What drives followers of University of Malaya library to follow them on Facebook?

Lleuvelyn A. Cacha[1], Hamedi Mohd Adnan[2] and Halida Yu[3]

[1]University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
[2]Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
[3]Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Shah Alam, Malaysia
e-mail: cacha_lyn@siswa.um.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Academic libraries are starting to apply social media marketing techniques to increase awareness, promote the use of their collections and services, and to increase users' value for knowledge. However, the lack of literature causes some librarians to be apprehensive about this paradigm shift in communicating library services to their patrons. The best way to convince them of the usefulness of social media is to point directly to patron input. This study seeks to understand social media's usefulness in an academic library setup. It explores and measures brand value and user motivation and perception within an academic research community. Grounded in fundamental theories of social media, this study utilises a validated survey tool to gather data from approximately 700 library users in University of Malaya. Quantitative data analysis was utilised to investigate the responses. It aims to determine: (i) Social media's impact on University of Malaya library's branding; and (ii) Social media's influence on patron's library usage.

Key words: Social media; Online communication; Online marketing; Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, academic libraries have seen increasing interest in the development and use of social media applications aimed directly at students and academic members. Networking sites, blogging and likewise are the most common platforms being used. An essential aspect of communications and marketing, social media changes the way people discover, read and share news, information and content.

Despite the many benefits social media could bring to organisations, many organisations do not make a thoughtful effort to sense and respond to consumer sentiment when using social media. A famous astrologer once said, "All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them," taking this into account, libraries, by all means, can effectively support students and members by making the initiative to understand their target audiences' needs and what drives them to follow their social media site.

The audience must be given the chance to be heard and to participate, because two-way conversations cannot be developed, no matter how good the initial idea. It is the user's perception that will define the online experience. By understanding them better, organisations can offer a good user experience thereby keeping customer stickiness and their competitive

edge. Moreover, this makes social media possible to engage new groups of people and to interest them in UML's ever-growing service and products.
Study Rationale: Why University of Malaya Library

A pioneer in adapting social media for library patrons in Malaysia, UML established its Facebook presence in 2008 and has been categorised as "Skaters" in the 8-S Framework of Category Development for Facebook user. This according to Ayu and Abrizah (2011) is the highest category which means the organisation is "in a strong position for taking advantage of Facebook opportunities." As part of their marketing efforts, UML has an official website, a blog in Wordpress, a flickr account, and a social media page with customized tabs in Facebook™. At present, UML's Facebook™ page has over 8,600 followers. The UML Facebook page offers library information (hours, contact information), news, weblinks to important websites, latest feeds from the UM Research Repository, photos, videos, notes, and book database search.

Branding Defined

Branding within business and marketing perspective is an established subject and there are many books, publications, and literature dedicated to this topic. Despite its prevalence in every aspect of human life: production and consumption, food and clothing, personality and lifestyle, and so forth, branding, although simple, is often a confused word with multiple meanings. According to the American Marketing Association, branding is giving a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them to identify goods or services of a seller or groups of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler, 2003). More than just giving a product name and identity, Hazel Kahan (quoted in Hall, 1999) perceives brands that share consumers' inner lives, their values, their beliefs, their politics; and yes, their souls. In order to capture these, Fan (2005) suggests that branding should be about developing and managing the relationship between the organization and its various stakeholders as well as the general public.

More specifically Ibeh, Luo, and Dinnie (2005) take branding as a process of creating value through the provision of a compelling and consistent offer and customer experience that will satisfy customers and keep them coming back. Indeed, branding is no longer just about the product, but it is now a representation of cultures, beliefs and lifestyles. Said Fan (2005), the ultimate objectives in branding can be summarized as follows: to dominate the market – to reduce or eliminate competition; to increase customer loyalty – by increasing the switch cost; and to raise the entry barriers – to fend off potential threat.

