

Social Media Role in Digital Marketing to Improve Academic Library Services and to Enhance the Use of Resources

Jumaan Abdulqader Alzahrani,
Department of Information Science,
College of Computer Science and Information Systems,
Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah,
Saudi Arabia,
E-Mail: jazahrani@uqu.edu.sa

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Abstract: *Today we live in a digital age. In the current scenario of the digital world, the new concept of digital marketing is a step forward in marketing strategy and takes precedence over the traditional approach. As a tool, social media (SM) makes digital marketing increasingly simpler and more interesting to visitors. Social networks help gather information about who views your target audiences' content. This article discusses the concept of digital marketing of library services and library resources using social networks in academic libraries.*

Keywords: Social Media, Digital Marketing, Academic Libraries, Digital World, Marketing Strategy, Library Resources, Library Services.

Introduction

As approaches using social media grow rapidly and become very popular around the world, a new concept of marketing emerges. Digital marketing offers a new way to market any product through social media. With the adoption and application of digital marketing concepts, it enables library professionals to promote library services and library resources more effectively. There are many applications that help library professionals serve their library users and improve library services. Libraries can market their resources through social media advertising. With the advent of new technologies and intensifying competition in the digital age, marketing of social media tools has become an important factor for the continued existence of libraries and library professionals. Therefore, from this perspective, it is crucial to realize the importance of implementing a digital marketing strategy that is supported by social networks.

Review of Literature

According to Chewe, Sakala & Zulu (2021), SM literacy skills refer to the acquaintance, adoption, and productive use of social media technology in any given setting. These skills are critical for improving library service delivery (Chewe, Sakala & Zulu, 2021). In their study of SM literacy skills among librarians at the University of Zambia, 41 librarians participated in their questionnaire survey. Data analyzed by SPSS showed that 63.4 percent of librarians were SM illiterate, while only 7.3 percent were literate. As for skills acquisition, 34.1 percent acquired their skills with the help of friends, 21.9 percent through formal schooling and self-study. Major constraints included the lack of training opportunities and ignorance of new

social media tools. Based on the findings, it has been recommended that the library conduct capacity-building workshops to enhance social media literacy skills acquisition (Hamad, Tbaishat, & Al-Fadel, 2016).

The introduction of SM as a medium of communication on the Internet is widely accepted by users due to its viability, integration, and penetration into different spheres of human endeavor (Chukwudi, Taiwo, & Deborah, 2020). It is highly popular among other means and tools of information communication and dissemination. Their research found that enterprises that embedded social media in their productions, processes, and marketing platforms (blogs, forums, wikis, and communities) realized the potential of these tools in improving their productivity and efficiency.

Chukwudi, Taiwo, & Deborah (2020) reported that, the introduction of social network as a medium of communication on the Internet, followed by its widely acceptance by users, its viability, integration, and penetration into different spheres of human endeavor gives it high popularity among other means of information communication and dissemination. Enterprises that embedded social media in their productions, processes, and marketing (blogs, forums, wikis, and communities) are realizing the potential of these circles in improving their productivity and efficiency (Kumar & Thanuskodi, 2018). Social networking is a social structure that lets the user interact and work collaboratively with other users, including the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect and interact with the web world. Social networking technologies in web 2.0 have enhanced teaching and learning process within and outside the four walls making librarians agents for repositioning the educational system of the country. In this paper, the authors have intended to describe the possible implications of social networking technologies in the field of library and information services in the web 2.0 milieu. In addition, an attempt has been made to illustrate different social software tools and their effective utilization in the social networking environment. Finally, the author has cited some stunning examples of libraries worldwide being managed and administered using web 2.0 technologies. At the same time, recommendations on possible ways to enhance library service delivery through application of social networking technologies have been proposed. According to Kumar & Thanuskodi (2018), Social Network sites are one of the innovative technologies contributing and providing libraries with the opportunity to reach out to their patrons. Keeping library users up to date is the primary aim of every library whereby online library services have seized the role successfully, among which Social Network Sites undertake that unique role of keeping patrons well-informed.

Muhammad & Zhiwei (2021) explained how their study looked into attempts by public libraries in their engagement with social media and their testimonies of the challenges using Facebook, Twitter, and Weblogs. Also, the study aimed to find out how libraries' professionals perceived SM and emerging technologies as key factors in assisting them create flexible and exclusive environments that make a difference. As such, Muhammad & Zhiwei's paper provided various options and forms of SM for purposes of marketing library resources and services (Muhammad & Zhiwei, 2021).

