

## Prospects and Challenges of Library Marketing Strategies at Private University Libraries in Bangladesh: A proposed model plan

<sup>1</sup>Shohana Nowrin , <sup>2</sup>Sk Mamun Mostofa, <sup>3</sup>Taslima Akter

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Information Science and Library Management  
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka,  
Bangladesh

<sup>3</sup>Dept. of Information Science and Library Management University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Corresponding author : Sk Mamun Mostofa**

**ABSTRACT:** The prime aim of the study is to provide a model plan for marketing library services in private university libraries in Bangladesh. The present paper also conducted based on the two research questions i.e. what are the prospects of library marketing of private university libraries in Bangladesh? and what are the challenges towards library marketing faced by university libraries in Bangladesh? The study used a standardized questionnaire to collect data, consisting of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Total numbers of sample libraries were fifteen (all are private university libraries) and out of fifteen all of the fifteen responses were received from the head of the library of respective private university libraries. The study identified some challenges during library marketing and services like; lack of library infrastructure, absence of suitable qualified staff, and non-appearance of decision-making skills amongst the staff, financial constraints and many others. Finally, the study provides some recommendations for improvement of library marketing among university libraries in Bangladesh.

**KEYWORDS:** Private university library, Marketing strategies, Library marketing, Library services, Bangladesh.

### I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The academic library was founded in colleges, and universities to serve communities of library consumers i.e. students, faculty members and researchers who are the heart of academic library and the services provided by this library is to strengthen the use of library resources and services (Mwageni, 2020). On the other side, the philosophy of marketing holds that the secret to achieving corporate objectives is to assess the target market's needs and expectations and produce the desired satisfactions more efficiently and effectively than competitors (Kotler, 1994). Marketing was perceived to be fragment of a management mechanism beyond the limits of Library and Information Science (LIS) in the early days, and librarians were unable to use it (Garoufallou, et al., 2013; Gupta, 2003; Lovelock and Weinberg, 1990; Cronin, 1992; Weingand, 1999). In 1970s, information experts started to believe that selling their libraries allowing to the needs of the library customers will lead both to achieving the overall goals of the library and to enhancing the current services (Koontz et al., 2006). Marketing of academic libraries in Bangladesh now-a-days more and more important. Implementation of marketing strategies in libraries can play an important role for making library services better. Owing to the introduction of modern technical storage, processing, retrieval and services, libraries and knowledge centers have become profit-making organizations in the current era of information technology (Kotler & Andreasen, 1995).

Present situations there are a growing burden on libraries to organize resources and develop self-reliance. Library clients are turning into consumers with increasing prospects, various requirements, and selections. Today, not handling the collection, employees and technology, but translating these tools into programs, is the true challenge for library and information professionals. The concept of services has also changed from basic to added value, from self-service to support staff, from in-house to outreach (Gupta and Jain, 2009). Marketing offers an opportunity to see if they can give their users or customers reliable and productive services. Several

international innovations have led to the development of marketing in Bangladesh for library facilities. In addition, the present study tracks the teaching of library service marketing and an action plan for further dissemination. For further analysis, it also poses some concerns. Libraries and the business sector are facing a big issue in the current economic environment, i.e. survival. It is high on the list of goals of library and information unit managers to justify their presence by showing that the work that is performed is suitable and necessary for an organization's success in a competitive environment. Managers must establish action strategies that take all the factors that affect their survival into account. (Anafo, 2014). Role of an academic library is the heart of the campus; not only needs a place to serve the information of employees and students, but also a place to facilitate cooperation and study and host community events (Mathews, 2009; Zibani and Kalusopa, 2019). In 2010, Godin highlighted a widespread belief that a library service is no longer required, as material is now accessible online for free. Quality information, of course, is not free in practice, and the wealth of available information illustrates another issue in the management of that information. Today, in order to adapt, succeed and continue to compete in the world of virtual information, information professionals are forced to use new abilities and strategies. To restructure conventional libraries into information centers that will be respected for promoting competitive benefit and strategic decision-making, fundamental change is required. This paper is structured as follows; we stated the research questions and methodology in the section 2 and 3. Section 4 covers the literature search from diverse sources. Data analysis and prospect of library marketing discussed in the section 5 and 6. Proposed model plan, challenges and recommendations in section 8. Final section described the conclusions and future work.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The prime aim of the study was to provide a model plan for marketing library services in private university libraries in Bangladesh. The study was designed to attain the following Research Questions (RQ):

RQ1. What are the prospects of library marketing of private university libraries in Bangladesh?

