

INNOVATIVE MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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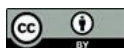
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Abstract

Within the traditional era, public libraries were used to gain knowledge and enhance the user's intellect and access to books. In the digital era, these libraries have lost their true essence. However, social media strategies have aimed to revive and maintain the influence of public libraries on diverse communities. Hence, the current research aims to investigate public libraries' marketing strategies in the digital era. The research adopted a mixed-method research design, conducted from January 2023 to December 2023, to implement quantitative and qualitative assessments, including 650 participants selected through purposive sampling, to assess the individuals' perspectives on implementing marketing strategies in public libraries within the digital era. Moreover, the research conducted eight in-depth interviews with 20 library professionals to accentuate the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of library professionals when implementing marketing strategies in public libraries within the digital era. Case studies on specific libraries were conducted to assess the importance of social media and the digital presence of libraries. The research findings manifest. Public libraries should develop innovative strategies to maximize their marketing potential in the digital era. However, such advancements and efficiencies in using

Resumo

Na era tradicional, as bibliotecas públicas eram utilizadas para obter conhecimento e aprimorar o intelecto e o acesso dos usuários aos livros. Na era digital, essas bibliotecas perderam sua verdadeira essência. No entanto, as estratégias de mídia social têm buscado reavivar e manter a influência das bibliotecas públicas em diversas comunidades. Portanto, a presente pesquisa visa investigar as estratégias de marketing de bibliotecas públicas na era digital. A pesquisa adotou um delineamento de método misto, conduzido de janeiro a dezembro de 2023, para implementar avaliações quantitativas e qualitativas, incluindo 650 participantes selecionados por amostragem intencional, a fim de avaliar as perspectivas dos indivíduos sobre a implementação de estratégias de marketing em bibliotecas públicas na era digital. Além disso, a pesquisa realizou oito entrevistas em profundidade com 20 profissionais de bibliotecas para destacar as percepções, atitudes e experiências dos profissionais de bibliotecas ao implementar estratégias de marketing em bibliotecas públicas na era digital. Estudos de caso em bibliotecas específicas foram conduzidos para avaliar a importância das mídias sociais e a presença digital das bibliotecas. Os resultados da pesquisa são evidentes. As bibliotecas públicas devem



social media platforms will provide a better online reputation for public libraries while replenishing their need within the community.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Tools. Public Libraries. User Engagement. Social Media Strategies. Community Partnerships.

desenvolver estratégias inovadoras para maximizar seu potencial de marketing na era digital. No entanto, tais avanços e eficiências no uso de plataformas de mídia social proporcionarão uma melhor reputação online para bibliotecas públicas, ao mesmo tempo em que suprirão sua necessidade dentro da comunidade.

Palavras-chave: Ferramentas de Marketing Digital. Bibliotecas Públicas. Engajamento do Usuário. Estratégias de Mídia Social. Parcerias Comunitárias.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Public libraries play a critical role within the community, providing the public with free access to information and enhancing ways in which the community fathoms to interconnect and constitute meaningful discussions. Thus, public libraries play a crucial role in delivering prominent standards of an integrated community. According to Aabø, Audunson, and Vårheim (2010), libraries are identified across six categories: as a square, as a place to meet individuals across diverse communities, as a public sphere, as a place that complements meaningful discussions with friends and colleagues, as a meta-meeting place, and as a place to configure virtual meetings. Within the traditional era, public libraries were significant, considered a means to read, study, gain knowledge, work, or explore and engage, thereby enhancing the user's intellect and access to books, periodicals, and reference materials (Jones and Harvey 2016). Hence, public libraries emphasize the importance of increasing access to community repositories and offering services, such as cataloging, classification, and indexing of print sources (Nathaniel Agbo and Kate Nkechinyere, 2020).

Over the years, the history of public libraries has evolved such that in the present digital era, these libraries inculcate profound knowledge and strategies. The strategies aim to address the needs of the community and provide access to information instilled within various formats, whether print, electronic, or web-based. Hence, in the digital era, libraries have solely become community hubs and learning centers for students, scholars, and researchers (Gul and Bano 2019). The current emerging technologies within libraries

include cloud computing, mobile computing, e-reading, e-books, and virtual technologies, such as gamification, augmented reality, and virtual reality. Thus, with the advent and influence of present-day technologies, the digital transition of public libraries has evolved exponentially, thereby introducing and implementing the concept of digital libraries. Moreover, within the 21st century, smart libraries have become an emerging and innovative technological habitat that accentuates and amalgamates smarter technologies, smarter users, and smarter library services. Hence, the system of digital technology has rendered an influential aspect, despite advancements, where resource provision within the public library setting has encountered numerous challenges to upgrading and marketing libraries in the digital era (Gul and Bano 2019; Garoufallou et al. 2013).