Social Media Defined

The best way to define social media is to break it down. Media is an instrument of communication, like a newspaper or radio, so social media would be a "social" instrument of communication. It's not exactly a medium, when compared to print, television, etc., social media is the human connection between media. Traditional media is a one-way street wherein the audience has very limited ability to share their thoughts on the matter. Social media, on the other hand, is a two-way street that provides high connectivity for readers to communicate, too. Social media is dynamic and flexible because it can with time and be edited by the author and in some cases, the community. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content."

In Web 2.0, social media has been defined as a website that doesn't directly spoon feed information but interacts with the audience while giving them information. The interaction can be as simple as asking for comments or allowing voting on an article, or sharing information to other people of similar interests. Social media enables new forms of collaboration, and they provide what Pierre Levy describes as collective intelligence. Tobin (2008) writes, "think of social media as tools that empower people to self-publish." This 'self-publishing' can take on a variety of forms. Table 1.1 shows the different forms of social media that include blogs (short for web logs), forums, content communities, wikis, and social networks (Karjaluoto, 2008).

Although definitions vary, there is one characteristic common among social media platforms: the consumers of content or information online are also the producers. Most of social media networks thrive on the notion of participation and making connections. Part of this is informed by the notion of a community, in which all parties engage in open dialogue. The success of social media relies on the engagement of users. More interactions encourage more user participation, and vice versa. As what Li and Bernoff stressed, it is the relationships that matter, not the technologies. It is more productive to focus on the messaging rather than which social media technology to use.

Table 1: Various Forms of Social Media

Forms	Samples
Wikis	Wikipedia, Scholarpedia, Ganfyd, AskDrWiki
Social Networking	Facebook™ , MySpace, LinkedIn, Friendster
Social Tagging	Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon
Media Sharing	Flickr, YouTube, Justin.tv, Ustream, Scribd
Social News	Digg, Reddit
Blogs	Blogspot, Wordpress, LiveJournal, BlogCatalog
Micro blogging	Twitter, foursquare
Forums	Yahoo!, Answers, Epinions

Online Social Networking Defined

Online social networking is the grouping of individuals and even organizations together through social websites. Social networking websites facilitate online communities. Depending on the social network sites, many of these online communities have members who share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. To become part of a social network, one must register and once access is granted, a member can begin to socialize. Socializing includes requesting to another user and wait to be accepted. Once accepted, both parties can share information – archived messages, photos, videos, notes, and so forth.

Clafferty (2011) notes that social networking sites can be defined as ideal infrastructures that allow users to: Create a public profile within the system and limited by its functionality; Demarcate and manage a list of friends with whom information can be shared and communicated; View and check their list of connections and those made by others within the system;

Aside from meeting maintaining existing relationships and the development of new contacts, online social networks are loaded with information. On Facebook™ for instance, users can easily check out a friend's profile to see what they're up to through their status updates; where they've visited recently through maps and photos; and what Youtube video they find interesting, through a link they have watched. In a nutshell, communication and information

sharing in social network sites travel at unparalleled velocity. As what Kiesler (1997) describes it, networks are always up, allowing 24-hour asynchronous or synchronous interactions and information retrieval and exchange among individuals and groups.

Background on Facebook™

Facebook™ is a social networking website. Since its inception in 2004, the social network supports over 600 million users- with 70 percent located outside the United States. It currently supports over 5000,000 applications in its ecosystem, and is the most-trafficked social network website in the world, and the 2nd most trafficked website in the United States (Statistics-Facebook™ website 2010).

Facebook™ allows personal users to create and manage a digital expression of themselves, their personal relationships or links through viewable profiles. Having a presence in Facebook™, allows the user to discover potential ties (either weak or strong), and display their interest, knowledge, experience and even expertise in a sociable and searchable format.

Facebook™ pages are like micro sites within Facebook™. It allows local businesses, brands, musicians, and all types of organizations to create a presence on Facebook™ for free. Page owners can build downloadable content, games, surveys, contests and other tools within pages. Users can interact and affiliate as a fan of a business or organization in the same way they interact with other user profiles. Users can share information about that business with their friends, once a fan of a business on Facebook™.