RQ2. What are the challenges towards library marketing faced by academic libraries in Bangladesh?

## III. METHODOLOGY

We applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches for this study. Further, we used a standardized questionnaire to collect data, consisting of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Total numbers of sample libraries are fifteen (all are the private university libraries) and out of fifteen all of the fifteen responses were received from the head of the library of respective private university libraries. For the purpose of the present study data were collected by a questionnaire during the MA thesis projects of Taslima Akter a Master's student of the Department of Information Science and Library Management of University of Dhaka for fulfillment of her completion of Master's degree. Specific questions were also asked based on the five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Interviews method also deployed for this study for data collection. The librarians of these sample libraries (See Table 1) were selected for this purpose. The collected data were processed and analyzed through SPSS and thematic content analysis.

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is a crucial part to any research activities for creating and discovering something new and for avoiding duplication of a scholarly work. The existing literature has found a variety of reasons, facilities, current status, challenges and ongoing practices of marketing library services in different university libraries. These reviews will help to have an overview of the library marketing strategies and will help to provide an ideal model plan for library marketing services.

Present study addressed the fact that the use of marketing strategies is very effective in enhancing the capacity of library information resources to achieve customer satisfaction. The business theory also requires library management to concentrate on understanding the needs of customers rather than the needs of libraries. It also focused on some benefits of a well-built marketing library services program. So it is clear that to maximize library uses and to attract the users marketing library services is needed (Munshi, 2008). Alcock, (2011) focused on strategic marketing in academic libraries, integrating organizational orientation components, strategic planning, and supporting processes and procedures. Siddike et al. (2013) conducted a study of marketing of web-based academic library services in Bangladesh where they focused on the analysis and description of the present status of library websites. A significant number of libraries did not make any attempt to provide online reading classes, copyright documents, and online user surveys, the study reported that academic library websites are not fully used for selling library tools and services. Bangladesh's academic libraries have no direct ties to other libraries and interrelated relations surveyed, and this finding does not represent a strong networking and resource sharing culture. In order to achieve high-level customer satisfaction, library promotion activities and

marketing of library facilities have shown that the longevity of their respective institutions should be ensured and the perceived importance of the facilities should be improved. Libraries can encourage the use of resources and items, but since the library is a social organization, they cannot benefit from it. A library professional can play a role in terms of providing and marketing library services and finally, librarians will create the libraries' image and value. New vistas for the promotion of library resources, goods and services have been opened by the restricted budget provision and the introduction of new technology and its implementation in libraries (Patil and Pradhan, 2013). Einasto (2013) carried out a marketing campaign renewal study: from meeting consumer needs to the development of values by focusing on investors, stakeholders and volunteers are highly motivated by the social values the projects offer. Projects that are of particular importance to society would also gain more interest from the public and sponsors. Here, he meant that library programs in the marketing mix are not just a commodity and not only what and where we do, but also why we do it. In other words, it's time to expand the approach to library marketing, and there is a partnership and values-based marketing on the library agenda today. A case study of Australian academic librarians' perceptions of effective Web 2.0 tools used for selling services and resources examined how Australian academic librarians view effective Web 2.0 tools used for the sale of library services and resources and the factors that influence the perceptions of the Web 2.0 tools used (Yi, 2014). Britto and Marwin (2014) conducted a survey of essentials of a library marketing strategy where the necessity of a marketing plan for public library has been focused. Like traditional marketing he also considered the basic 4ps of marketing elements such as product, place, price and promotion. The basic components of an efficient public library marketing plan are listed here in an attempt to provide a model for those involved in designing marketing strategies for public libraries, i.e. Marketing Audit and Plan, Marketing Priorities, Target Plans, Budget, Timetable and Assessment, Executive Summary, Mission Statement and Role Statement.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Findings have been prepared based on survey taken through the questionnaire of the participating libraries. The findings have been analyzed below;

