



The Digital Frontier: Exploring the Impact of Digital Marketing on Libraries using Bibliometric Values

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Abstract

Purpose: The current study is an attempt to quantify the global scientific literature on digital marketing in libraries. Further, the study analysed the research productivity in terms of growth and impact of digital marketing research in the context of library and information centres.

Design/Methodology/Approach: To adequately cover the scientific output on library digital marketing research, Web of Science (WoS) was used to extract the bibliographic data using 345 keywords. A total of 344 documents from 79 sources were retrieved from 1989 to 2021. R-bibliometrix software and MS Excel were used for data analysis and cleaning.

Findings: The findings indicate a gradual increasing shift in research output from 2011 to 2015, followed by a decline after 2016. Citation impact varied across years, with 2007 achieving the highest citations per article and per year. The United States emerged as the most productive, most cited, and most collaborative country, followed by China. Network analysis showcased the prominence of the keyword social media. Author Joo S, and the Journal of Academic Librarianship emerged as central contributing author and Source respectively.

Practical Implications: The study traces trends in digital marketing research in libraries and underlines how digital marketing tools enhances library visibility, user engagement, and service outreach.

Originality/value: The study offers comprehensive bibliometric analysis for librarians and policymakers to adopt data-driven marketing strategies that improve resource utilization and institutional impact.

Keywords: Libraries, Marketing, Digital Marketing, Bibliometrics, Social Media Marketing, User Engagement.

Introduction

Academic libraries play a key role in providing diverse information resources and services to the users they serve (Deja et al., 2021). Historically, they have functioned as primary knowledge hubs supporting the educational, research, and pedagogical needs of students, faculty, and the wider scholarly community (Baer, 2021). Libraries also act as key mediators in the dissemination of knowledge by promoting best practices for information access and utilization among users (Sumadevi, 2014). However, this traditional position has been increasingly challenged with the rapid advancement of digital technologies (Sun et al., 2011). The widespread availability of smartphones, laptops, and internet-enabled devices has

enabled users to access vast amounts of information anytime and anywhere, reducing their dependence on physical library spaces. As a result, academic libraries have seen a clear drop in the number of people who use their services and visit them in person (Haleem et al., 2022). In this evolving information landscape, Helinsky (2014) warned that libraries are in risk and will becoming marginalized unless they actively demonstrate their relevance and value within the continuously expanding digital information ecosystem. Therefore, libraries must embrace transformation and reposition themselves to remain significant in the digital era.

One effective strategy for enhancing visibility and reaffirming institutional relevance is the adoption of digital marketing practices. Digital marketing refers to the promotion and branding of products or services through digital technologies and online platforms (Mandal, 2017). Digital Marketing does not only create a whole new way of marketing, instead it builds on old marketing ideas with new information technology tools (Marcos, 2013). The American Marketing Association (2021) defines digital marketing as marketing activities carried out via electronic platforms utilizing technological devices. Contemporary digital marketing further integrates emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) to achieve marketing objectives across both consumer-to-consumer and business-to-consumer environments (Buhalis & Volchek, 2021; Petrescu et al., 2020). Since, marketing library products and services through electronic platforms have become essential for promoting awareness, improving outreach, and strengthening engagement with users, digital marketing in libraries should be hence viewed as a comprehensive organizational effort aimed at delivering user-centred services and fostering meaningful communication with stakeholders (ODonnell & Anderson, 2021; Shontz et al., 2004).

Popular Digital Marketing Platforms

Digital marketing platforms refer to the mediums used to communicate information about a brand, product, or service to the target audiences (Gunawan et al., 2023). Prominent digital marketing channels include website marketing, email marketing, and social media marketing (Valenti et al., 2024), affiliate marketing and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising (Almestarihi et al., 2024), video marketing, SMS marketing, and paid search advertising; as well as content marketing, broadcast media, mobile platforms, podcasts, and social media applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X etc. (Kovalev et al., 2024; Kumar & Nanda, 2024).

