

## Marketing strategies for Egyptian university libraries

Review – English Summary

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### Abstract

This document presents a comprehensive study on evaluating marketing strategies for central libraries in Egyptian universities. It explores the current state of these strategies, identifies challenges in their implementation, and investigates their impact on increasing engagement with library services and achieving sustainability. The research utilizes a descriptive analytical approach, gathering data through interviews and reviews of central library managers and officials. The findings reveal a disparity in marketing approaches among libraries, highlighting the need for innovative and comprehensive strategies that leverage technology and increase awareness about the importance of marketing in libraries.

### Keywords

Information service, marketing, academic libraries, Egypt

## 1. Key Themes and Objectives of the Study

The core problem identified by the research is "the lack of sufficient awareness regarding the announced marketing strategies for the marketing process, and the importance of developing a specific time-bound marketing strategy for promoting library services." This highlights a significant gap in structured, long-term marketing efforts within these institutions.

The study's primary objectives are:

- **Assessing Awareness:** To measure the awareness of university library management regarding the importance of marketing strategies for information services.
- **Analyzing Current Strategies:** To analyze the reality of existing marketing strategies, including their effectiveness in attracting users.
- **Identifying Challenges:** To pinpoint the challenges faced by libraries in implementing these strategies.
- **Exploring Impact:** To investigate the influence of marketing strategies on increasing demand for library services and achieving sustainability.
- **Developing Recommendations:** To propose a set of recommendations to enhance marketing procedures and improve the effectiveness of university library services.

## 2. Methodology and Scope

The study employed a descriptive analytical approach, collecting data through a review of "refereed lists, and interviews with central library directors and officials" in Egyptian universities.

### Scope:

- **Subject Boundaries:** Focused on marketing strategies, their components, and functions, aiming to develop a comprehensive vision for their improvement in central university libraries.
- **Geographic Boundaries:** Primarily covered central university libraries in the Greater Cairo area, including both governmental and private universities.
- **Timeframe:** Field visits for the study were conducted during the academic year 2023-2024.

**Sample:** The study included 12 central governmental university libraries and 5 central private university libraries in Greater Cairo.

## 3. Key Findings

The study revealed a varying degree of adoption and effectiveness of marketing strategies across the surveyed libraries, with a notable distinction between traditional and modern approaches.

### 3.1 Awareness and Strategy Implementation:

- **High Awareness, Varied Application:** There is a "100% awareness among central university library directors regarding the importance of marketing library services and products." However, the actual application of defined, written marketing plans varies significantly.
- **Traditional vs. Modern Approaches:** Some libraries rely on "traditional methods," while others, like Egypt University for Science and Technology and October University for Modern Sciences and Arts, have adopted "modern technologies such as electronic marketing and social media platforms."

- **Lack of Written Plans:** Despite awareness, "most central university libraries, both governmental and private, lack a written marketing plan." An exception is the Central Library at MUST (Egypt University for Science and Technology), which has "a marketing policy for each service provided."

### 3.2 Strengths of University Libraries (Current State):

- **Awareness of Marketing Importance:** "The presence of sufficient awareness among directors and staff of central university libraries regarding the necessity of developing a marketing strategy for library services and information."
- **Dedicated Marketing Teams:** Some libraries, such as Cairo University's Central Library, have "teams responsible for promotion and marketing." Others rely on university-wide marketing teams (e.g., October University for Modern Sciences and Arts).
- **Regular Introductory Seminars:** Libraries offer "regular introductory seminars at the beginning of each academic semester" to familiarize users with services and resources.
- **Database Subscriptions:** Libraries provide subscriptions to databases (e.g., "Knowledge Bank") and offer training on their use.

