

Role of Digital Marketing Services for Boosting Library Usage of Academic Libraries in India

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is witnessing a digital environment in every sphere of life the result of which is digital transformation in almost all our endeavours. In this context traditional marketing strategies are not enough to cope with this transformed situation. Digital marketing for higher education institutions and its different departments is now the need of the hour. Digital marketing is a process which involves the use of digital channels to market products and services in order to reach consumers. Application of the concept of digital marketing is essential for academic libraries where digital transformation has taken place to give birth to a new concept 'digital library'. To support and accomplish the institutional goals academic libraries are now resorting to digital marketing services for promoting their library services. This can increase the library usage of higher education institutions in India. The present paper relies on the theoretical exploration of the concept of digital marketing in the library and information service area of the higher education institutions in India. It relies on primary sources of information like research articles published in this context.

Keywords: academic libraries, digital libraries, digital marketing services, library usage, higher education institutions, digital transformation

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1978 Frederick Wilfred Lancaster, the renowned British-American information scientist, in his famous book 'Toward Paperless Information Systems' envisioned a future where digital aspects for communication and storage would replace paper-based systems. He was true as we are now observing a digital era in every walk of our lives. In India higher education systems are now imbibed with digital means for storage, retrieval and communication relating to its activities. For a successful journey in this digital era any entity needs to emphasize its marketing initiatives which would be digital in nature, i.e. a thrust should be given in its marketing affairs with introducing digital tools and techniques. Academic libraries, being constituent part of higher education institutions (HEIs), are also undergoing the digital transformation process for befitting their activities with that of their parent bodies i.e. the HEIs. In this context digital marketing initiatives play a vital role in library management. For a successful library and information manager digital marketing is now a means to boost library usage which, in turn, will utilise its resources at an optimal level. The present paper discusses the role of digital marketing initiatives to boost library usage in the present world of digital transformation of the HEIs in India.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prof. Vesna N Baltezarevic (2023) discussed the role of digital marketing in the education sector. He pointed out that at the backdrop of recent digital transformation forces in the education sector traditional marketing strategies are not sufficient to cope with. According to him, digital marketing services have many advantages like two-way communication channels, cost-effectiveness, etc.

Morgan Harvey, et al (2019) pointed out that libraries in educational institutions struggle to foster interest in their social media activities with staff often leading decisions rather than users.

Ishe Muzvondiwa, et al (2021) stressed on creation of a framework for library marketing practices that can improve usage of services and resources in private higher education institutions.

Pooja Chaudhary, et al (2021) opined that implementing digital strategies in higher education institutions required vision, preparedness, and commitment.

J. Maluleka, et al (2022) discussed the need of marketing services in the library sector that would increase library usage by the distance-learning students.

Ecaterina Siscan (2022) emphasized on digital marketing tools that can be used by higher education institutions to promote their services and attract potential students.

B. Singh (2017) pointed out that the digital initiatives taken by the government of India are significantly improving the quality of higher education in India.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims:

- 1) to create awareness on the various aspects of digital marketing services.
- 2) to deal with the effectiveness of digital marketing services for boosting library usage of academic libraries of higher education institutions in India.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present paper relies on the theoretical exploration of the concept of digital marketing in the library and information service area of the higher education institutions in India. It relies on primary sources of information like research articles published in this context.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present paper discusses the concept of digital marketing in the library and information service area of the higher education institutions in India and how the application of the digital marketing services is helpful in boosting library usage.

VI. DIGITAL MARKETING SERVICES AND ITS APPLICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Digital transformation works as the foundation on which digital marketing builds and develops in the present ICT era that means digital transformation works at the backend whereas digital marketing runs at the frontend so far as the activities relating to digital marketing are concerned. Hence digital transformation plays a vital role in this respect.

Digital transformation is a process of converting the operations of teaching, learning and other related activities of the HEIs into a digital atmosphere where the use of technology dominates. Now if one clicks on e.g. www.ugc.ac.in it takes him/ her to the website of University Grants Commission from where one can get every information regarding this apex body of Indian higher education sector. It could not be imagined before the advent of the Internet in 1986 with the launch of the Educational Research Network (ERNET) by the Department of Electronics, the Government of India. Now the HEIs in India are resorting to digital technologies to go digital worldwide.

Areas in the higher education institutions affected by digital transformation include the following:

1. Building online learning platforms
2. Personalised and adaptive learning
3. Fostering innovation
4. Automation for administration of the HEIs
5. Increasing accessibility
6. Enhancing digital skills
7. Embracing new technologies

VII. THE CONCEPT OF DIGITAL MARKETING

The use of digital channels to market products and services in order to reach consumers is referred to as digital marketing. This concept became popular with the adoption of the internet in the 1990s. Digital marketing can be interactive in nature. Thus, it differs from traditional print or television advertising. In this context, it can be mentioned that internet marketing and digital marketing are often used interchangeably though there are some subtle differences between these two concepts. Internet marketing focuses on online channels such as websites, search engines, and emails whereas digital marketing describes a broader range of digital channels, including mobile devices, digital signage, and other digital platforms.