Review of Literature

The swift advancement of digital technologies has revolutionised the methods by which libraries advertise their resources, services, and

engagement strategies (Haq & Jan, 2025; Mir & Khan, 2026). Digital marketing which encompasses social media, websites, search engine optimization, email marketing, and analytics has become a critical mechanism for sustaining the relevance of modern libraries. Consequently, scholarly interest in digital marketing within library and information science has increased, giving rise to empirical, conceptual, and bibliometric investigations. Wani (2023) and Le (2025) conducted bibliometric analyses focusing explicitly on digital marketing research in libraries. Using WoS data and science-mapping techniques, the authors analysed publication growth, prolific journals, leading authors, and thematic clusters. The results indicate that the number of publications has been steadily rising. The most common topics are social media marketing, digital outreach, and user engagement. Rykhtorova (2020) explored various library marketing websites and found digital marketing techniques applied in library contexts, emphasizing search engine optimization, social media platforms, email marketing, and content strategies. Mukhopadhyay (2023) examined the role of digital marketing services in boosting academic library usage, particularly in the Indian context. The study highlighted how digital platforms enhance the visibility and accessibility of library resources, aligning them with broader digital transformation initiatives in higher education institutions. Similarly, Sonawane and Thirunnavukkarasu (2023) discussed a reoriented digital marketing approach for library products and services. Their review identified recurring themes such as content marketing, social media engagement, and performance analytics, emphasizing the necessity of data-driven digital strategies in libraries.

Despite growing interest, bibliometric analyses specifically addressing digital marketing research in modern libraries remain scarce and fragmented. Existing studies often focus on limited datasets, short time spans, or single platforms. Moreover, there is insufficient synthesis of thematic evolution, collaborative networks, and geographic distribution within this research domain. Therefore, the present study adopts a bibliometric approach to investigate the current state and currency of digital marketing research in modern libraries. By analysing publication trends, influential authors, leading countries, collaboration patterns, and evolving themes, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date mapping of digital marketing scholarship within library and information science.

Research Objectives

- a) To track the productivity and impact of scientific literature on digital marketing in libraries globally.
- b) To determine the most relevant authors and countries.
- c) To examine the collaboration patterns of authors, countries, and sources.

- d) To highlight the most impactful and relevant keywords thematically in digital marketing research related to the libraries.

Methodology

To adequately cover the scientific output on library digital marketing, WoS database was employed to extract the bibliographic data. WoS is one of the prominent research databases used in bibliometric studies (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ashiq et al., 2021; Ganaie et al., 2026; Shonhe, 2020; Siddique et al., 2020; Tripathi et al., 2018). The data was extracted on 10th of January 2024. But the timeline was limited to a three-decade period, i.e., up to 10 January 2021. The search query used was

(TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(marketi*), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(electr* marketi*), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(digit* marketi*) (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(social media market*), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(blog), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(twitter*), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(social media), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(websit*), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(Market*) AND TI=(websit*), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(mail), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(sms), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(youtube), (TI=(librar*)) AND TI=(Electronic bulletin boar*), TI=(librar*) AND TI=(instagram), TI=(librar*) AND TI=(facebook) TI=(librar*) AND TI=(search engine optim*), TI=(librar*) AND TI=(Mobile App*).

A total of 344 documents from 79 sources were extracted for the analysis.

Software tools, refinement of data and analysis

A variety of bibliometric software applications are available for conducting bibliometric analysis which include HistCite, CiteSpace, VOSviewer, and Pajek. For the present study, the authors used the R-based bibliometric package Biblioshiny in conjunction with Microsoft Excel for analysis, visualization purposes and data refinement.

Results

Table 1: Main Information about the Data

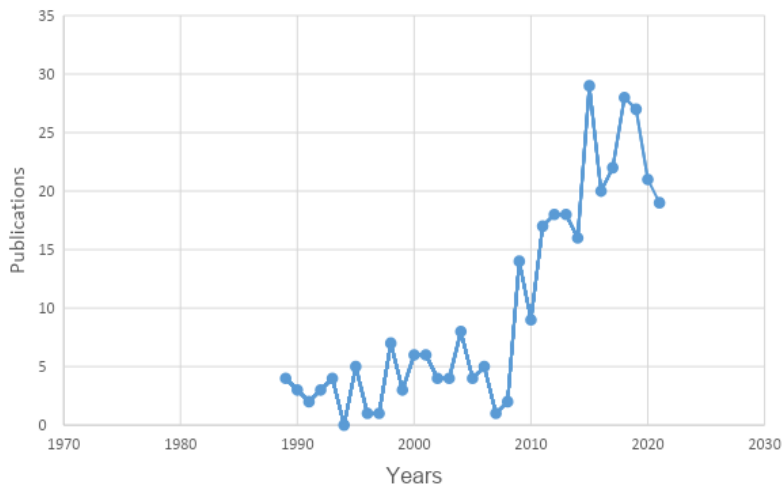
Timespan	1989-2021
Sources (Journals)	79
Documents (Articles)	344
Average years from publication	9.98
Average citations per documents	12.18
Average citations per year per document	1.221
References	7822
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	345
Author's Keywords (DE)	608