### 5.1 Name of the Sample Libraries

Total number of sample libraries is fifteen. The name and year of establishment of the sample libraries are given in the following table (Akter, 2016).

| Name of the libraries          | Year of establishment |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ayesha Abed library            | 2011                  |
| North-South university library | 1992                  |
| ULAB Library                   | 2004                  |
| Stamford university library    | 2002                  |
| Daffodil university library    | 2002                  |
| State university library       | 2002                  |
| East West university library   | 1996                  |
| IUB Library                    | 1993                  |
| Eastern university library     | 2003                  |
| ASA university library         | 2007                  |
| AIUB Library                   | 1994                  |
| UIU library                    | 2003                  |
| Northern university library    | 2003                  |
| Manarat university library     | 2001                  |
| Southeast university library   | 2002                  |

**Table-1: Name of the sample libraries**

### 5.2 Level of agreement of sample libraries with library marketing

All the sample libraries were asked to specify the factors that should be realized while implementing library marketing in their library. All the responses about these factors have been presented in table-2 using descriptive analysis techniques of SPSS 20.0 on 5- point Likert scale. It indicates that the maximum mean score was 4.67 on 5-point Likert scales for the statement of "Marketing library service is very important for enhancing service quality", while the lowest mean score was 4.27 for the statement of "User will badly be influenced towards using library through library marketing". The second highest mean score was 4.60 for the statement of "A planned & structured marketing program will greatly benefit the library"

### 5.3 Level of agreement regarding the factors of marketing library service

| Statement   | N  | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Devi. |
|---|----|------|------|------|------------|
| Marketing library service is very important for enhancing service quality     | 15 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.67 | .62        |
| A planned & structured marketing program will greatly benefit the library     | 15 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.60 | .83        |
| User will badly be influenced towards using library through library marketing | 15 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.27 | .71        |

**Table 2:** Level of agreement regarding the factors of marketing library service

### 5.3 Librarians views regarding the necessity of implementing library marketing

All the respondents of librarians were asked to give their own views and comments regarding the necessity of implementing library marketing through an open-ended question. It was really an exclusive experience that most of the librarians were very tempting about library marketing and some of the librarians were very willing to implement and experiment of library marketing (Akter, 2016).

| Views /comments of librarians  | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| The maximum use of library assets and services should be ensured over library marketing  | 6          |
| It is very important for library professionals and it will aware the people of different library services by changing their attitude towards libraries | 3          |
| It is an integral part of a library without which library could not run smoothly   | 2          |
| By employing non-profit marketing mix, professionals can provide the needs of their users  | 2          |
| It will develop the image of the library professionals and will cope up with the information explosion   | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>15</b>  |

**Table-03:** Views of the librarians regarding the necessity of library marketing

From the librarians, 40% have given emphasis on ensuring maximum utilization of library resources and services through library marketing (Table 3). The second highest view was implementing library marketing will aware and will change the attitude of the people towards library and library professionals.

## VI. PROSPECT OF LIBRARY MARKETING AND SERVICES IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN BANGLADESH

The present situation of private university libraries may get cleared by the status of the following sections. Despite all the limitations, there is a great possibility of private university libraries in Bangladesh regarding the improvement of their library services. As it is now somewhat clear about the current situation of private university libraries in Bangladesh, on the basis of that status it can now be hoped that sooner they may become the prime sources of all the information which will provide services more dynamically. Nevertheless, for that private university libraries have more jobs to do so i.e.

### **Fully skilled staff**

Though the number of skilled staff is not sufficient enough, the number is increasing radically. In the near future, all the private university libraries will be run by fully skilled staff which is a salient prerequisite of ensuring the maximum utility of the library materials. Also available staff training programs and training facilities are being kept for the development of the library personnel's capability.

### **Enriched collections of library materials**

The collections of libraries' materials though up to the mark but it is not yet hundred percent enriched. However, it is not so far when private university libraries will be fully rich in collections and resources. Therefore, in terms of collections, a great future is ahead.

### **Fully computerized libraries**

Although at present 98 percent private university libraries on the basis of the selected samples provide digitized facilities to the users, sooner this percentage may be hundred percent (Akter, 2016). Also the number of available

databases is increasing in a dynamic way according to the respondents' view. It may become enriched as there is a great opportunity in that session.