For the promotion of existing products and services and also for the launch of new products or services to the potential consumers, organizations depend on this new form of marketing that is digital marketing. The marketing concept can also be applied for non-profit organisations like educational institutions. Organisations earlier focused on marketing with the help of print media and electronic media like television and radio. In addition to these media being used as platforms for marketing products and services, organisations are now resorting to the internet service to reach consumers and this, finally, brings forth the concept of digital marketing. At the beginning sending emails to consumers was popular as a means of digital marketing. Now it has been shifted to the search engines. Social platforms like Facebook are now the modern means of digital marketing for reaching the audience.

VIII. BENEFITS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

- 1. Greater visibility:** Application of the concept of digital marketing by the higher education institutions in India helps to attract a larger audience by making them more visible to potential students worldwide.
- 2. Awareness about the Image of the HEIs:** It develops a strong online presence so that the institutions can build their image and differentiate themselves from competitors.
- 3. Targeted Advertising:** Digital marketing techniques allow institutions to target specific demographics, interests and behaviours which ensure that their message reaches the right audience.
- 4. Economy:** Digital marketing is more cost-effective than traditional marketing methods.

IX. DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

- 1. Text Messaging:** Institutions use text messages for example short message service (SMS) to send information relating to their courses of study and job opportunities after completion of the courses.
- 2. Email Marketing:** Institutions send targeted messages to the students who intend to enrol in their courses.
- 3. Content Marketing:** Publishing on websites the audio-visual content or even a written content regarding the products and services of an organisation and then promoting that content through social media, email marketing etc are followed for content marketing.
- 4. Website Marketing:** Organisations for marketing their products and services digitally now build their own website. It will be easy to navigate, mobile-friendly and to have fast-loading capacity.
- 5. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising:** With this technique organisations reach customers by paying for their advertisements to other websites and digital platforms for displaying their ads, e.g. Google Ads.
- 6. Social Media Marketing:** To build awareness regarding the organization it engages with audiences on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- 7. SEO in Digital Marketing:** Search Engine Optimization (SEO) (the term SEO was popularized by SEO practitioner Bruce Clay in 1997 as per Danny Sullivan's article 'Who invented the term "Search Engine Optimization"' published in 2004) uses different techniques to increase traffic to the websites of the institutions concerned. It raises the websites' position in search results. The higher a website surfaces on the search results page the more chance for potential students to see it and click to visit it.
- 8. Affiliate Marketing:** In this type of digital marketing organisations build partnership with affiliates who can promote their products and services.
- 9. Video Marketing:** Video marketing technique uses video content for their promotion of products and services.

X. APPLICATIONS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

- 1. Business to Business (B2B) Digital Marketing:** Organisations reach other similar types of organisation and partners for promoting their products and services. It may be a wholesaler to retailer kind of activity.
- 2. Business to Consumer (B2C) Digital Marketing:** It engages with individual consumers.

XI. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN DIGITAL MARKETING

- 1. Social Media Traffic:** It includes likes, follows, shares, views, etc. It measures how many people interact with the organisation's profile on social media platforms.
- 2. Website Traffic:** It measures how many people visit an organisation's website during a given period of time.
- 3. Conversion Rate:** It provides quantitative data regarding the percentage of people who had taken desired actions like purchasing a particular product or service as compared to the total audience to whom that particular advertisement reached.

4. Click-through Rate: It measures the effectiveness of online advertising. It counts the number of people who actually clicked on a particular advertisement as compared to the number of people who might have seen it.

XII. PHILIP KOTLER ON DIGITAL MARKETING

The father of modern marketing Philip Kotler has shared valuable insights on digital marketing. Here are some key points from his works:

1. Understanding the digital revolution, 2. Customer centre approach, 3. Content is King (significance of creating valuable, relevant and engaging content to attract and retain digital audiences), 4. Personalisation to offer individual preferences, 5. Data-driven decision making, 6. Omni-channel Marketing (integrating various digital channels to create a cohesive customer experience), 7. Social media engagement, 8. Mobile optimization for making websites and marketing materials mobile-friendly, 9. SEO and SEM (Search Engine Marketing) to improve online visibility, 10. Continuous learning for staying updated with the latest trends, tools, and strategies in digital marketing.

Digital marketing services play a pivotal role to make the digital transformation of the HEIs successful in the Indian context. Digital marketing contributes to increasing brand awareness. With creation of consistent online presence across multiple channels to make institutions more visible to potential students. It utilizes social media, email marketing, and online advertising to drive website traffic and generate leads. Digital marketing takes social media promotional initiatives to connect with potential students by sharing latest news and events relating to the student achievements, etc. HEIs implement content marketing strategies to attract and nurture leads. Digital marketing helps to build relations with potential students. Digital marketing helps to leverage online advertising such as Google ads, and social media ads to target specific demographics and interests. It optimizes websites for search engines to improve visibility and generate leads. For measuring the success of digital marketing, the HEIs are involved in tracking website analytics and social media metrics. These can use data-driven insights to refine digital marketing strategy and, thus, improve return on investment (ROI).