In the local scene, Malaysians are avid adopters of social networking sites and are among the most prolific of bloggers, as reported among the first three worldwide on Blogger.com. Facebook™ is of course the leading social network in Malaysia. As of Q2 2011, the country ranks fourth in the highest users growth on Facebook™ with over 10 million on board (from Facebook™ Ads estimator).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on social media within the library is quite limited. For the past recent years, librarians have applied social media marketing techniques to increase awareness, promote the use of their collections and services, and to increase users' value for knowledge. However, many libraries are apprehensive about this paradigm shift in communicating library services to their patrons. Some librarians who want to use social media applications to reach potential library users say that their library's administrators do not believe in or are apprehensive of using social media.

The lack of literature contributes to the little confidence some library administrators have on social media. The best way to convince them of the usefulness of social media is to point directly to patron input. Most of the literature, however, fall into the 'how-to' category, such as the works of Schier, 2011; Ayu, 2011; Burkhardt, 2010; Rivero, 2009; Crumlish, 2009; Miller and Lauren, 2007; and Chu, 2007; all these share best practices, software applications, as well as ideas for the use of social media networks such as Facebook™. Other literatures share librarians' personal accounts in using social media for a variety of marketing and promotional goals. These however do not actually test methods for engaging in effective social media.

Moreover, no research to date has looked at the marketing and branding effectiveness of Facebook™ pages through academic library users' perspective in Malaysia.

There are personal accounts on the use of social media such as Mathews' (2006) paper included an element of the survey method. Mathews' experience determined the relevant use of Facebook™ in libraries and its effectiveness as an outreach tool through student perspectives. The librarian contacted students of the mechanical engineering school through Facebook™ and through 'friend requests'. Through batch process, Mathews was able to send messages to 1,500 students (75% of the total mechanical engineering student population) of which 48 responded. A few respondents said "cool" or "thanks" while most of them inquired on software availability such as MatLab and AutoCAD. He found out that computers were the primary draw for this segment of students. Despite the low response rate, and the fact that engineering students do not traditionally rely on library as much as other disciplines, Mathews believes that Facebook™ helped promote the library and prompted some questions about library resources.

On another relevant student-based study done by Chu and Meulemans (2007), they determined that students prefer to communicate with organizations via Facebook™ rather than with members of faculty. Aside from this, their study offered practical tips on how librarians can use social media, Myspace and Facebook™, for content delivery, reference assistance, outreach, and information literacy instruction.

Similarly, librarians Miller and Lauren (2007) offered suggestions for increasing student response to library services and information through Facebook™. The librarians suggest that Facebook™ and other social networking sites is all about connecting with the students. The profile must be kept active, current and updated; the newsfeed feature must be utilized; student queries must be replied promptly; favourites and interests must be shared; and new databases and library services should be promoted.

Another helpful literature that supports Miller and Lauren's suggestion would be Jacobson's survey (2011), a comparison of actual library Facebook™ pages to librarians' perception. Twelve Facebook™ pages were scrutinized, and 12 librarians were surveyed. Results show that Facebook™ is a better tool for active libraries or libraries that host a lot of events, exhibits, workshops, and other activities, such as announcements and marketing. However, uses for communication from patrons or fans communicating library needs (including queries and discussion) may not be an ideal use even although the space was provided for them.

In the local scene, Ayu and Abrizah's (2011) work determined the extent and nature of Facebook™ use by academic libraries and the type of information these libraries share on Facebook™. Using content analysis to evaluate each Facebook™ page of 14 academic libraries in Malaysia, they found out that most libraries were using their Facebook™ page for marketing and creating awareness of library services to their users. However, only 3 libraries were fully utilizing their Facebook page and among them include the library of University of Malaya.
Despite the benefits social media brings to libraries, there are some who think otherwise. In a survey conducted by Hendrix et.al (2009), they found out that two most cited reasons that academic health science libraries do not set up Facebook™ page were the lack of time, and assumption that Facebook™ would be of little use or no use in the academic setting. Their work also found out that most surveyed academic health libraries use Facebook™ mainly to market the library, push out announcements, post photos and establish presence in the social network.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a validated survey tool from Barnes and Mattson (2008) to gather information on the perceptions and opinions of a sample of library users. The survey measures brand value across three dimensions of emotion, physical and logical. The tool has a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.97.