#### **Web 2.0 grounded library services**

Private university libraries are now running along with technological development for ensuring effective utilization and dynamic library services. Different web 2.0 based library services are now being offered by the libraries i.e. it is absolutely clear in the study that most of the library services can be offered through those technologies so those libraries that are providing web 2.0 based services are far more enriched and developed. Therefore, these services can make the libraries even better.

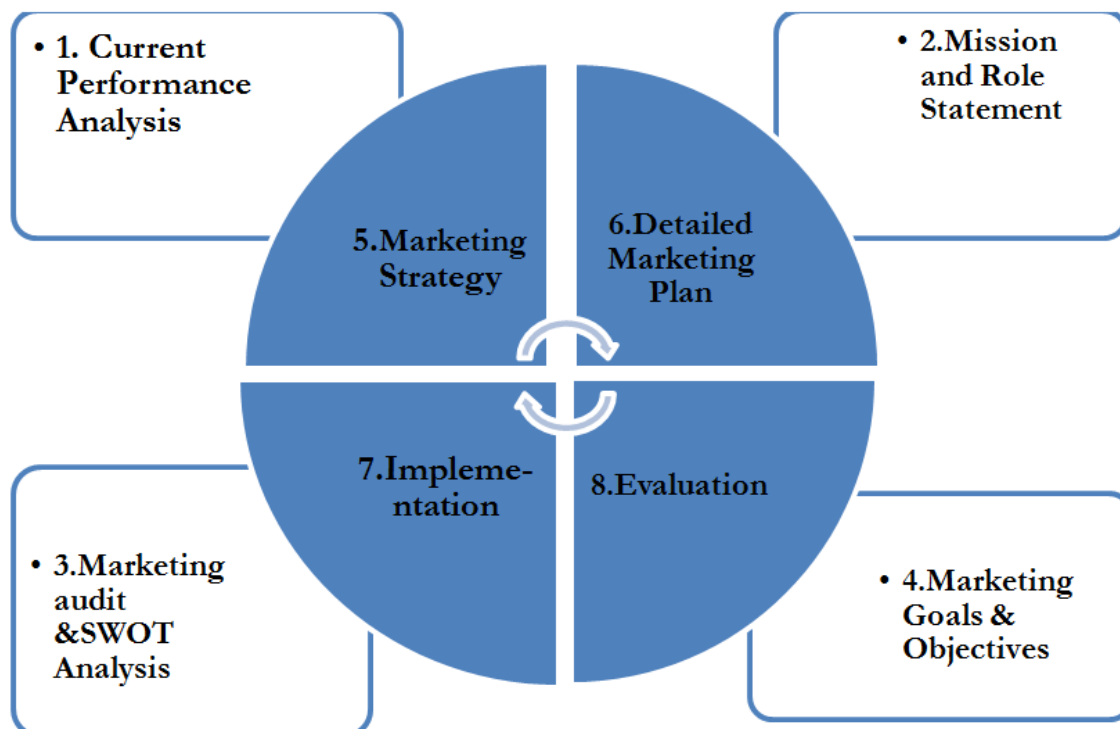
#### **Willingness of implementing marketing strategies**

In the present time when the world is becoming more competitive marketing library services in private university libraries in Bangladesh is undoubtedly badly required. And it is really pleasure to hear that most of the libraries already implemented marketing strategies in their library services and the libraries who have not implemented yet are very willing to incorporate marketing strategies. It is not too away when all the private university libraries in Bangladesh will be delivering library services to the users and fully making the resources and services accessible and available. From the overall status of the private university libraries in Bangladesh it can be assumed that they have a great opportunity and possibility of developing their library services and enhancing their utility of library materials to a great extent.

### **VII. A PROPOSED MODEL PLAN FOR MARKETING LIBRARY SERVICES**

The typical functions of libraries are acquisition, storage, sorting, distribution as well as referral and reference services and other activities. Over time, libraries have extended their activities to take in documentation and document delivery methods due to shifts in the nature of user requirements. Private university libraries have now been introduced as profit-making entities that provide customers with efficient information products and services. Libraries have recently offered cost-effective expertise as a service for the application of modern marketing strategy principles.