Authors	
Authors	615
Author Appearances	762
Authors of single-authored documents	114
Authors of multi-authored documents	501
Authors' Collaboration	
Single-authored documents	130
Documents per Author	0.559
Authors per Document	1.79
Co-Authors per Documents	2.22
Collaboration Index	2.34

Annual Productivity

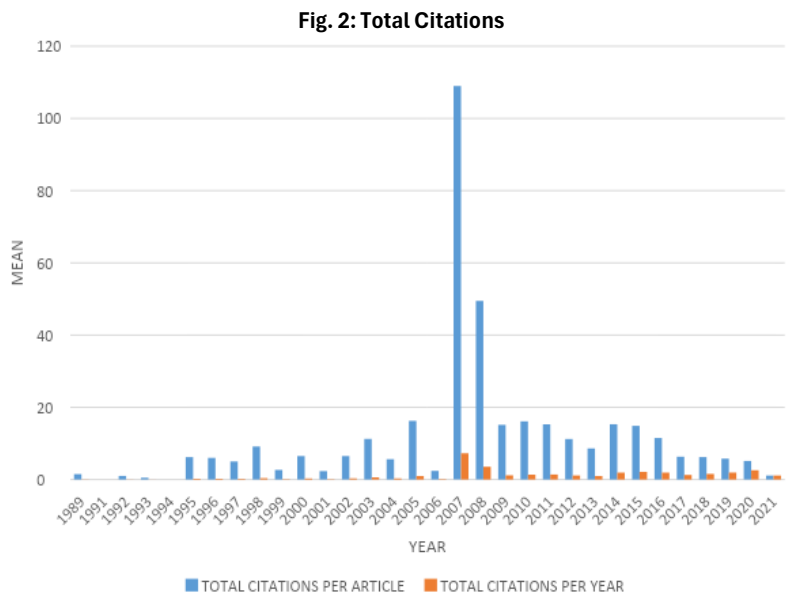
Fig. 1 illustrates the annual distribution of publications in the field under study. The highest research output was recorded in 2015 with 29 publications, followed closely by 2018 (28) and 2019 (27). A moderate level of productivity was observed during 2017 (22), 2020 (21), and 2016 (20), while 2021 contributed 19 publications. Earlier years such as 2012 and 2013 each produced 18 publications, followed by 2011 with 17 publications. In contrast, zero publications were recorded in 1991, marking the lowest level of research activity within the study period.

Fig. 1: Annual Scientific Production



Citation Count

Fig. 2 portray the pattern of citations per year alongside citations per article, reflecting the scholarly impact of publications over time. The results elucidate that articles published during 2007 received highest citation influence, leading in both citation indicators, which suggests strong academic recognition and sustained relevance of research produced during that period. Subsequent years, including 2008, 2010, 2009, and 2015, also exhibited considerable citation performance, indicating phases of increased research visibility and engagement within the field. Conversely, 1991 recorded the lowest citation impact, reflecting minimal scholarly attention or limited research output during the early stage of the study period.



Top Cited Countries (Top 10)

Table 2 presents the distribution of the most cited countries based on total citations and average citations per article. The United States emerged as the leading contributor, recording the highest citations (1,398) with an average of 9.64 citations per article, reflecting its dominant scholarly influence in the field. The United Kingdom ranked second with 1,226 total citations and the highest average citation impact (61.30), reflecting strong research quality and visibility. China followed with 471 citations and an average of 12.39 citations per article. Moderate citation performance was observed for Australia (162; 10.80) and Israel (99; 24.75), while Singapore demonstrated a comparatively high citation impact (44.00) despite fewer total citations

(88). Pakistan (69; 11.50), Korea (61; 15.25), Canada (59; 7.38), and New Zealand (59; 11.80) also contributed to the global citation landscape, highlighting diverse international participation in digital marketing research within libraries.

Table 2: Top Cited Countries (Top 10)

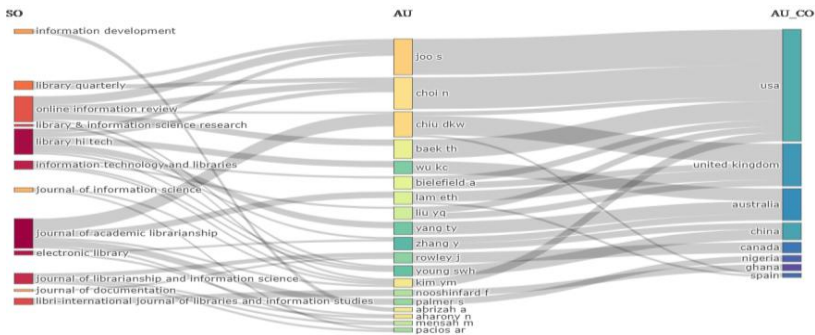
Countries	Total Citations	Average Citations
USA	1398	9.64
UK	1226	61.3
China	471	12.39
Australia	108	10.8
Israel	99	24.75
Singapore	88	44
Pakistan	69	11.5
Korea	61	15.25
Canada	59	7.38
New Zealand	59	11.8