The questionnaire comprise 20 items – items one to four serve as a questionnaire screener which would be used to find eligible respondents; items five to seven determines respondents' Facebook™ usage behaviour (how frequent they visit Facebook™) as well as their behaviour and motivations; and the remaining items determine respondents' attitude and perception towards UML using a ratings (Likert-like scale) format.

The purpose of the rating scale is to allow respondents to express both the direction and strength of their opinion about a topic, in this case about UML's services and its image as the university's nucleus of knowledge. Using one question format, the last 10 questions (items 8-20) have a scale of 1 to 6 where 1 is strongly disagree, respondents are asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Instead of the usual 3- or 5-scale found in a typical Likert scale, the researcher has decided to remove the neutral option and use a wider scale step, in this case 6 points to keep respondents from choosing the midpoint category or the 'uncertain response' (Matell and Jacoby, 1972).
Selection of Respondents

To best communicate with the particular target population and obtain a high survey response rate, the researcher has decided to email the Facebook members and provide them a link to the questionnaire which was created using Googledocs. Respondent selection was based according to the following conditions:

▪ The respondent is a follower of UM Library Facebook Page
▪ The respondent has at least posted a comment or ticked a "like" button on UM Library Facebook Wall within the last 8 months
▪ The respondent is a student or a lecturer/professor of University of Malaya as stated on their respective Facebook profiles

This method allows the researcher to better explain to the respondents the purpose and benefits of this survey in a friendly manner. However the limited access to the members' profiles due to privacy settings made it impossible to trace every member who generated a feedback or commented on the library's Facebook walls. Another challenge experienced by the researcher is the quantity of messages that can be sent out in a day. Facebook has anti-spamming features that suspends a user's messaging features are used heavily. Hence, the researcher had to allot a certain number of sent messages per day so as not to be suspended. Nevertheless, this method warrants a high chance of responsiveness. The researcher used convenience sampling and interviewed only those members who fall within the category during the one year period.

FINDINGS

Frequencies and percentages were utilised to analyse data and this section presents the most prominent findings retrieved from the respondents. The number of participants in the study were six hundred and six (n=606). Base on the survey responses, majority of respondents were

students, with some members of the faculty and school administration of University of Malaya (see Table 2).

Table 2: A Breakdown of Participants by Occupation

Total No. Of Respondents	Students	Lecturers	School Admin
n=606	*n*=570 (94%)	*n*=30 (4.9%)	*n*=6 (1%)

The survey was able to get a balanced number of respondents from both genders. One hundred and eight (53%) were males and 94 (47%) were females. In terms of educational attainment, most of the respondents were undergraduates, followed by graduate students and those pursuing their PhDs. Three hundred forty eight (57%) of the 606 respondents were undergraduates; 186 (31%) were graduate students, and the remaining were 72 (12%) post-graduate students.

In terms of visits to UM Library's Facebook page, 52% (n=318) of respondents said they rarely visit the page; 14.8% (n=90) said they visit weekly; 12.8% (n=78) reported visiting the page at least once a month; 8.9% (n=18) said they visit twice a week. Figure 1 shows the respondents' Facebook visits.
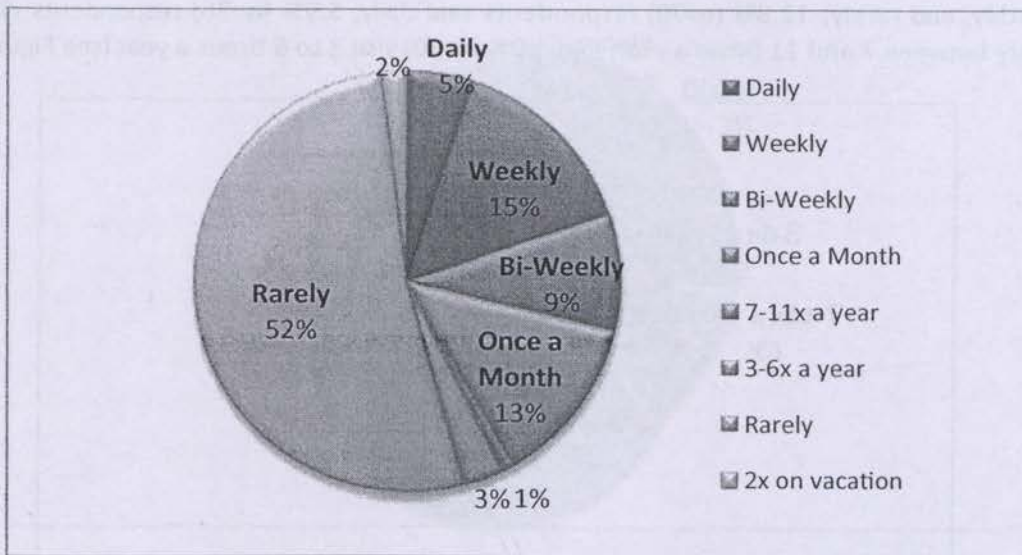

