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## MARKETING OF INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IN BANGLADESH: FINDINGS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

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### Abstract

*This paper discusses the current trends of library and information products and services in Bangladesh with reference to country's leading special and specialized academic libraries. Identifies the present status of library's information products and services and their marketing strategies, and measures the attitudes of librarians/information professionals towards profit-making activities in libraries. Highlights the information needs and information seeking behaviour of academic community, scientists, specialists, researchers as well as administrators of the organizations and from outside the organizations.*

**Keywords:** Information Products; Information Services; Information Technology; Marketing of Information; Non-profit Organizations; Special Libraries.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the present age of information technology, libraries and information centers have become profit-making organizations due to adoption of new technological advances and innovations, and changing nature of their information storage, processing, retrieval and services. Instead of the user approaching for information services in the libraries or information centers, the information must reach the user's place of work; whether it is a classroom, the research laboratory, the home or any other place of activity in any field of life. Recently, the cost-effective information is to be provided by the special and some academic libraries as a service for application of modern principles of marketing management (Kotler and Andreasen, 1995).

Before 1970, the concept of marketing was confined almost exclusively to organizations supplying products rather than services. Although the idea of applying marketing principles to library activity was realized by S. R. Ranganathan in 1930s himself and on the basis of which the Five Laws of Library Science were formulated by him (Mandal, Poddar & Choudhury, 1998). Over the last few years, a number of information services have been experimenting with modern marketing methods or at least in certain aspects of marketing such as advertising and public relations. The marketing approach may profoundly modify the perspective of information products and services just as it transformed the business world some years ago. The application of information technology (IT) based marketing approach in information products and services would be quite radical and dynamic as it forces the organization to the competitive business world. Now-a-days, marketing acts as a driving force in achieving quality library and information products and services and maximizing users' satisfactions at the minimum producing and delivery cost. This fact is more important in case of special libraries. This study is an attempt to assess how the special libraries in Bangladesh do apply the marketing orientation to create superior values to users.

The special libraries and information centers in Bangladesh have been reflected as social and non-profit service oriented organizations providing information to their members from a long time past. Over a period of time, due to change in the nature of demands by the users, libraries have extended their functions to include documentation and document delivery systems (Munshi, 2004). The libraries have also been initiated to make them as profit making organizations providing better information products

and services to users. In the recent time, the cost-effective information is to be provided by some special and academic libraries as a service for application of modern principles of marketing management. But the concept of marketing of information products and services in Bangladesh can be said to be still in infancy. In a recent survey conducted on some leading special libraries in Bangladesh regarding their present status of marketing activities of information products and services, it was observed that most of the special libraries have not been performing any marketing functions and activities. Very recently, a few number of special libraries (BANSDOC, DISC of ICDDR,B, CIRDAP Library, CDL, BIDS Library, SAIC, AIC, etc.) have started a slight marketing activities in their library operations and services.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To identify the trend of the present scenario of library and information services in Bangladesh with special reference to special and specialized academic libraries;
2. To identify the present status of library's information products and services and their marketing strategies;
3. To measure the attitudes of librarians or information professionals towards profit-making activities in libraries of Bangladesh;
4. To examine the availability of infrastructural facilities required for performing profit-making functions and activities in special libraries in Bangladesh;
5. To identify the information needs and information seeking behaviour of academic community, scientists, specialists, researchers and administrators of the organizations and from outside the organizations;

## **3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The study is basically an exploratory in nature. For ensuring representativeness from different types of special libraries (sciences, social sciences, agricultural sciences, medical sciences, technology as well as community development libraries) and considering the functions, activities, operations, services and usefulness to the users, forty (40) leading special and specialized academic libraries of the country were selected using a stratified simple random technique.

**Data collection instruments** : Based on the review of literature, a set of structured questionnaire has been designed to collect information, which was prepared for the survey of the sample special libraries and the questionnaire was duly pre-tested and finally structured keeping in view the objectives of the study.

**Data Collection Method** : For the purpose of authenticity and reliability of data, personal interview method was applied to collect relevant data and information through a semi structured questionnaire.

**Library and Information Centre** : Librarians and information professionals of the selected forty (40) special libraries and information centers were interviewed carefully with the structured questionnaire.