Alongside challenges to constituting effective marketing of the libraries, the library staff instills uninformed and irresponsible attitudes toward digitally upgrading libraries, hence becoming unresponsive and unbothered by library training opportunities. Moreover, little to no standardization or policies affirming the training requirements of library staff are imposed, significantly inhibiting strategic marketing of public libraries in the digital era (Flaherty 2015). The Internet and social media platforms within the present digital infrastructure have displaced traditional library services to an extent, which has accelerated the usage of virtual libraries, where data and information are readily available on Internet forums and virtual databases. Hence, this exponentially decreases the value of traditional libraries and their significance across diverse communities and cultures (Potter 2012; Khan and Bhatti 2012). Thus, the current research aims to configure and explore the implementation of efficient marketing strategies across public libraries that aim to invigorate, retrieve, and maintain the significance of public libraries in the digital era. With newer marketing strategies aiming to explore the value of libraries across diverse communities, the current research investigates the role and attitude of library staff toward implementing digital marketing strategies within libraries, mitigating their significance across virtual settings.

1.2 Problem statement

In the digital era, public libraries experience significant hindrances concerning the loss of their relevancy and competitive power. Library users seldom visit conventional brick-and-mortar libraries to read or explore books, alongside using the many library

services that accentuate easier access to information. With the advent of technology, library users in the current digital era prefer to make do with the information and ample books available on online platforms. Hence, the preference of users completely renders the significance of traditional libraries. Moreover, library users also occasionally visit conventional libraries, thus inhibiting their physical presence. Users adopt easier ways to retrieve information that involve lesser physical presence within the library (Vasileiou and Rowley 2011). Thus, to keep pace with the digital transition of the era, libraries aim to find and explore newer marketing strategies to maintain their significance by offering and selling their products within the newer trends and marketing patterns in the digital space. Hence, the current research aims to foster enhanced digital growth of libraries by implementing strategies that attract and retain the essence of public libraries within the existing available digital resources, which act as an alternative to traditional public libraries. Moreover, the research also explores the attitudes of the library staff towards the marketing strategies to better assess and navigate challenges that foster inhibitory effects on libraries and their strategic marketing in the digital era.

1.3 Research objectives

1. To investigate and examine the effectiveness of different marketing strategies in public libraries in the digital era.
2. To explore library users' and staff's perspectives on digital marketing initiatives.
3. To identify challenges and successes in marketing public libraries in the digital era.

1.4 Research questions

1. What marketing strategies have been most effective for engaging the community?
2. What challenges do libraries face in promoting their services?
3. What is the potential of public libraries in adopting social media to interact with the local community?
4. What are the best practices for implementing the Digital Outreach Campaign to promote the library?

5. How do the existing libraries' marketing activities contribute to an increase in the number of users and their engagement with the library?

1.5 Research significance

The current research possesses eminent significance in guaranteeing the sustainability and pertinence of public libraries. As digital resources render advancement within the virtual space, public libraries seek to evolve and implement marketing strategies that focus on redirecting and maintaining the core and distinct value of libraries across digital forums. In order to serve, manifest, and enhance knowledge within diverse communities, alongside engraving societal engagement, the library staff also plays a key role in maintaining and upgrading the implementation of modern marketing instruments within public libraries. Additionally, the research bears significance as it aims to deliver a profound understanding for library professionals to contribute to the general discourse and evolution of public libraries.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Public libraries play an integral role within the community, providing free access to valuable information and opportunities. However, in the digital age, libraries face significant hurdles in maintaining their significance across digital platforms. Chandratre and Chandratre (2014) explore the need for libraries to adopt marketing techniques that are suitable for profit-oriented organizations. In particular, the research presents the relevance of the Friends of the Library model, targeted publications, and media inputs, which foster the emergence of libraries as a crucial center to enhance engagement within the community while engraving its intellectual growth. Thus, such approaches should be integrated across digital forums to assist libraries in retaining their community significance within the digital sphere. However, one of the most significant challenges encountered by public libraries is the aspect of broadening their service base to facilitate users affiliated with diverse groups and communities.