Figure 1: Frequency of UML Facebook Visits

Not only were respondents rarely visiting the page, when it comes to their interaction with UML's Facebook page, 79% (n=480) respondents said they rarely interact (through leaving comments, ticking the like button, etc.) with the UML Facebook page. Only nearly 6% (n=36) respondents say they post something on the page at least once a month; nearly 4% (n=24) each reported daily, 7 to 11 times a year, and 1 to 2 times during vacation period (see Figure 2).
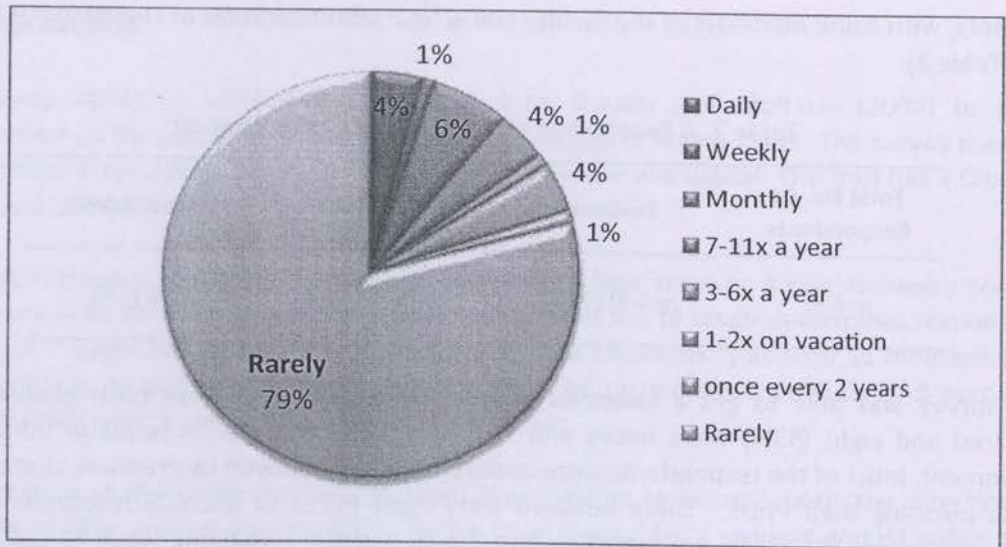
Figure 2: Frequency of UML Facebook Postings