**Data Processing and Analysis** : The data collected from the questionnaire of this study was duly edited to verify and analyzed to fulfill the stated objectives. The SPSS statistical package was used to enter, edit, analyze and interpret the data.

## **FINDINGS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The study has been prepared based on findings of the interview results of librarians, documentation officers, information professionals, scientists, specialists as well as advisors of the library and information centers and users to assess the marketing activities in the special libraries of Bangladesh. The study was conducted on 40 leading special libraries and information centers of the country. Major findings of the study are:

### **A. INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION AND LIBRARY COLLECTION**

#### **Strength of Library Staff**

With respect to the strength of library staff in different categories, table – 1 shows that the major portions of the employees in most libraries are non-professional category. In a few number of libraries this situation is found exceptional. About 55% libraries have a very limited number of semi-professional library staff. The table also shows that both governments dominated and private libraries did not maintain the staff recruitment rules. As a result the libraries have been suffering seriously from quality control in terms of measurement, good management, arrangement, organization and administration.

Table – 1: Percentage distribution of total strength of library staff

Name of Library	Strength of Staff Category							
	Professional		Semi-prof.		Non-prof.		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
BANSDOC Library	77	46.67	1	6.66	7	46.67	15	100
DISC of ICDDR,B	06	66.67	-	-	3	33.33	9	100
NHLDC	04	17.39	1	4.35	18	78.26	23	100
AIC	09	39.13	2	8.70	12	52.17	23	100
SAIC	01	50.00	-	-	1	50.00	2	100
BIDS Library & Doc. Centre	05	29.41	4	23.53	8	47.06	17	100
BANBEIS Library	05	45.45	1	09.10	5	45.45	11	100
BCSIR Library	03	25.00	1	08.30	8	66.67	12	100
CIRDAP Library	02	28.57	1	14.29	4	57.14	7	100
BUET Library	13	33.34	8	20.51	18	46.15	39	100
Shahjalal University Library	5	26.32	1	5.26	13	68.42	19	100
BAU Library (Mymensingh)	13	14.29	6	6.59	72	79.12	91	100
BIRDEM Library	5	38.46	1	7.69	7	53.85	13	100
PGMR Library	6	35.71	-	-	9	64.29	14	100
BCS Admin Academy Library	3	33.33	1	16.67	3	50.00	6	100
Community Development Library	3	42.86	-	-	4	57.14	7	100
NIPORT Library	3	60.00	-	-	2	40.00	5	100
Bangladesh Bank Library	10	35.71	1	3.57	17	60.72	28	100
BARD Library (Comilla)	3	23.08	2	15.38	8	61.54	13	100
NILG Library	3	30.00	2	20.00	5	50.00	10	100
ERDOC	2	50.00	-	-	2	50.00	4	100

BIISS Library & Doc. Centre	6	54.55	-	-	5	45.45	11	100
Dept. of Environment LDC	1	25.00	1	25.00	2	50.00	4	100
BAEC Library	1	20.00	1	20.00	3	60.00	5	100
NGO Forum Library	1	100.00	-	-	-	-	1	100
IBA Library	4	26.67	3	20.00	8	53.33	15	100
ISWR Library	2	25.00	2	25.00	4	50.00	8	100
BPATC Library (Savar)	7	53.85	-	-	6	46.15	13	100
BLRI Library (Savar)	2	50.00	-	-	2	50.00	4	100
BINA Library (Mymensingh)	2	50.00	-	-	2	50.00	4	100
DCC Library	3	60.00	-	-	2	40.00	5	100
NAEM Library	2	20.00	3	30.00	5	50.00	10	100
BRAC Library	2	33.33	-	-	4	66.67	6	100
NIPSOM Library	3	30.00	1	10.00	6	60.00	10	100
FRI Library (Mymensingh)	3	50.00	-	-	3	50.00	6	100
PIB Library	4	40.00	-	-	6	60.00	10	100
DMB Library	1	100.00	-	-	-	-	1	100
RDA Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	100
BIBM Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	100
Grameen Trust Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	100

**Source: Field Survey**

### Staff Qualification and Training

With respect to staff qualification, results indicate that only 29 (23.77%) library staff having post graduate Masters degree. Surprisingly we did not find any graduate degree holding library staff in our sampled libraries. Most of the library staff has a 6 months certificate course on library and information science in Bangladesh. Lack of professionalism is thus revealed from the above fact, raising the quality of service providers in a highly technical arena of information services.