Islam, Agarwal, & Ikeda (2017), proposed a closer co-operation with library clients in upgrading services through co-operative strategic planning. The demands for more value-added services but yet, burdened with financial limitations brought about by tougher economic times is burdensome for libraries. These call for innovations by libraries, even though they may be rare and challenging. Since the approach to co-op with users is rare, Islam, Agarwal, and Ikeda (2015a) proposed a framework for such an idea in academic libraries. Empirically tested, the framework to be produced used free-form web-based

questionnaires which were e-mailed to the library administrator and other librarians. Twenty-one respondents participated in the project based on their awareness of value sharing and service innovation practices in the libraries. This approach of sharing ideas and planning between service providers (libraries) and clients (library users) encompassed project management, library space, information literacy, and library website design. The success of this co-operation highlights the importance of shared value creation and a unique approach for service innovation in academic libraries and contributes a refreshing concept to the literature in the field of library and information services.

Waral, Pillai, & Elpinston, (2021) considered social networking sites (SNS) as being among the most dynamic and powerful tools used in developing countries especially during the COVID-19 pandemic whereby, they provide customers with efficient information to their customers. Their questionnaire surveys of 138 librarians from the arts and sciences universities across India found WhatsApp and library websites to be the preferred SNS with MySpace being the least preferred. Respondents used SNS as their communication platform due to the wide range and effectiveness. However, to achieve desired effectiveness libraries were advised to update their social networks on a regular basis (Waral, Pillai, & Elpinston, 2021).

Innovative technologies used for marketing of information products and services in Kuwait's academic libraries according to Al-Awadhi & Al-Daihani (2019), were used to raise awareness and for assessing users needs and satisfaction. Although academic librarians showed their willingness in using social media, data collected from Kuwait's academic libraries (private and public) reflected that administrative support was weak in adopting social media as their library marketing strategy. Al-Awadhi & Al-Daihani highlighted the importance of social media platforms as a marketing tool to promote information resources and services and as an outreach strategy to encourage higher library patronage by current and potential users (Xu & Jia, 2018).

To develop social media marketing plans and effectively promote library resources, Hamad, Tbaishat, & Al-Fadel (2016), explained how the Jordanian University Library, and the Alvarkar Applied University Library benefitted from their staff's high level of awareness of SNS. Although they improved and enhanced their professional development, their social networks were however, not fully utilized to promote their library services. The study found that the main contributing factor for library promotion were staff positions and not gender, experience, frequency of use or age. Their study therefore, concluded that Jordanian academic libraries could have made better use and should take advantage of social networks to promote their library services.

Results and Discussion

Digital marketing and social media impact in academic libraries

In the present age of information and communication technology, most people use social media. In the digitization scenario, the approach in marketing requires current-day librarians to embrace all available social media tools as acknowledgment of their importance which will provide avenues for generating new ideas. This would only materialize when the potentials of digital marketing and social media is well understood and their adoption is well integrated through the following adoption and adaptation to current situations.

- Digital Marketing should be integrated into libraries' marketing strategies. This will

raise awareness and enhance engagement within the digital scenario; including blog marketing, e-mail marketing, mobile marketing, online banner marketing, and/or marketing through social networks.

- Social media plays the key role in digital marketing and as an effective marketing tool; facilitates messaging, connectivity, and engagement within the various platforms of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google + (Plus), WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Pinterest.
- Academic libraries need to engage in digital marketing through social media to provide current information about library resources and showcase the best library services available. The adoption of social media will assist library professionals to meet the needs of users and provide wider range of opportunities for interaction with library users.
- Updates on new and current information about products and resources through branding, reference services, building relationships and continued liaison with library users would create better connectivity between staff and customers and thereby, promote better efficiency of media library experts in their timely information provision services. Enhanced services and good rapport lead to continued patronage and association of customers with libraries. These positive trends would increase libraries' income from chargeable services. Social media when applied effectively provide lower maintenance cost of services such as promotion of tailored services and programs for the faculties.
- Promoting these new products to customers provide many benefits to customers and libraries as service providers. Students, academics and administrators become better informed and receive library notices and product promotion in due time because social media makes it possible to connect and link libraries with the student association pages, work with students' societies, academics and administrator's platforms or SNS in a much more efficient manner and ubiquitously.

Digital marketing benefits through social media

In comparison, traditional marketing strategies are time-consuming, monotonous, costly, time-limited, static, one-way and passive when reaching out to customers. The benefits of digital marketing through social media on the contrary however is; timesaving, exciting, cost-effective, unlimited time, creative, interactive, easy to adopt, and provide quick solutions for both libraries and customers.