Vavrek (1995) describes that public libraries, in some instances, aim to overlook golden opportunities and marketing potentials. These potential perspectives are essential to broaden the library's service base while attracting library users and obtaining additional

revenues. However, the research constitutes six potential markets that aim to tap into exploring newer marketing strategies while delivering newer prospects to the library and its online presence. These markets involve;

1. The urgency for librarians to work closely with leaders and ensure apt functionality of the library.
2. To directly provide literacy services to the library.
3. To create better and transitioning job opportunities for employees.
4. To develop a more secular strategy and accentuate the home market as a strategy to connect with library users.
5. To promote an environmental market that enhances the availability of a wider range of services while directly targeting information to the users.
6. To develop and explore a potential market that redirects health and medical issues among library users, aiming to enhance their knowledge toward healthy eating habits while adopting nutritional dietary choices.

Moreover, Markgraf and Erffmeyer (2002) proposed challenges related to the provision of library services to off-campus business students. The research explores the transition from a research-intensive marketing course to an online learning environment, which imposes significant hurdles for the library. Precisely, the library encountered service inadequacy across three categories, including library resource availability, resource and service access, and providing instruction in an unsynchronized environment. The research covers the peculiar challenges while entailing specific solutions to render effective access to information and online resources across the digital space. Thus, public libraries aim to implement efficient marketing strategies to maintain their online presence and community significance within the digital space. Through the perspective of private and public institutions, Duke and Tucker (2007) argue for the urgency of developing marketing plans for academic libraries, providing a step-by-step overview of accentuating a comprehensive market plan. Thus, it is pertinent to address the needs and demands of the library user to maintain the influence of public libraries on communities, whether through traditional means or newly formed strategies within the digital retrospect (Fraser-Arnott, 2023). Moreover, Fisher, Pride, and Miller (2005) outline various techniques and methods to market libraries while enhancing their online presence. Thus, the apt implementation of digital tools and social media strategies delivers an enhanced modern perspective of public libraries. However, the essential aim of such marketing tools is to

render service to individuals connected with diverse communities and cultural backgrounds, providing ample choices for library users to interconnect and digitally communicate with other users.

Marie R. (2011) explores the marketing activities employed by libraries to promote electronic resources while examining ways in which libraries aim to assess the success or failure of their marketing plans. However, the research revealed that libraries aiming to engage in marketing activities should have an apt awareness of general marketing principles. Moreover, the libraries should focus on selecting activities that align with the marketing plan goals while choosing appropriate evaluation techniques prior to exploring and implementing marketing activities. Ofori, Markwei, and Quagraine (2020) reviewed the active inclusion of marketing strategies across Ghanaian academic libraries, showcasing their benefits and drawbacks. In particular, the research mentioned that the marketing of libraries encumbered a low level of funding while the majority of the library staff concluded insufficient training in marketing public libraries. However, the research revealed that sufficient funding for libraries and proper training of the library staff will induce unprecedented success in the library while accentuating and improving its online presence.

To deliver proficient marketing strategies for libraries, the inclusion and adoption of digital marketing tools play a pivotal role in the modern digital world. Lucas-Alfieri (2015) distinguished between marketing and promotion, suggesting ways in which libraries should adopt social media platforms and digital technologies to configure success and efficient community service. Moreover, research studies mention the usage of digital platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to connect and deliver the essential aspects of libraries within diverse ethnocentric communities. However, one of the most essential and pertinent aspects of delivering a dynamic and active online presence is to update and upgrade content, which fosters motivation among community members to render active participation and interconnectedness (Wu and Monfort 2022; Horsfall 2020). Furthermore, Webb and Wang (2013) demonstrated the effective use of social media strategies and digital tools to manifest the positive influence of digital libraries across communities. The research, through numerous case studies, implored and offered practical advice and suggestions to promote the efficient usage of libraries across digital platforms. Additionally, Obiekwe, Ezejiofor, and Egwuonwu (2021) aim to prioritize the promotion of electronic resources, advocating implementing strategies that

enhance digital library usage alongside easier access to information. However, the research argues that libraries should provide user education programs and develop effective promotional techniques to educate users on ways to access data and efficiently utilize electronic resources to enhance user engagement and satisfaction (Madhusudhan 2008; Khan and Bhatti 2012).