Table – 2: Percentage distribution of library staff qualification

Qualification	No.	Percent (%)
Post Graduate Degree	29	23.77
Graduate Degree	-	-
Diploma in Library & Information Science	56	75.90
Certificate Course	37	30.33
Total	122	100

### Rating of Present Collection

Existing collection among the surveyed libraries has been extremely poor. Figure – 1 demonstrates that out of 37, only 10.81% libraries responded as adequate in their collection. In fact, no library has balanced collection on their respective fields, but some libraries satisfactorily reacted as they have adequate collection. Only 37.84% libraries responded as that they have almost adequate collection; 40.54% libraries responded as that their collection is inadequate and only 10.81% libraries replied that they have a very poor collection relating to information services for users. But physical verification of some selected libraries did indicate inconsistency in their responses, that is, adequate collection is hardly to be found in any special libraries in Bangladesh.

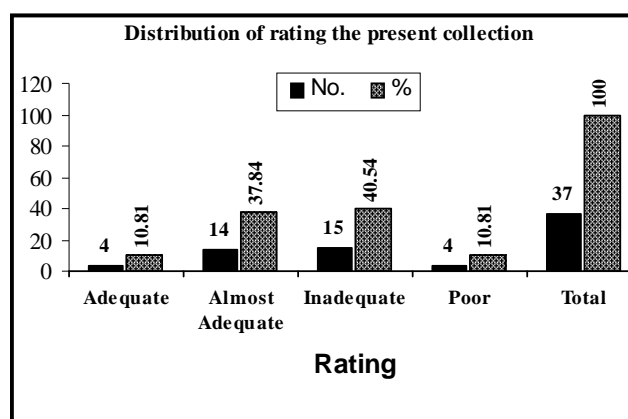


Figure – 1: Percentage distribution of rating the present collection

### Subscription of Journals

Information regarding journals regularly are subscribed by leading 5 libraries of Bangladesh are presented in table – 3. The table shows that BANSDOC Library subscribed 53.12% national and 46.88% international journals; DISC of ICDDR,B subscribed a total of 217 titles and all these are international journals, NHLDC subscribed 33.33% national and 66.67% international journals; BIDS Library & Documentation Centre subscribed only 4% national and 96% international journals, BIISS Library & Documentation Centre subscribed 25% national and 75% international of journals.

In terms of numbers, international journals subscriber is extremely poor of all the 5 leading sample libraries in Bangladesh. Only two libraries, e.g. DISC of ICDDR,B and BIISS Library & Documentation Centre are found to be at satisfactory levels. Apart from this, majority of the libraries did not subscribe any research journal though they are designated as specialized library.

Table 3 : Percentage distribution of journals being subscribed by leading 5 special libraries in Bangladesh

Name of Library		National	International	Total
BANSDOC	No.	34	30	64
	%	53.12	46.88	100
DISC of ICDDR,B	No.	–	217	217
	%	–	100	100
NHLDC	No.	20	40	60
	%	33.33	66.67	100
BIDS Library & Doc. Centre	No.	2	48	50
	%	4.00	96.00	100
BIISS Library & Doc. Centre	No.	50	150	2-
	%	25.00	75.00	100
Total	No.	106	485	591
	%	17.94	82.06	100

### Library Collection

Library collection of leading five special libraries during the last five years is depicted in table-4. The collection rate of BANSDOC Library is gradually decreasing, but the same rate of the other 4 libraries e.g. DISC of ICDDR,B, AIC, BIDS Library & Documentation Centre and CDL are satisfactory. The rate however, varies from year to year. The DISC of ICDDR,B purchased 1520 reading materials in the year of 2000-01; but in the year of 2002-03 the library purchased only 751 reading materials and in the year of 2003-04 it purchased 1121 reading resources. The fact is equally true for other leading libraries. In general, the collection rate of other special libraries is very poor.