### 3.3 Weaknesses of University Libraries:

- **Insufficient Funding:** A major limitation is the "lack of funding and support for library services," leading to an inability to "update and create new services" and "poor attention to the needs of users."
- **Lack of Comprehensive Marketing Plans:** While awareness exists, "there is no written and clear marketing plan for library services."
- **Limited Internal Marketing Culture:** Despite management awareness, "it is not enough to spread the culture of marketing to all library staff to ensure the effectiveness of service delivery."
- **Poor Interior Design:** "A severe deficiency in the interior design of library halls," negatively impacting user attraction and ease of access to services.
- **Outdated Promotional Materials:** Many libraries still use "old posters and outdated promotional materials" due to funding limitations, failing to attract users.
- **Absence of External Marketing Focus:** While some engage in internal promotion, there is a general weakness in "external marketing initiatives" to reach a broader audience beyond the library's physical walls.

### 3.4 Comparison with International Libraries:

- **Advanced International Models:** International university libraries (e.g., in America, Britain, and Africa) show a strong commitment to marketing, particularly through "a strong technological infrastructure and the use of websites and social media platforms for promotion." They publish news, events, and future plans.
- **Lack of Published Strategies:** Despite their advanced marketing efforts, international libraries generally do "not publish their complete marketing plans," considering them internal procedures.

- **Gap in Arab Libraries:** Arab and African libraries generally "lack marketing strategies for library services through their websites and fail to reach the largest number of users." They often limit their online presence to basic information and news.

#### 4. Recommendations

The study concludes with a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at improving marketing practices in Egyptian university libraries:

##### 4.1 For Academic Libraries:

- **Develop Written Marketing Plans:** Libraries must "prepare written marketing plans that include financial resources and capabilities," aligning with university goals. These plans should be flexible and continuously updated.
- **Diversify Marketing Tools:** "Utilize traditional, electronic, and effective attractive marketing methods and tools" to inform users about available services, and continuously update them to reach the widest audience.
- **Focus on Service Quality:** Emphasize "the quality of services provided by libraries" to maximize user benefit and satisfaction.
- **Utilize Social Media:** "Employ and utilize social media platforms" like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and other emerging platforms for continuous engagement and communication with users.
- **Improve Library Infrastructure:** "Pay attention to the university library building in terms of location and design" to facilitate easy and accessible service delivery.
- **User Training:** Libraries should "train users on how to search for information" within the library.
- **Collection Development & Promotion:** "Focus on developing collections based on user preferences" and promote them effectively through in-library display screens and email.
- **Adopt New Technologies:** Invest in "modern technologies, especially computers and communication devices," to provide advanced information services.
- **Market Research:** Design and implement "marketing research to collect required data about users," analyzing it to meet their information needs.
- **Optimize Resources:** "Develop a written marketing strategy for information services in university libraries" to effectively invest human and material resources in producing and marketing information services.
- **Diverse Activities:** Organize "diverse promotional activities" such as competitions, lectures, and exhibitions to attract different student groups.
- **Promote Unique Resources:** Highlight "unique and specialized resources in the library," such as archives or rare materials, to increase awareness.
- **Allocate Marketing Budget:** "Allocate a specific budget for advertising and marketing campaigns" online and through traditional media.
- **Performance Evaluation:** Conduct "periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing strategies" by analyzing data and measuring their impact on library usage.

- **User Engagement:** Establish "channels for direct communication with students through surveys and interviews" to gather feedback and improve services.
- **Continuous Development:** "Follow developments in marketing and technology" and adapt to changes in user needs.

#### 4.2 For Library Marketing Specialists:

- **Professional Development:** "Work on developing the human element" in libraries by providing training on new marketing developments, especially for specialized library marketing, and optimizing the use of information technology.
- **Continuous Training:** Provide "training courses for staff on marketing and effective communication with users" to enhance their skills.

#### 4.3 For Library and Information Science Departments:

- **Academic Research:** "Increase attention to the topic of marketing institutional resources" and conduct academic research on marketing and strategies specifically for libraries.
- **Guidance Document:** "Create a special guide on how to market library and information services" and update it continuously, in line with technological developments from the Egyptian Library Association and the Arab Federation for Libraries and Information.
- **Academic Collaboration:** "Build partnerships with colleges and departments to enhance library usage" in academic activities.

By implementing these recommendations, university libraries can significantly enhance their marketing strategies, increase student and researcher engagement with their services, and ultimately fulfill their mission more effectively.