Moreover, various research studies have provided a better understanding and demonstration of effective marketing strategies for libraries, hence analyzing the practical usage of digital outreach programs within public libraries. Digital outreach programs enhance community interaction, including the possibility of arranging virtual events, promoting online materials, and enabling timely and interactive discussions. This may include a virtual book club with ethnically diverse participants, an online workshop, and community involvement initiatives that induce increased interaction among library users (Haider, Ya, and Hussain, 2023; Henderson, 2005). Thus, research studies significantly support the ideology of developing complex marketing strategies to ensure public libraries' relevance and sustainability within the digital era. These strategies include adopting data analytics to effectively implement digital marketing tools that require developing durable and robust marketing plans. Based on existing literary concepts, advocating a proficient digital library service, alongside targeted online strategies, would influence active community engagement, increased usage of digital library forums, and strategic planning to render and maintain the perception of public libraries within the digital arena.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The research adopted a mixed-method research design, conducted from January 2023 to December 2023, to implement quantitative and qualitative assessments on configuring and exploring marketing strategies and their incorporation across public libraries within the digital era. A mixed-method research approach is especially utilized when the research involves multiple stakeholders or complex research questions (Wasti et al. 2022). The research design was selected to inculcate the quantitative perspective of using marketing strategies, while the qualitative perspective was incorporated to assess

the participants' perceptions and attitudes toward strategic marketing of public libraries in the digital era. Hence, a mixed-method approach provides a deeper understanding of the research by combining the strengths of the qualitative and the quantitative research methods.

3.2 Sample size for qualitative and quantitative assessments

To accentuate the quantitative analysis, the research included 650 participants, including 260 (40%) university students, 234 (36%) working professionals, and 156 (24%) researchers and members of the general public. However, the participants were selected through purposive sampling to strategically involve multiple stakeholders and their individual perspectives in implementing marketing strategies in public libraries within the digital era. Moreover, the research incorporated a qualitative analysis by conducting eight in-depth interviews with 20 library professionals, including 10 library directors, five marketing coordinators, and five community engagement officers. The qualitative analysis aimed to accentuate the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of library professionals when implementing marketing strategies in public libraries within the digital era.

3.3 Data collection for quantitative and qualitative assessments

The participants were surveyed using two survey questionnaires: the Digital Marketing Orientation Scale and the Attitude of Public Librarians Toward Library Service Marketing Scale. The 16-item Digital Marketing Orientation Scale, adopted from Mahmutović (2021), assesses the orientation of marketing strategies, aiming to deliver a robust perception of the service sector across digital forums. The scale included three dimensions: strategic emphasis (5 items), digital intelligence generation (5 items), and planning and resource provision (6 items). However, this scale was previously adopted within the hotel industry to measure the digital marketing orientation of hotel services (Mahmutović 2021). Hence, the research adopted the scale to assess marketing strategies and their robust maintenance across public libraries that manifest across virtual settings. Furthermore, the research adopted the 28-item Attitude of Public Librarians Toward Library Service Marketing Scale from Shontz, Parker, and Parker (2004) to assess the

attitude of the library staff toward the marketing of library services within digital platforms.

The survey questionnaires were sent to the 1,000 participants through online platforms; however, questionnaires with missing data were excluded to avoid ambiguity. The participants were given 2 weeks to conclude their responses. Hence, only 650 survey questionnaires were received without missing data, which were later used to measure descriptive and inferential statistics. The responses were scored through the Likert scale and categorized as follows:

1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Disagree

Furthermore, face validity and content validity of the questionnaires were assessed by library professionals and marketing experts. Moreover, the items of the Digital Marketing Orientation Scale were modified to suit the research context, as they were initially formed for the hotel industry. In addition, the reliability analysis of both questionnaires was measured to ensure item validity and consistency within the research decorum.

In addition, the qualitative assessment incorporated a thematic analysis to explore the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of library professionals on the implementation of marketing strategies in public libraries within the digital era. The participant's responses were decoded and transcribed to assess recurrent ideologies and concepts. Thus, three themes were generated: current library marketing practices in the digital era, challenges faced in implementing marketing campaigns, and recommendations for improvement in marketing strategies.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from the research participants, ensuring complete confidentiality throughout the research process. The survey questionnaire was translated into the participants' native language to enhance a smoother understanding of the survey questions. Additionally, the participants were informed of their withdrawal from the research at any phase.