Table – 4: Distribution of growth of collection of leading 5 libraries during last five years

Financial Year	Library-1 BANSDOC	Library-2 ICDDR,B	Library-3 AIC	Library-4 BIDS	Library-5 CDL
2003 – 04	350	1121	700	2735	2417
2002 – 03	400	751	450	1658	1285
2001 – 02	500	1060	380	1770	2725
2000 – 01	500	1520	350	980	2180
1999 – 00	450	1336	320	1647	1730

### B. INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

#### Hardware Available

The number of hardware available in leading 5 libraries is depicted in table- 5. The table shows that BANSDOC Library has installed 15 computers, 1 scanner 5 reprographic tools and 5 audiovisual materials. The status is encouraging for the DISC of ICDDR,B, AIC BIDS-LDC and CDL also. These libraries have the sufficient number of hardware for providing automation services. The picture of other special libraries is however, painful; each of them has only one or two computers only. Literally they are doing nothing rather than word processing functions and official corresponding.

Table – 5: Showing the number of hardware available in five leading libraries

Hardware Available	Library-1 BANSDOC	Library-2 CDDR'B	Library-3 AIC	Library-4 BIDS LDC	Library -5 CDL
Computer	15	16	11	6	7
Scanner	1	1	-	1	1
Reprographic tools	5	1	8	3	2
AVM	5	4	6	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>

#### Users' Opinion on Existing Facilities

The opinions about existing infrastructural facilities of the special libraries in Bangladesh are disappointing (Figure – 2), only 13.51% libraries responded as adequate in their infrastructural facilities and they are completely satisfied. About 51% responded as almost adequate about their infrastructural facilities while 35.14% libraries responded dissatisfaction in their existing facilities. This unusual picture has been observed in both private and public special libraries in Bangladesh.

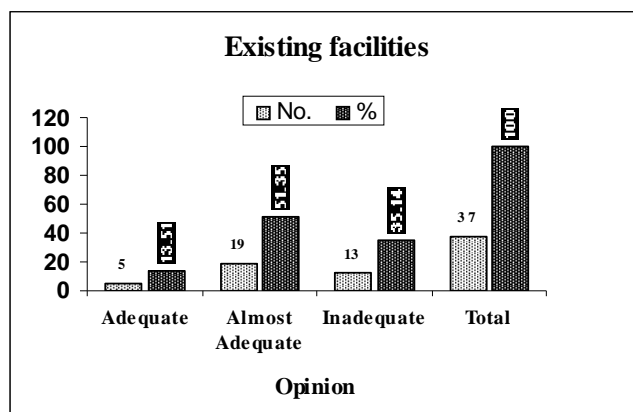


Figure – 2: Percentage distribution of users' opinion about existing facilities

### C. LIBRARY/INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

#### Nature of Activity

The table – 6 shows that 54.05% libraries prepared Current Awareness Bulletin and 56.76% prepared Periodical Holding List as their major activities. Most of the libraries did not perform activities like Preparation of Subject Bibliography, Directory, Newsletter, Indexing and Abstracting Journals, Union List of Serials and Audio-Visual Materials. Highest nature of activities is found in Newsletter (70.27%) and Union List of Serials (75.67%).

Table – 6: Percentage distribution of nature of activity on library products/publication

Library Product/Publication		Nature of Activity			
		Major	Minor	None	Total
Current awareness bull	No.	20	7	10	37
	%	54.05	18.92	27.30	100
Subject bibliography	No.	11	11	15	37
	%	29.73	29.73	40.54	100
Directory	No.	2	6	29	37
	%	5.41	16.22	78.37	100
Newsletter	No.	9	2	26	37
	%	24.32	5.41	70.27	100
Indexing/abstracting jr	No.	12	7	18	37
	%	32.43	18.92	48.65	100
Periodical holding list	No.	21	5	11	37
	%	56.76	13.51	29.73	100
Union list of serials	No.	7	2	28	37
	%	18.92	5.41	75.67	100
Audio-visual materials	No.	6	1	30	37
	%	16.22	2.70	81.08	100

### Library's Information Services

Figure – 3 demonstrates that, 100% of the surveyed libraries provided Reference Services and Current Awareness Services (CAS). About 90% of libraries provided Referral Services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services and Reprographic Services. About 73% provided Computerized Services and about 68% are providing Indexing and Abstracting services.