Digital marketing objectives through social media in academic libraries

Promote library resources, Marketing services, create attention centers and attract users, provide reference books, save library rules and notifications, provide up-to-date library updates, create conversation groups, and start of collaboration, two beginnings-way communication, further development of library news and press releases, modernization and increase of library revenue.

Social media sites for digital marketing in academic libraries

There are many sites on the Internet that are useful for marketing library services and

promoting their resources. Revolutionary approaches and strategies have drastically changed the outlook of library services through information technology. Adopting new technologies have enhanced the role of library professionals as the people in the forefront of IT applications in academia and have made research work less burdensome. Coaching of customers in information and literature search have popularized and placed libraries and Librarians in the forefront of research and reference work. Library professionals have created the importance of “library and reference literacy” as the key to successful research and academic achievements. Through educating and coaching library customer’s academic libraries have been responsible and contributed greatly to their customers in acquiring knowledge and understanding of the various functions of SNS in adopting various social media sites such, namely; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Research Gate, YouTube, Pinterest, Twitter, Google+, WhatsApp, snapchat, etc. The popularity and importance of SNS is shown in the following statistics of the World’s most used SNS (Figure 1).

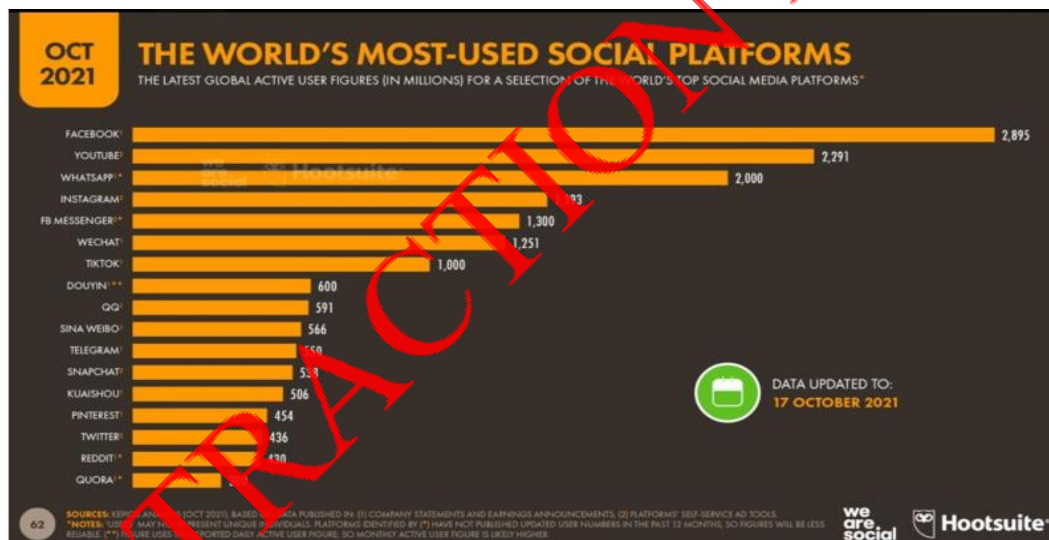


Figure-1: The world’s most-used social platforms

According to the analysis, as of October 2021, there were 4.55 billion social media users worldwide, taking up 57.6 percent of the world's total population. These numbers suggest that more than 9 out of 10 Internet users use social media every month. Based on Fig.1 above, the popularity of social media sites breaks down into the following usage; 2,895 million communities follow Facebook, making them the highest and best SMS community and 2,291 million users of YouTube. Meanwhile, Instagram has 1,393 million followers and over 435 million members follow Twitter, Pinterest, and Vine. These statistics reflect the favoured user’s choice of SMS and provide librarians information on most popular websites that libraries could focus on and utilize in their digital marketing strategies.

How social media may assist patrons of academic libraries?

Digital platforms provide fast and varied approaches when teaching and training students in reference and research work. Some examples are provided to show the practicality of digital marketing and assistance for students in their research work throughout their period of study.

Facebook

Being among the world’s most popular social media site, FB is user-friendly and provide a platform for librarians to raise awareness among their customers about rich information

sources from Databases by searching through various applications provided by the suppliers; JSTOR Search, World Cat and LibGuides. Interactions between Librarians and customers will be much more effective since communication is direct and two-way. The option of real time responses makes solutions to user's issues and problems prompt, immediate and direct between with users and service providers. When assisting users of applications links on "how-to videos" are most suitable and act as tools for academic libraries when teaching and training their customers to maximize referencing and utilization of library resources.