3.5 Questionnaire reliability and validity

Questionnaire reliability and validity are essential to evaluate and conduct efficient and effective research. Reliability and validity are considered effective methods for analyzing the questionnaire and ensuring the precise apprehension of intended information (Sarmah and Hazarika 2012).

Table 1: Questionnaire Reliability and Validity

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.779	44

Source: Authors

Generally, the most acceptable Cronbach alpha value is 0.9 or above, which is considered excellent reliability. However, the questionnaire item's Cronbach Alpha value is 0.779, which is considered generally reliable and suitable for most research purposes, hence indicating moderate internal consistency and reliability.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quantitative analysis

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender			
		Frequency	%
	Male	357	54.9
	Female	293	45.1
	Total	650	100.0
Groups			
	University Students	260	40.0
	Working Professionals	234	36.0
	Researchers and Members of the General Public	156	24.0
	Total	650	100.0
Marketing Strategy Exposure			
	Social media	366	56.3
	Newsletter	284	43.7
	Total	650	100.0

Source: Authors

Table 2 tabulates the demographic characteristics of respondents. The research included 357 (54.9%) and 293 (45.1%) male and female respondents, respectively. Moreover, 650 participants were selected, of which 260 (40%) were university students,

while 234 (36%) and 156 (24.0%) were working professionals, researchers, and members of the general public, respectively. Furthermore, the research incorporated the assessment of marketing strategy exposure, of which most of the respondents, 366 (56.3%), adopted the social media platform to upgrade and market public libraries in the digital era. On the contrary, 284 (43.7%) respondents adopted newsletters as the marketing strategy to advertise public libraries in the digital era.

Table 3: Correlation between Gender and Attitude Towards Marketing Libraries in the Digital Era

Descriptive Statistics			
		N	
Gender		650	
Attitude Survey		650	
Correlations			
		Gender	Attitude Survey
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	0.102**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.009
	N	650	650
Attitude Survey	Pearson Correlation	0.102**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	
	N	650	650
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Authors

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics and the correlation between gender and the attitude survey. The mean and standard deviation of gender and attitude surveys are 1.45 ± 0.498 and 100.79 ± 10.046 , respectively. The high variability between the respective standard deviations suggests some variation in the attitudes of the respondents toward using marketing strategies in public libraries in the digital era. Moreover, the correlation between gender and attitude survey is 0.102 at p-value 0.009, suggesting a small but relatively significant positive correlation between gender and attitude survey scores. Moreover, a higher attitude score may be slightly associated with a particular gender. However, the relationship is weak, meaning that gender has a relatively small effect on attitudes toward marketing public libraries in the digital era.

Table 4: Correlation between Gender and Marketing Strategy Exposure

Descriptive Statistics	
	N
Gender	650
Marketing Strategy Exposure	650
Correlations	

		Gender	Marketing Strategy Exposure
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	0.181**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	650	650
Marketing Strategy Exposure	Pearson Correlation	0.181**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	650	650

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors

Table 4 provides the descriptive statistics and the correlation between gender and marketing strategy exposure (social media or newsletter). The mean and standard deviation of gender and marketing strategy exposure are 1.45 ± 0.498 and 1.44 ± 0.496 , respectively. Moreover, the correlation between gender and marketing strategy exposure is 0.181 at p-value 0.000, suggesting a weak to moderate positive correlation between gender and marketing strategy exposure scores. The correlation results suggest that gender is positively correlated with marketing strategy exposure, indicating that either gender may be adopting either newsletters or social media platforms to market public libraries in the digital era.