However, it can be said that the notion of marketing library services in Bangladesh is still in its infancy (Munshi, 2008). Marketing plan elements proposed by Munshi (2008) were; current performance analysis, marketing audit, strategic direction, marketing strategy, detailed marketing plan, implementation & control. For particular product(s) or service(s), as well as for the library or information center as a whole, a marketing plan can be planned (Munshi, 2008). A model plan for private university libraries has been given below-



“Figure1:” Marketing plan for private university libraries in Bangladesh (Akter, 2016)

In preparing a marketing plan for library services and products, employees of the library must be arranged to go over numerous phases and procedures such as:



***i. Current performance analysis***

Analyzing the current results of the library services is the principal stage in generating a marketing strategy. The efficiency of the libraries should be evaluated with regard to the targets or the aim defined. Within the wider community background, this sector offers the present condition of the library and describes any patterns that can affect the resources and services of the library.

***ii. Mission and role statement***

"For the marketing campaign, the mission statement "sets the stage". It gives the audience knowledge, including its importance and unique contributions, about the history and context of the library within the community. It explains the theory and principles of the library, too. In addition, neighborhood patterns and desires should be expressed in this argument. The mission and position declaration are interdependent; they are inherently closely related and one must therefore be written in mind with the other (Britto, 2014).

***iii. Marketing audit & SWOT analysis***

The marketing audit is deemed to be a vital part of the method of marketing strategy. In the case of the public library, the internal and external situations of the library as per as the macro and micro settings are fully evaluated and analyzed. Usually, two types of environmental scanning are used to assist in these analyses: PEST; Political, Economic, Social and Cultural, and Technical Analysis, and SWOT; Analysis of Strengths, Vulnerabilities, Opportunities and Threats (De Sáez, 2002).

***iv. Marketing goals & objectives***

Marketing goals and objectives should be defined and determined for effective library marketing. A beneficial director to progress the marketing objectives is the S.M.A.R.T. goal guidelines (SMART criteria, 2020). S.M.A.R.T. stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely. The "Specific" in S.M.A.R.T. goals highlights the necessity for precise marketing goals, which can be attained over mentioning "who", "what", "why", "where" and "which" (Britto, 2014).

***v. Marketing strategy***

Strategy of marketing may be stated as the means of attaining the objectives of marketing. The knowledge that arises in the marketing assessment will define the utmost suitable marketing methods to be selected for the marketing campaign of private university libraries. The course of the marketing campaign will be influenced by these techniques. The course of the marketing campaign will be influenced by positioning statements, pricing, advertising, delivery methods and marketing programs for the library can be part of the material for this segment (How to write, 2011).

***vi. Detailed marketing plan***

A comprehensive marketing strategy should be drawn up after deciding particular marketing strategies and keeping track with the goals of the library marketing services. The marketing strategy should provide information that will allow it to develop a roadmap for the service to be introduced, i.e. the role to be reached in the relevant target peoples for which planning has been made (Munshi, 2008).

***vii. Implementation***

This stage lists the actual use of the marketing techniques to meet the aims and goals of the library marketing services. In order to meet the organization's goals, the execution of the marketing strategy must be reviewed and modified as appropriate.

***viii. Evaluation***

At any step, evaluation is necessary and should therefore include both influential and collective assessment methods (De Sáez, 2002) planned to evaluate the efficacy of marketing functions (Duke & Tucker, 2007). The aim of the assessment section is to help enhance the utility and efficacy of the marketing strategy, identify any concerns or challenges along the way, and integrate suitable solutions.

## **VIII. CHALLENGES TOWARDS LIBRARY MARKETING FACED BY LIBRARIES IN BANGLADESH**

There are of course, challenges and difficulties faced by the organizations regarding library marketing. While surveying the librarians mentioned some challenges that they usually find in marketing library services. The major challenges of library marketing faced by the libraries have been discussed below (Akter, 2016):

***a. Insufficient personnel & expertise***

The study revealed that the highest number of libraries mentioned that one of the major challenges of marketing library services faced by them is insufficient library personnel. There are very little recruitments of the library personnel in proportion to the original requirements. Obviously lack of expertise is another biggest challenge of library marketing faced by libraries. As skilled and competent personnel are crucial to marketing library services, the recruitment of skilled and expert staff is badly necessary to the successful marketing of library services in private university libraries in Bangladesh (Ofori et al., 2020).