Three-Field Plot Depicting the Distribution of Sources, Authors, and Countries

Fig. 3 demonstrates the structural relationship among leading countries, influential authors, and core publication sources, highlighting patterns of scholarly communication within digital marketing research in libraries. The network reveals that prominent authors, including Joo S, Choi N, Baek T.H., Chiu D.K.W., Lam E.T.H., Wu K.C., and Yang T.Y., are largely affiliated with research-intensive countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Their strong association with journals like *Academic Librarianship*, *Library Hi Tech*, and *Online Information Review* indicates the concentration of high-impact research within well-established library science publication outlets.

Conversely, authors positioned on the peripheral side of the network, such as Young S.W.H., Pacios A.R., Abrizah A., Kim Y.M., Neves B.C., and Nooshinfard F., represent geographically diverse regions, including China, Canada, Ghana, Nigeria, and Spain, suggesting expanding global participation in the field. These authors primarily publish in journals such as *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, *Information Technology and Libraries*, *Library Quarterly*, *Libri: International Journal of Libraries and Information Studies*, and *Journal of Documentation*. The recurring presence of the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* across both central and peripheral authors showcases its role as a key scholarly platform facilitating international knowledge exchange and dissemination in digital marketing research related to libraries.

Fig. 3: Three Field plot: Sources, Authors, and Countries



Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Fig. 4 presents the distribution of the twenty frequently occurring keywords, reflecting dominant research themes within digital marketing studies in libraries. The keyword *services* emerged as the most frequently used term, appearing 28 times, indicating a strong research emphasis on service-oriented applications of digital marketing in library environments. This was followed by *Facebook* (23 occurrences), highlighting the significant role of social networking platforms in scholarly discussions. Keywords such as *academic libraries* and *impact* (20 occurrences each), along with *information* (19) and *web* (18), further demonstrate the focus on evaluating digital engagement and information dissemination practices.

User and technology-oriented terms, including *students* (17); *model* and *Twitter* (13 each); and *adaptation*, *social media*, *university*, and *usage* (12 occurrences each), suggest growing scholarly interest in user behaviour, platform adoption, and institutional implementation of digital marketing strategies. Additionally, keywords such as *design* and *Web 2.0* (11 each), along with *digital libraries* and *website* (10 each), indicate the integration of technological innovation within library services. Less frequent yet notable terms, including *websites*, *knowledge*, and *networking* reflect emerging thematic directions. Overall, the keyword pattern highlights a shift toward social media-driven service delivery and digital user engagement as central research priorities in contemporary library marketing studies.

Top 10 Authors by Scholarly Impact

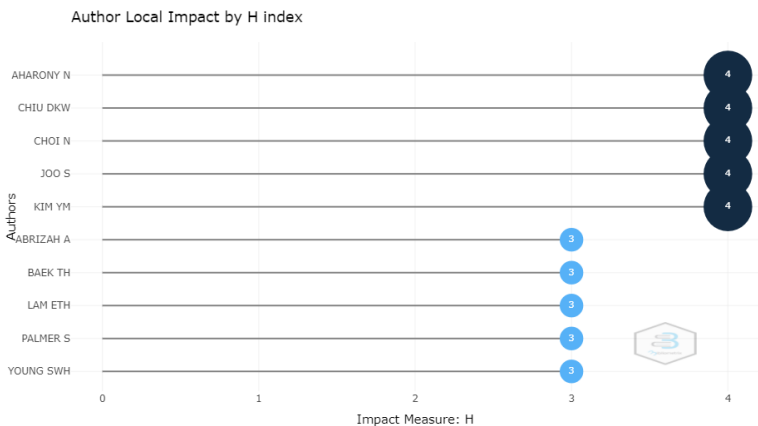
Fig. 5 illustrates the local H-index of leading authors, highlighting their scholarly impact within the dataset. The analysis shows that Aharony N, Chiu D.K.W., Choi N, Joo S, and Kim Y.M. achieved the highest local H-index value of 4, indicating consistent citation influence and sustained research contributions in the field of digital marketing in libraries. Authors including Abrizah A, Baek T.H., Lam E.T.H., and Palmer S. recorded an H-index of 3,

reflecting moderate yet notable academic impact. Young S.W.H., positioned at the lower end of the ranking with an H-index of 3, demonstrates comparatively limited citation influence within the analysed corpus. Overall, the distribution of local H-index values suggests a relatively balanced author impact structure, with several researchers contributing consistently to the development and visibility of the research domain.