Survey respondents were asked how frequent they visit and use the library of University of Malaya. Respondents were asked to choose among the following options – daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, 7 to 11 times a year, 3 to 6 times a year, and rarely. Among the 606 respondents, 31% (n=192) respondents said weekly; 14.8% (n=90) each reported bi-weekly, monthly, and rarely; 12.8% (n=78) respondents said daily; 5.9% (n=36) respondents visit the library between 7 and 11 times a year; and 4.9% (n=10) visit 3 to 6 times a year (see Figure 3).
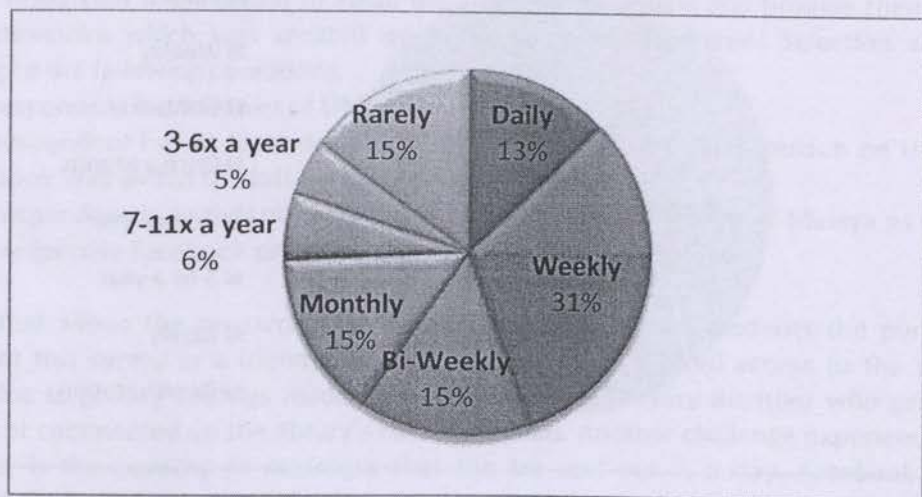

Figure 3: Frequency of Library Visits

Respondents were then asked if exchanging information were their main purpose for following UML's Facebook page and 32% (n=198) of respondents slightly agree that this was their main motivation; 12% (n=72) agree; and 7% (n=42) strongly agree that this was their main agenda for joining the page. Meanwhile, twenty-three percent (n=138) of respondents slightly disagreed that this was their sole purpose for joining the page, 16% (n=96) strongly disagreed, while 10% (n=60) disagreed. See figure 4.12 for breakdown (see Figure 4).
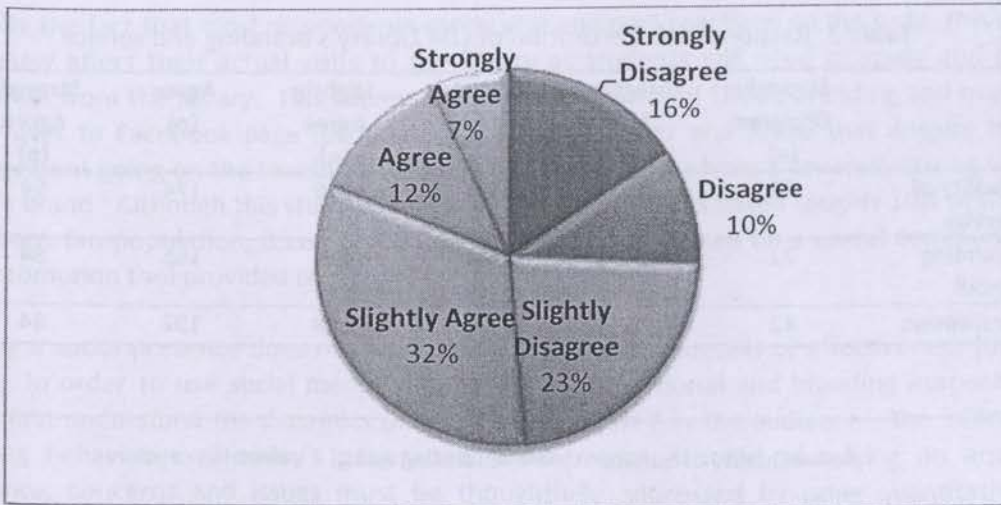
Figure 4: Motivation to Exchange Information

