

Do university libraries in Sri Lanka use social media as a marketing tool?

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The development of Information and Communication Technologies and Web 2.0 technology created the opportunities for the librarians to reach their patrons by moving beyond its physical boundaries. As one of the main communication products of Web 2.0 technology, social media plays a vital role on library marketing. Libraries worldwide are using popular social media platforms as a digital marketing tool. Therefore, the objectives of the present study are to: assess the availability of social media platforms to academic libraries in Sri Lanka and to identify the types of social media channels used by academic libraries in Sri Lanka. The universities and higher education institutes accredited to the University Grants Commission (UGC), Sri Lanka were selected as the study sample. There are 15 universities accredited to the UGC, Sri Lanka. The social media accounts of each library were accessed through researchers' own accounts to make sure whether these accounts were created by the particular library. Since this research focused on the availability of libraries on social media, the contents of the social media accounts were not considered. Two libraries Facebook pages were mentioned as 'unofficial' and they were omitted from the study. Finally data were analyzed using Microsoft excel 2010. Results revealed that, nine out of fifteen academic libraries have at least a single account in any type of social media platform. However, of those nine academic libraries (60%) which have at least a single social media account, four academic libraries (40%) provide links through the library homepage. Facebook is the most widely used social media site for marketing university libraries in Sri Lanka. Eight out of fifteen university libraries (53.3%) use Facebook to promote their library and related activities such as events, new arrivals and new services. Only two university libraries (13.3%) published their details on Wikipedia encyclopedia. One library created YouTube (6.7%) and Google+ (6.7%) accounts to market their library services. However, none of the university libraries use Twitter, MySpace, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, LinkedIn or Blogs for promotional purposes. Therefore, libraries must pay their attention to developing strategies to use social media more effectively for library marketing.