Fig. 4: Word Cloud (Keyword Co-Occurrence)



Fig. 5: Author Impact

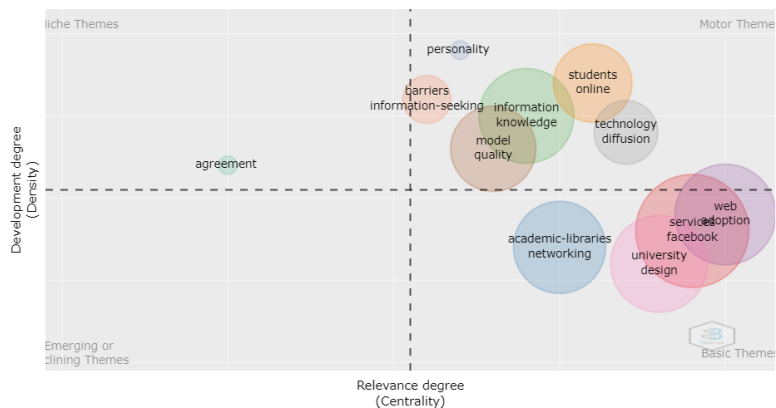


Analysis of Emerging and Core Themes

Fig. 6 presents the strategic diagram derived from the evaluation of author keywords, illustrating the thematic structure of research based on density and centrality dimensions plotted along the y-axis (density) and x-axis (centrality). Following the classification proposed by Cobo et al. (2011), the

diagram categorizes research themes into four quadrants representing varying levels of development and relevance within the field. The upper-left quadrant identifies highly developed yet specialized themes, where *agreement* emerges as an isolated but conceptually mature research area. Motor themes, located in the upper-right quadrant, include topics such as *information knowledge*, *model quality*, *student online*, *technology diffusion*, *barriers in information-seeking*, and *personality*, indicating strong internal development and high connectivity with other research themes, thereby driving scholarly discourse in the domain. The lower-right quadrant represents basic and transversal themes namely, *services*, *facebook*, *university design*, *web adoption*, and *academic libraries networking* which form the foundational and widely interconnected concepts supporting the overall research structure. Collectively, the strategic mapping highlights the evolving thematic landscape of digital marketing research in libraries, demonstrating both established conceptual foundations and specialized areas of scholarly advancement.

Fig. 6: Thematic Map



Discussion and Conclusion

The study analysed the growth, publication trends, collaboration patterns, and thematic evolution of research on digital marketing in libraries. The findings indicate a steady expansion of scholarly output, with 344 documents generating 4,187 citations, demonstrating increasing academic interest in marketing practices within library and information science. Consistent with earlier bibliometric studies, the publication trend shows a transition from limited early research activity to sustained annual productivity, reflecting the growing importance of digital engagement, user-oriented services, and online communication platforms in contemporary libraries (Siddique et al., 2020; Wani, 2024).

Author productivity and impact analysis revealed that a small group of researchers plays a significant role in shaping the intellectual structure of the field, supporting patterns identified in previous bibliometric research. Joo S emerged as the most productive author, while Aharony N demonstrated the highest scholarly influence based on the H-index. At the geographical level, the United States dominated research output and international collaboration networks, confirming earlier findings that developed countries lead advancements in digital marketing practices in libraries (Ashiq et al., 2021; Shonhe, 2020). Institutional contributions, particularly from the University of Kentucky, further highlight the concentration of research activity within established academic environments.

Thematic analysis emphasizes the service-oriented nature of library marketing research, with “services” identified as the most frequently used keyword. The prominence of social media-related themes depicts the ongoing transformation of libraries into digitally interactive and user-centred information spaces. Strategic thematic mapping shows a balanced research structure comprising motor themes, foundational themes, and specialized areas, indicating both conceptual maturity and emerging research directions.

Overall, the study confirms that digital marketing in libraries has evolved into a technology-driven and globally relevant research area. Future research should focus on emerging digital tools, interdisciplinary collaboration, and skill development initiatives to enhance marketing effectiveness and improve library visibility and service delivery in an increasingly digital information environment.

Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledge using AI tools to improve the clarity and readability of the manuscript. All content has been reviewed by the authors, who accept full responsibility for its accuracy and integrity.

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