***b. Inadequate budget***

Lacking of sufficient budget in any organization is considered one of the major obstacles towards achieving the organization's objectives. Almost 60 percent of the libraries of the study felt that because of lack of a sufficient

budget for marketing sections, it becomes difficult for them to market or promote their library service to the users which is certainly a big challenge towards library marketing. Some literatures have also found the similar challenge faced by the organizations.

### ***c. Lack of interest & awareness***

It really seems very awful that some of the libraries even do not want to implement marketing strategies in their library services because they are not interested in doing what they serve to the users. Awareness of anything is the half solution of any problem. But lack of awareness is the biggest hindrance of the libraries to implement marketing in library services. And almost 60 percent of the libraries are not aware of the benefit of the library marketing. Therefore, the challenges faced by both libraries and the librarians should be overcome to fruitfully incorporate marketing library services to the users to make their library products and services available and to ensure effective utilization of library materials.

### **8.1 Recommendations**

The following recommendations for improving marketing activities in university libraries are suggested on the basis of the above findings (Akter, 2016; Akter and Nowrin, 2016):

- i. With a mandate to support its parent organization, every academic library should have a marketing strategy for its goods and service area.
- ii. Marketing strategies should be incorporated fully to make library products and services more accessible and their maintenance should be done timely.
- iii. Consumers should be interested in the procedure of developing innovative, tailored services and products for them.
- iv. The uppermost popular features of web/library 2.0 based services should be incorporated to broaden libraries utilities.
- v. All libraries should appoint permanent staff to look after library marketing activities.
- vi. Separate and appropriate funding for effective marketing information services should be made available.
- vii. The standard and selection of its items should continually be preserved and improved by libraries.
- viii. Library awareness programs and user orientation schemes should be conducted on a regular basis.

## **IX. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE**

Bangladesh, a south Asian nation with a population of approximately 170 million has a total of 46 public, 106 private and 3 international universities (University Grants Commission). The number of private universities is getting higher day by day. So the services pattern and resources of these libraries should also be rich and satisfactory. From the study it is clear that the current status of library services is not so bad. Majority of the libraries have rich library collections and resources (Akter, 2016). The study identified that during delivering library services there are few library personnel who are trained and skilled. Lowest number of libraries provides different training programs for their library personnel to effectively deliver services to the users. Librarians have a constructive outlook towards the commercialization of library information resources and items. In the library situation, it is only the lack of awareness and exposure to the notion of marketing that discourages them from embracing marketing principles. Among the librarians, the highest number of them agreed that marketing library service is very important for enhancing service quality and for making library products available and easily accessible to the user. Kaur and Rani (2008) in their study found the similar result. The study also revealed that the largest numbers of libraries provide web 2.0 based library services but in the age of information explosion this percentage is not satisfactory and whether they really provide web 2.0 based services or not clear yet. The highest number of respondents agreed that marketing preparation provides librarians with an opportunity to analyze the use of services or goods and to explain the costs of manufacturing services and products. Kanaujia (2004) reached alike outcomes in his study. Most of the librarians accepted that main difficulties in developing a marketing program in university libraries relate to gaining skilled manpower and fiscal support. Though it is very hard to meet users' satisfaction level, private university libraries are now becoming able to cope-up with the vast explosion of information by managing them systematically and making them available to the users. To refine the existing status of library services and resources, efforts should be undertaken promptly to facilitate efficient library marketing and to ensure the uppermost use of the library resources.

Finally, the study exposed that marketing offers a wide range of activities and resources that can help librarians deal with a wide range of factors regarding their position, image and use in the current socio-economic context. Many of them, however, refuse to implement methods of marketing. Different staff training programs should be kept in order to make their library personnel skilled and capable of delivering effective library services. Librarians are now becoming more conscious about their quality service and fruitful employment of marketing strategies in their libraries. For the purpose of the study as the inclusion of all of the private university libraries was not possible due to some limitations, only fifteen libraries were selected and surveyed. Therefore, the status of private university libraries in Bangladesh acquired from this study may not be accurate as well. But it may represent the whole current situation of the private university libraries in Bangladesh. So, further studies can be

done in other educational sectors like public university libraries in Bangladesh, which will widen the area and will also give better results of the study.

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