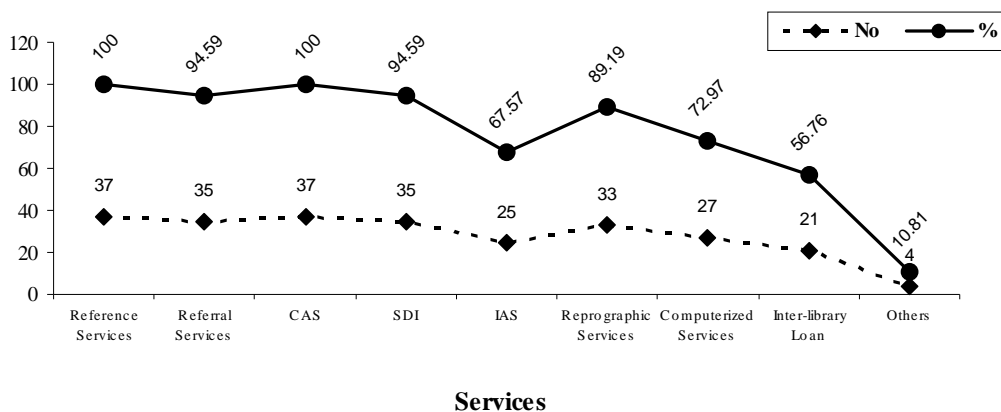


Figure – 3: Percentage distribution of services provided by library/information centre

**Note:** CAS = Current Awareness Services SDI = Selective Dissemination of Information IAS = Indexing and Abstracting Services

## D. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES

### Computer Based Library Operation

Figure – 4 shows that out of 37, about 76% of surveyed libraries have initiated activities for Acquisition as library operation. The table also shows that about 44% of libraries are doing cataloguing and about 35% libraries are functioning for serials control. Only 10.81% libraries are using computers for circulation and about 25% libraries are using for current content. In fact, the practical scenario is absolutely different, most of the sample libraries are doing nothing rather than acquisition of materials.

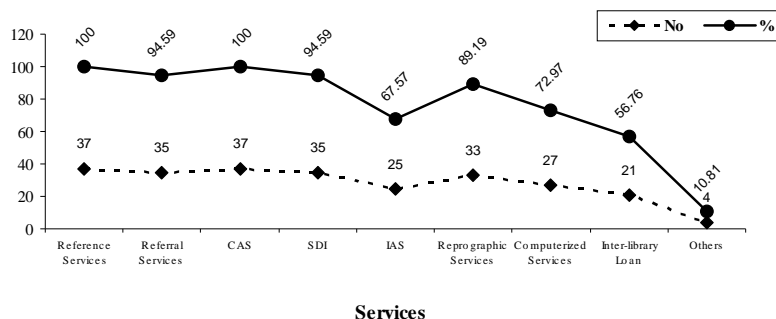
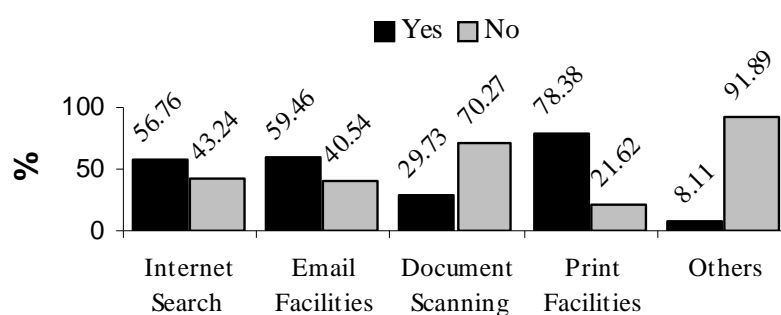


Figure – 4: Percentage distribution of computer based library operations



### IT Services and Facilities

The most striking findings of the study (Figure – 5) are that out of 37 sample libraries, about 57% are providing internet search facilities, 59.46% have email facilities, about 80% are providing print facilities and about 30% are also providing document scanning facilities. A nominal rate is charged from the users for providing these facilities. Although libraries and information centres are considered as non-profit organizations in Bangladesh; but very recently these are doing such functions for making them as profit-making organizations.



