about other relevant issues of the library.

The social news sites have different types. Sphinn (2010) gave some examples of the social site Digg which is the most popular of a social news website. It covers a huge variety of topics like technology, it is a very important site for the internet market and will therefore be good for libraries' social media marketing. Show hype is another type mainly used for entertainment and sharing of information. Reddit is another type. It is a large site which covers a large of topics which are separated into sections called subreddits. For this paper, the three mentioned are good, although there are other types very good for library promotion and services.

Social Media Marketing in Libraries

In defining this concept, it is important to describe what marketing is. Marketing simply is the buying and selling of goods and services. People buy different goods and sell different goods too and in the course of doing this services are rendered. Selling in the libraries involves showcasing what products (Library resources) the libraries have with the motive of disseminating information to the users who happen to be the buyers. Two things are involved, the buying and selling of a product or more products which involves two or more people. Social media marketing is a powerful way for libraries of all sizes to reach prospects and customers (users). Your customers are already interacting with brands through social media, and if you're not speaking directly to your audience through social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Prininterest, you're missing out! Great marketing on social media can bring remarkable success to your business, creating devoted brand advocates and even driving leads and sales.

Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing that implements various social media networks to achieve marketing communication and branding social goals. Social media marketing is a powerful way for businesses of all sizes to reach prospects and customers. Your customers are already interacting with brands through social media, and if you're not speaking

directly to your audience through social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest, you're missing out! Great marketing on social media can bring remarkable success to your business, creating devoted brand advocates and even driving leads and sales using social media for marketing according to each platform's unique user base and environment. Different social media marketing sites require different approaches, what this means is to develop a unique strategy tailored for each platform. The bigger and more engaged your audience is on social media networks, the easier it will be for you to achieve every other marketing goal list (<https://www.wordstream.com/social-media-marketing>).

Social media marketing involves social sharing of content, videos and images for marketing purposes. In the case of library marketing, it involves studying the information needs of the client, creating consolidated products and then planning ways of informing library clients about these products and services. Marketing as an academic discipline and management activity, has been the subject of substantial transformation (Constantinides, 2013).

Kaur (2016) stated that social media marketing is a new trend and rapidly growing in a way in which libraries are reacting to targeted customers, it is so because social media marketing is the use of social media channels to promote the products (library resources) and the services rendered in the organization. Libraries that partake in marketing their products online according to Chopra (n.d.) do not face financial difficulties because social media marketing is quite low compared to others and the level of social interaction makes people spend more time in communication activities through emails, IM Chat and social network is high and encouraging. Chopra further revealed that social media provide marketers (librarians/libraries) with the ability to target audiences while they carry out the sales of what their libraries are known for and the services they render, by so doing potential users of the library are captured.

Some comparisons were carried out by Shaveta (2012) indicating the benefits of social media marketing against the traditional form of marketing library resources or products which he identified as books, periodicals. Reference sources, manuscripts, journals and magazines, News bulletin, online resources and others.

In his comparisons, Shaveta opined strongly on some points which gave an edge to using social media marketing. Below is the table showing the comparison:

Traditional Marketing	Social Media Marketing
Time-consuming	Time save

Expensive	Effective
Passive	Interactive
One	Way collaborative
Limited means for marketing a range of social media channels for marketing.	Limited means for marketing a range of social media
Allows little or no interaction with the user community.	Brings librarians closer to users
Static	Creative
Limitation to reach the community	Reachable to the community instantly

All these benefits according to Shaveta (2012) show how social media has changed the traditional way of marketing from the four walls of the library to the worldwide plane.

Challenges of using social media for marketing in libraries

Libraries are increasingly using social media platforms to promote services and highlight resources to library users. But then, in making use of these platforms there must be some challenges associated with using social media in libraries. According to Boloom and Norelli (2018), Kaur (2016) and Anamika (2016) some challenges were itemized in their study and adopted in this paper. These challenges are:

1. Social media can require a considerable time commitment from library staff this is true because for a post to be dropped and comments read, requires the time and commitment of the librarian in charge of the social media platforms.
2. Social media can require technological expertise. This is serious if there has to be customizing of applications to provide access to online catalogues and other library technical jobs. It has to be smart and catchy if it is carried out by a professional to attract users.
3. The authors opined that it can be a challenge for librarians to use an informal but presentable tone, or deliver social media content in a bilingual or multilingual region.
4. Levels of interest in and skills in using social media vary enormously across library staff.
5. There are limited funds to support more advanced social media usage/features and the training that would be required to enable this.
6. A library needs to work hard to maintain engagement with library users and attract popularity.

7. It can be difficult to maintain library branding to make accessible via social media content/resources
8. There is a potential copyright issue when using social media such as YouTube to build collections
9. External factors such as internet connectivity, technological infrastructure and government restrictions on the use of social media may restrict access.
10. Librarians lack marketing principles and skills (Source: The researchers of this paper-Alex-Nmecha & Wagwu (our view))

Recommendations

- There should be training for social media usage for proper marketing of the library products and there should be an effective utilization of the platforms for the libraries that have them
- Libraries should develop social media pages for maximum exploitation of library services
- Librarians should develop their marketing place for utilizing social media for news and service alerts and quick updates to online users and fundraising.
- Libraries should name a particular librarian 'SOCIAL MEDIA LIBRARIAN'. This is to enable the librarian's best time and attention to creating the platform(s), servicing it and seeing to the day-to-day uploads and information retrieval as it concerns the library.
- Librarians should be trained in marketing principles and skills to enable them to carry out the duties of social media marketing and networking in libraries effectively.

Conclusion

The emergence of social media and subsequent trends of change in media consumption are pushing libraries to adopt social media as their marketing and networking tools. This is to make the library product known to the users and general public. It also goes a long way to connects with other libraries and users/patrons to identify with the library. The use of social media is important to capture the attention of online users and help in distance learning, services, knowledge acquisition and sharing (Khan & Bhatti, 2012). With the help of technology libraries can actively play their role which will lead to being more innovative and creative in-service delivery. However, if more attention will be put on the use of social media platforms to carry out library services and promotions it will go a long way to bringing libraries to the open and users will not have choice rather than flow with the trend of things. The training of

librarians on effective use of these media is very pertinent to boost their skills and knowledge to latest tools for marketing.

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