When it came to receiving information 28% (n= 174) of respondents agree that this was their reason for joining UML Facebook page. Twenty-one percent (n=126) responded "strongly agree" and 23% (n=138) slightly agree that this was the main driver to joining the page (see Figure 5).
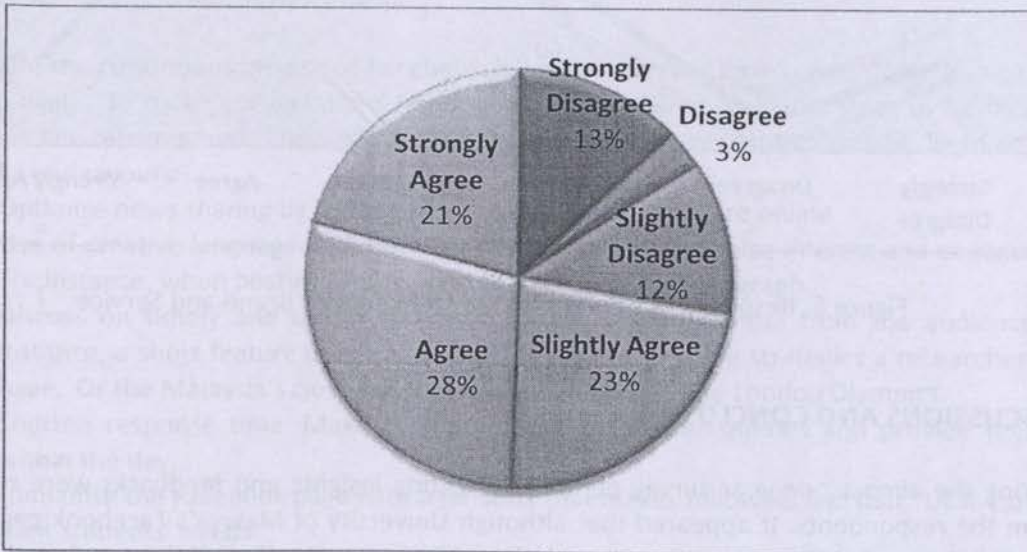

Figure 5: Motivation to Receive Information

When it came to brand value, respondents were asked how they felt strongly about university's position as the 'nucleus of knowledge', as a great library as well as the quality/kind of service it provides to them. "Slightly agree' was the major sentiment from the respondents (see Table 3).

Although the university library's service and branding as a nucleus of knowledge may not be strong, most respondents agree that UM Library is a great place to do research work.

Table 3: Respondent's Perception of UM Library's branding and service

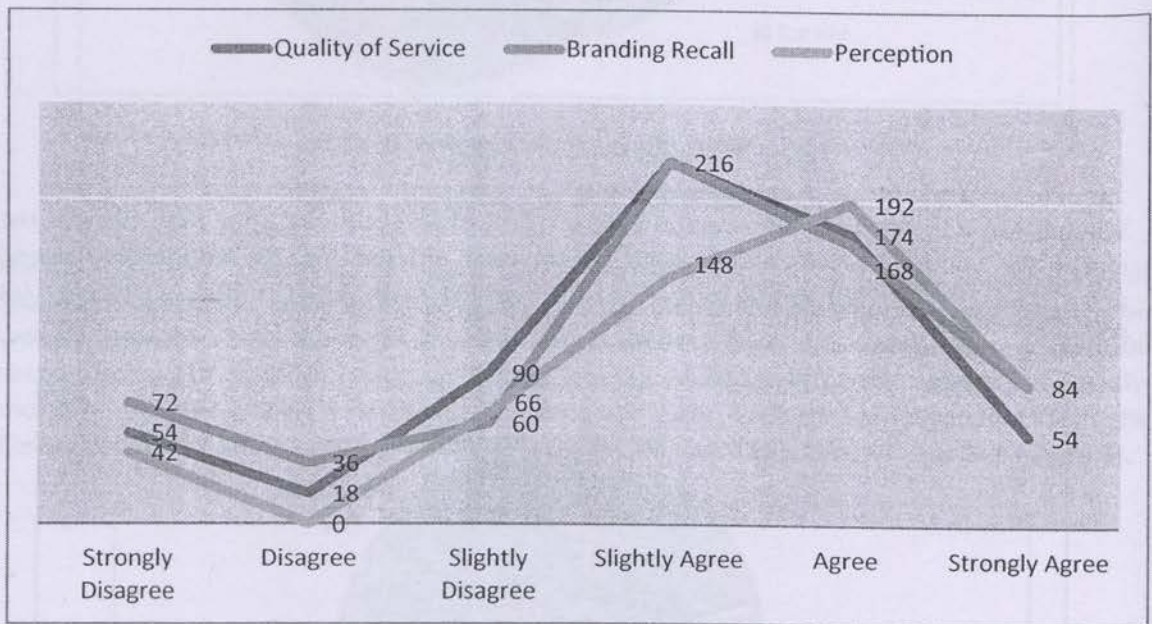|	Strongly Disagree (n)	Disagree (n)	Slightly Disagree (n)	Slightly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Strongly Agree (n)
Quality of Service	54	18	90	216	174	54
Branding Recall	72	36	60	216	168	84
Perception	42	0	66	148	192	84

