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Brand your Library as a Travel Guide: A Way Forward

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Nomadic nature of humans

The Human being is a nomadic animal by nature. This human behaviour created an iconic chapter of nomadism in the prehistoric era. Not only the nomads but also navigators turned new pages in world history through their findings of new lands and countries (Kolinko, 2019). This flashback has the signs of today's industry: tourism and hospitality. This fast-growing, and competitive industry has become a popular and direct source of income generation in Sri Lanka for several decades. The top-ranked hotels in Sri Lanka used to target international guests and travellers during the previous years. Due to several reasons such as generation change, globalization, social media, unstable economy, political issues, crises, brain drain and unsecured feelings experienced in the country redeemed from the island mind. Entertainment, cultural and recreation events were introduced to and experienced by Sri Lankans. Therefore, the young generation in the country today, tries to keep a work-life balance by adding entertainment to their routine lifestyles. As a result, local travellers are increasing than international travellers which is a good tendency within the country. This habitual change of Sri Lankans can be targeted by libraries across the country for their branding purposes while addressing and meeting community-changing needs.

Social media influence on travellers

As social media have become an easy and instant way to communicate, the popularity of travel guides, pages and channels is rapidly increasing. The contents shared through these platforms are all experience-based and first-hand data. Some of them are filtered, sorted, and authenticated and some are not. This is where the role of the library fits in tourism settings. Information collection, filtering, organization, display and distribution, access provision and conservation for a sustainable usage can be tailored by the libraries. Then only the reliability of given contents cannot be guaranteed. In addition, the real value and depth of some historical and archaeological sites have not been conveyed to the site visitor or the traveller in most of the places in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the absence of travel guides is challenging, especially for one-day travellers. Moreover, the display

boards and direction boards cannot solely serve the purpose of travel guiding as travel guiding is not merely showing the direction to a certain destination (Roque & Guerreiro, 2021). Therefore, libraries can play a prominent role in this scenario by becoming travel guides.

The libraries hereby can use their social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Messenger and Instagram for providing detailed information or instant communications which is indirectly to get more viewers, followers, and online reviews for the library's social media platforms. This drives towards the library branding through a continuous "online presence" of the library.

In Sri Lankan context, different types of libraries have been established throughout the country. Basically, public libraries are common in all key urban areas and university libraries have been established in each province. However, information centres are not very prominent in their performance. Regardless of the library type, the responsibility of every single library is to create its identity and brand while serving the community.

Diversity of Sri Lanka to Brand Libraries

Sri Lanka is rich in diversification in terms of natural resources, wildlife, nature, animals, climates, weather, geology, culture, agriculture, cultivation and many more. The gravity of these values is doubled by the historical and archaeological values in the country. As community service centres all the libraries can utilize the freely available diversity of the country to brand their library with their identity. The growing trend of travellers is a blessing for the libraries to sound as information centres whereby the same library functions are performed but in a modern and attractive way. Unfortunately, a limited facets of tourism such as cultural tourism, hospitality, heritage management, bibliotourism and sustainable tourism with libraries have received the global attention (Olufunke & Oghenekaro, 2020). Aiming at freely available natural resources and other facets of tourism and hospitality will be an efficient survival effort for the evolving libraries.

The libraries can focus on their area which can be the town, or district, or province to collect the information relevant to build their own identity. The information such as places to visit, their values, charges per visit, rules and regulations, transportation services, their schedules and availability, prices, accommodation, changing rooms, restrooms, contact details, social media links, websites, weather forecast, travelling essentials, food and beverages, and security etc. The provision of all this information should be supported by a streamlined and instant communication channel. For example, chat threads in the library's social media channels, and chat box in the library website will be more attractive for today's travellers to prevent them from groping in the dark. Responding to the requests of personnel guides can also be managed by training a

person who is more familiar with the area. That will be an opportunity for the person to develop his public relations, hospitality, and communication skills and increase his income if it was not a non-levying service. At that point, the library can rethink of a service charge. If your library is in a real need of fund generation, “why not?” - your library can officially discuss with the stakeholders and other relevant entities to initiate branding + marketing + fund generation + community services as travel guides.

Conclusion

In the evolving landscape, the library has to struggle with financial, social and technological barriers to meet the changing needs of the community. Unless the library uses innovative approaches to transform the existing library setting, the survival, and acceptance of the library as a community service centre will remain as a question. By using the readily available resources in the area, the libraries can brand themselves while serving as travel guides and promoting enriching library services. This transformative approach ensures the libraries remain relevant, and reinforce the dynamic roles and capacities as travel guides in the journey of knowledge and discovery.

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