YouTube

Having the second largest followers of SM, YouTube has become a preferred and effective information source. In the field of academia, YouTube offer, library professionals a practical and impressive tool for conducting lectures, conferences, workshops and information searching techniques as well as library orientation programs. Sharing videos for those unable to attend practical sessions provide a wider scope in outreaching efforts for both students in or outside campus.

Instagram

Instagram is an easy way to capture and share important moments and sessions. The availability of Taglines options, makes Instagram easy, fun and creative. Capturing, editing, and sharing photos, videos, and messages with friends and family becomes more attractive. These provide extensive opportunities and effective tool for library professionals to share library spaces, infrastructure, collections and events with their users. Libraries have better opportunities on Instagram, to share their stories, library tours etc. with highlights of favourable library corners. Hashtags are most beneficial as they provide common "subject headings" contents for attracting similar interests from the larger communities.

Twitter

Microblogging is a technique made available in Twitter's applications. Twitter is a microblogging social media site that allows users to post messages. Common interests and responses between users allow library professionals to connect online and build communities by participating on a wider scale of discussions. Twitter therefore, is a great way to hear what library users think about library materials and services, and communication between many others on similar interests. Other requests can be made at the same time while twitting.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is also one of libraries' powerful tools which is most popular among professionals. Using LinkedIn as an alternative to other methods of recruitment, the scope of choice of professionals becomes wider. It expands to an international access of broader skills especially when libraries need some specific specialization and subject field. This also provide a job-seeking paradigm for job seekers.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a very simple and effective tool for reaching out to library users. Libraries are able to easily create special groups for staff, faculty members and students. Being cost-effective, WhatsApp allow libraries to update information on the availability and arrival of requested titles or new materials for students and clients research. In addition, Current

Awareness Service (CAS) would be provided more efficiently at the tip of the fingers ubiquitously.

Blogs

Blogs being one of the oldest social media tools for marketing library services is still a useful tool for libraries purposes. Information about specific subject's research topics will benefit from postings, feature articles on specific topics or issues while providing users the opportunity to contribute to the creation of contents. Librarians can add previous academic sessions contents relating to previous year's surveys, events, exam questions, semester holidays, and vacation information.

Google+ (Plus)

With the help of Google+, librarians are able to create students, faculties, staff and other related groups for developing and producing virtual books. Google+ also helps drive content delivery to viewers and facilitate presentations. The library can also promote library resources such as this month's books, this month's authors, and this week's articles. It provides ways to create subject and topic specific contents.

Functions and responsibilities of academic library

Digital marketing using social media sites is attracting attention as a useful tool for marketing library services and promoting library resources. Libraries that have formerly used traditional marketing approaches, have adopted concepts and have substantially moved toward digital marketing. Academic library professionals need to leverage these varied social media tools for the betterment of library facilities and services. Librarians need to create online database management tools to implement and evaluate the adoption of SMS as a source for knowledge and information enrichment within the community. By acting as an active participant in social media groups, library experts identify and categorize user needs and provide up-to-date information links to websites that meet their information needs.

When customers need support and assistance in using SMS efficiently or face issues with using SMS, Librarians must be helpful so that libraries have "returning" customers as a result of the helpful solutions provided. Continued and consistency of support from Library professionals can be easily provided through the social media sites and libraries' websites. Communication, chat, reference sites, research guidelines, information about events and news are some examples of good linkages. General and standard guidelines when using social media tools for marketing must be followed, so that digital marketing will be effectively administered. This will ensure clients satisfaction with facilities, services and information received through implementation of digital marketing.

Conclusion

The growth of information and communication technology and the concept of digital marketing through social media have changed the way libraries adopt and adapt SMS so as to make headway in library marketing services are promotion. This study seeks to define and express the concepts and benefits of digital marketing of library services and resources with through the adoption and adaptation of social media sites by academic libraries. This study further defines how librarians can attain effectiveness of services when they actively engage with library patrons. Social media therefore, create efficient platforms that provide value-

added services to library customers and create attractive and excellent products that further enhance and elevate the image of libraries and librarians in this digital age. Better ways of promotion through digital marketing have had significant effects on user satisfaction and customer's loyalty. A study by Jia Tina Du & Fang Xu (2018) concluded that users, regardless of age, gender or educational level, significantly affected the attractiveness of digital libraries in such a way that customers are being further influenced in their satisfaction and loyalty. Librarians and academic libraries must therefore take heed and consistently update and provide facilities and services that will retain users and customer's satisfaction and loyalty, which are vital factors of continuous library patronage.

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