In the context of digital marketing the higher education institutions in India offer the following products and services:

1. Academic programs
2. Research opportunities
3. Faculty expertise
4. Infrastructure like laboratories, libraries, etc.
5. Teaching and learning
6. Student support e.g. counseling, career services, etc
7. Research support
8. Alumni services e.g. networking opportunities, events and engagement
9. Industry partnerships for collaborations with industry partners for internships, research and job placements.

XIII. ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING SERVICES FOR BOOSTING LIBRARY USAGE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA

Digital transformation in libraries involves leveraging technology to enhance services, resources and user experiences. This shift is crucial for academic libraries to remain relevant in the digital age. Now traditional academic libraries have shifted their activities to the digital environment and become digital libraries. Digital libraries have transformed the way people access and utilise information offering numerous benefits for education, research and cultural preservation.

Digital marketing services in the library and information sector refer to the use of several digital aspects like website, apps, mobile devices, social media, search engines and other digital means for promoting and using library services and products. Digital marketing offers significant potential for boosting library usage by improving accessibility to the diverse range of library resources. Academic libraries have started using modern technology to expand their reach to attract new users and, thus, enhance the library usage. The concept of digital library is becoming popular these days.

To meet the needs of the users, libraries of the higher education institutions offer various digital resources and services. These include:

1. E-books and digital publications
2. Databases and indexes
3. Digital archives
4. Online reference service like virtual reference desks, chatbots and email-based reference services
5. Research assistance for guided research support, literature searches and citation management
6. Information literacy programs to make online tutorials, workshops and courses on information literacy
7. Institutional repositories which can be built up with the help of open access software

8. Digital exhibits like online exhibits for showcasing library collections
9. Digitized special collections for rare books, manuscripts and other special materials
10. Library websites and portal including library web OPAC (online public access catalogue) to provide gateways to library resources and services

The above digital products and services help academic libraries to reach a wider audience, enhance user experience and demonstrate value in the digital age.

Automation of library services for conducting housekeeping operations is must for providing digital services. Providing links to e-resources for reaching remote users 24×7, electronic delivery of e-resources for giving online reference services, information alert services, provision of placing e-suggestions in an interactive way, provision of mobile-based library services, alerting users for library transactions by sending SMS notifications, are considered effective strategies for boosting library usage in the digital age.

Digital libraries and digital marketing can work together to boost library usage. Following are some strategies which are to be followed by academic libraries to boost library usage:

1. Social media to promote digital library resources, services and events.
2. Targeted online advertising to reach potential users such as students, researchers or faculty members.
3. Email marketing for sending regular newsletters and updates to subscribers, highlighting new resources, services and events.
4. Content marketing to create engaging content, such as blog posts, videos, or infographics to showcase digital library resources and services.
5. Search engine optimisation for digital library website to improve visibility and attract organic traffic. Organic traffic refers to the website visits that come from unpaid, or "organic" search engine results. It is the traffic libraries get when users search for something on Google, Bing or other search engines and click on libraries' website link in the non-sponsored (non-paid) results. It is actually the free traffic libraries earn through SEO efforts rather than through paid advertising. Organic traffic is a key indicator of how well an academic library's website is performing in SEO. Good SEO practices aim to improve academic libraries' website ranking in organic search results, making it more visible to users.
6. Collaborations and partnerships with other institutions to promote digital library resources and services.
7. User-generated content drive encourages users to create and share contents.
8. Analytics and feedback mechanism to track usage and gather feedback from users to improve digital library services and marketing strategies.

Thus, by leveraging digital marketing strategies digital libraries can increase visibility, enhance engagement among users, promoting a positive user experience and encourage users to explore and utilise digital library resources and services. In this way by combining digital libraries with digital marketing services, the higher education institutions in India can create a powerful synergy that supports learning, research and innovation and finally increase the library usage.

In this context, **the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)** plays a significant role in promoting quality in higher education institutions in India with giving emphasis on academic libraries' digital services that will, finally, lead to boosting library footfalls.

NAAC in its accreditation document point number 4.2 'library as a learning resource' stressed on:

Under 4.2.1 of the document - library automation using integrated library management system

Under 4.2.2 - institutional access to e journals, e-SodhSindhu, Shodhganga membership, e-books, databases and remote access to e-resources

Under 4.2.3 - average annual expenditure for purchase of books/e-books and subscription to journals/e-journals

Under 4.2.4 - percentage per day usage of the library by teachers and students (footfalls and login data for online access)

The above aspects are the clear indication towards creating a digital atmosphere where digital marketing techniques are to be followed by the academic libraries in the higher education institutions in India to increase usage of academic libraries by the academic community.

XIV. CONCLUSION

Digital wave is surging across the walks of mankind in the present world, the result of which is the digital transformation throughout the world. Digital transformation involves leveraging technology to revolutionise library operations, while digital marketing promotes these transformed services and resources to a greater community in the higher education sector in India. The library and information managers of the HEIs in India will have to carry out the task of digital marketing to build the image of their parent bodies in the 21st century's education arena.

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