### Services and Facilities

Figure – 5: Percentage distribution of libraries with IT services and facilities

## E. LIBRARY FINANCE AND BUDGETING

### Library Expenditure for Last Five Years

The table – 7 demonstrates that only one sample library e.g. DISC of ICDDR,B, allocates a sound budget( about 42.5% of 1053.7 Lac taka) during the last 5 years. The other two sample libraries, e.g. BANSDOC and BCSIR Library got 205.0 (18.8%) and 284.2 (27.2%) lac taka respectively for the last five years. The situation of other 34 sample libraries is not at all encouraging.

Table 7: Distribution of library expenditure for last five years of leading five libraries (Figures in Tk. Lac)

Library	Purpose	Financial year					Total
		2003-04	2002-03	2001-02	2000-01	1999-00	
BANSDOC	Books	10.0	5.5	3.0	5.0	5.0	28.5
	Periodicals	40.0	29.0	32.0	31.5	35.0	167.5
	Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	50.0	34.5	35.0	36.5	40.0	196.0
DISC	Books	8.0	6.5	4.5	5.5	4.5	29
	Periodicals	105.5	95.5	75.0	69.5	70.0	415.5
	Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	113.5	102.0	79.5	75.0	74.5	444.5

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Library	Purpose	Financial year					Total
		2003-04	2002-03	2001-02	2000-01	1999-00	
BIDS-LDC	Books	5.5	4.5	5.0	4.5	4.0	23.5
	Periodicals	10.6	9.5	15.0	10.5	18.5	64.1
	Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	15.1	14.0	20.0	15.0	22.5	86.6
BCSIR	Books	3.0	3.0	5.5	5.0	5.0	21.5
	Periodicals	60.0	57.2	50.0	50.0	45.5	262.7
	Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	63.0	60.2	55.5	55.0	50.5	284.2
FRI	Books	0.5	4.0	0.8	1.5	1.0	7.8
	Periodicals	2.5	8.0	2.8	3.0	3.5	19.8
	Others	-	3.5	1.0	0.8	0.5	5.8
	Total	3.0	15.5	4.6	5.3	5.0	33.4

		Library					Total
		BANSDOC	DISC	BIDS-LDC	BCSSIR	FRI	
Total Expenditure	Tk.	196	444.5	86.6	284.2	33.4	1044.7
	%	18.8	42.5	8.3	27.2	3.2	100

### Marketing Practices, Functions and Activities

With respect to marketing practices, functions and activities, table – 8 shows that, about two-thirds of the surveyed libraries did not developed annual marketing plan and program on product, price, promotion, and distribution services. Also the said libraries have not yet carrying out any periodic studies to determine the contribution and effectiveness of marketing activities, programs for marketing information system (MKIS), designing marketing activities for user services, assigning library staff to analyze, plan and implement the marketing information, etc. The scenario is overall gloomy and highly frustrating compared to many nations similar to Bangladesh settings.

Table – 8 : Percentage distribution of libraries making marketing practices, functions and activities

Marketing Programs and Practices	Yes(No.)	No(No.)	Yes(%)	No(%)
a. Development of Annual Marketing Plan	11	26	29.73	70.27
b. Periodic Studies for Effective Marketing Program	6	31	16.22	83.78
c. Having Marketing Information System	9	28	24.32	75.68
d. Designing Marketing Activities for User Service	10	27	27.03	72.97
e. Staff Assigned to Analyze and Implement the Marketing Programs	4	33	10.81	89.19
f. Need for Staff Training in Marketing Programs	16	21	43.24	56.76
g. Staff Understanding of Marketing Inf. Concept	24	13	64.86	35.14

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#### 4. CONCLUSION

Successful marketing includes the art of deciding that strategy and techniques that are used in different situation of the organizational activities. As non-profit organizations, library and information centers cannot avoid marketing practices in their operation and services. The survey reports demonstrate a gloomy scenario of the attitudes of Bangladesh people toward knowledge gathering. The study also implies that specialized and technical libraries in Bangladesh have failed to generate a mechanism of internal revenue collection. This is true both in government sponsored and privately running libraries and information centres of the country. With respect to marketing practices, functions and activities, the report shows that, about two-thirds of the surveyed libraries did not developed annual marketing plan and program on product, price, promotion, and distribution services. In most cases librarians and information managers seem to be reluctant to become fully involved in marketing their library and information products and services. They should understand the nature of information, current information needs of users, the transfer process between users and information, etc. This understanding will ensure that they will market their information products and services as well as providing an effective library and information services throughout the whole nation.

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