Figure 6: Respondent's Perception of UM Library's Brand and Service

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

During the almost one-year survey period, interesting insights and feedbacks were received from the respondents. It appeared that although University of Malaya's Facebook page have many followers (over 8,000), a large population of it were not active on the page's wall simply because socialisation (exchanging information with online librarians and fellow students/researchers) was not a motivational factor for members to join.

This coincides with Ayu and Abrizah's (2011) findings wherein UML's page is more information-centric than social. Within September to October 2010, UML page posted 36 statuses on news updates and web and library resources and only 5 greetings. The researcher may assume that the goal is simply to keep library users informed rather than engaged.

There are other reasons why engagement is low on UML's Facebook wall. These include the lack of confirming their followers' presence by delaying responses to enquiries sent through Facebook page. Librarians who maintain the site fail to quickly respond to the enquiries and if they do the days or weeks have already lapsed that it may be difficult for the follower to recall the inquiry. According to Dickson and Holley (2010), this can make the student use other library services.

Despite the fact that most respondents rarely visit and post reactions on the page, this did not adversely affect their actual visits to the library as students still need to study and borrow materials from the library. This survey also tried to measure if UML's branding and marketing carry over to Facebook page followers in a strong manner and found that despite the low engagement going on the Facebook Wall of UML, respondents have a generally strong value of UML's brand. Although this study comes with limitations and is based roughly 10% of the total Facebook fan population, it can be concluded that Facebook can be a useful communication and promotion tool provided that best practices are utilised.

Having a social presence does not automatically guarantee success or effectiveness (Dickson, 2010). In order to use social media effectively for promotional and branding purposes, one must first understand the dynamics of social media as well as the audience – the information seeking behaviours of today's generation. Furthermore, instead of relying on anecdotal evidence, concerns and issues must be thoughtfully addressed by using quantitative and qualitative research about the use of social networking sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The work and study of this paper that has been conducted into the Facebook page of University Malay Library has shown that the organisation's use of Social media has been primarily for dispersing news updates.

Despite the continuous growth of Facebook followers, there is little conversation going on the page itself. To make conversations happen and for sustainable relationships to be built, the researcher recommends some good practices that UML may want to imbibe in their social media endeavours:

- Optimise news sharing by posting news when most people are online
- Use of creative language and more multimedia content to raise interest and engagement. For instance, when posting photos, add stories to each photograph.
- Discuss on timely and useful topics to initiate responsiveness from the audience. For instance, a short feature article that lists the top 5 searching strategies a researcher must have. Or the Malaysia's close call for winning the gold in the London Olympics.
- Shorten response time. Make a commitment to answer queries and provide feedback within the day.
- Humanise the Facebook page with a persona that makes followers feel that "UML cares for their students' needs."
- Physical library must also have posters to inform patrons to join the in Facebook
- Encourage followers to post their experiences in UML. For instance, invite them to blog about the library's programmes such as Library Carnivals, etc. News doesn't always have to spring from UML; let followers create and spread the news in behalf of UML.

At this juncture of my observations and studies, I conclude that the knowledge of user information needs and motivations is very crucial for progress. UML's online information service and products, including user interface, should be influenced by the knowledge ad observation of follower's needs, motivations and behaviours.

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