Table 5: Correlation between Groups, Marketing Strategy Exposure, Strategic Emphasis, Digital Intelligence Generation, and Planning and Resource Provision

Descriptive Statistics						
	Mean	Std. Deviation		N		
Groups	1.84	0.784		650		
Marketing Strategy Exposure	1.44	0.496		650		
Strategic Emphasis	18.25	1.348		650		
Digital Intelligence Generation	18.06	2.139		650		
Planning and Resource Provision	21.32	2.229		650		
Correlations						
		Groups	Marketing Strategy Exposure	SE	DIG	PRP
Groups	Pearson Correlation	1	0.002	0.010	-0.001	0.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.965	0.793	0.976	0.885
	N	650	650	650	650	650
Marketing Strategy Exposure	Pearson Correlation	0.002	1	-0.072	0.027	0.160**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.965		0.067	0.491	0.000
	N	650	650	650	650	650
Strategic Emphasis	Pearson Correlation	0.010	-0.072	1	0.080*	0.366**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.793	0.067		0.040	0.000
	N	650	650	650	650	650
Digital Intelligence Generation	Pearson Correlation	-0.001	0.027	0.080*	1	0.283**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.976	0.491	0.040		0.000

	N	650	650	650	650	650
Planning and Resource Provision	Pearson Correlation	0.006	0.160**	0.366**	0.283**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.885	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	650	650	650	650	650
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

Source: Authors

Table 5 provides the descriptive statistics and the correlation between groups, marketing strategy exposure, strategic emphasis, digital intelligence generation, and planning and resource provision. The mean and standard deviation of groups, marketing strategy exposure, strategic emphasis, digital intelligence generation, and planning and resource provision are 1.84 ± 0.784 , 1.44 ± 0.496 , 18.25 ± 1.348 , 18.06 ± 2.139 , and 21.32 ± 2.229 , respectively. However, the planning and resource provision possesses a slightly wider distribution in comparison to other variables, which suggests that the library and users incorporate newsletters and social media strategies as tools to market libraries in the digital era, implying that the users possess enough knowledge and understanding with respect to planning the digitization of public libraries while providing adequate resources to the library users that prefer using digital libraries rather than libraries within conventional settings.

Moreover, the results of the correlation suggest that the correlation between the groups and other variables is weak to negligible, whereas marketing strategy exposure possesses a weak negative correlation with strategic emphasis (0.072 at p-value= 0.067), weak positive correlation with digital intelligence generation (0.027 at p-value= 0.491), and a moderate positive correlation with planning and resource provision (0.0160 at p-value = 0.000). In addition, strategic emphasis has a weak positive and a moderate positive correlation with digital intelligence generation (0.080 at p-value =0.040) and planning and resource provision (0.366 at p-value 0.000). Conclusively, marketing strategy exposure has a significant positive correlation with planning and resource provision, which indicates that social media and newsletters as marketing tools aim to better provide library service and library resource provision through digital platforms. Moreover, strategic emphasis shows a significant positive correlation between planning and resource provision and digital intelligence generation, whereas digital intelligence generation and planning and resource provision have a moderate positive correlation. This suggests that either variable plays a pivotal role in marketing public libraries in the digital

era. Hence, the unavailability or incompetence of either of the variables may indicate incompetent marketing or advertising of public libraries across digital forums.

Table 6: ANOVA between Effectiveness Score and Marketing Strategy Exposure

Descriptives								
Effectiveness Score								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Social media	366	157.55	12.917	0.675	156.22	158.88	133	180
Newsletter	284	159.56	11.920	0.707	158.16	160.95	145	189
Total	650	158.43	12.522	0.491	157.46	159.39	133	189
ANOVA								
Effectiveness Score								
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.			
Between Groups	642.489	1	642.489	4.117	0.043			
Within Groups	101116.612	648	156.044					
Total	101759.102	649						

Source: Authors

Table 6 represents the descriptive statistics and the analysis of variance for the effectiveness score and marketing strategy exposure. However, marketing strategy exposure is divided into two groups: social media and newsletters. The results indicate that the mean effectiveness score for the newsletter group (159.56) is slightly higher than the other group, which suggests a small difference in the effectiveness between the two marketing methods. Moreover, it must be noted that the effective score is the sum of all three dimensions of the digital marketing orientation scale and the attitude towards library marketing scale. In addition, the standard deviation of both groups is relatively similar, which indicates a similar variation in the effectiveness scores of both groups. Furthermore, the analysis of variance signifies that the f-value of 4.117 at p-value = 0.043 indicates a statistically significant difference between both groups, newsletters and social media, in terms of the effectiveness score, suggesting, on average, higher effectiveness for newsletters.

Table 7: Correlation between Groups, Marketing Strategy Exposure, and Attitude Toward Library Marketing Scale

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Groups	1.84	0.784	650
Marketing Strategy Exposure	1.44	0.496	650
LS	100.79	10.046	650
Correlations			

		Groups	Marketing Strategy Exposure	Attitude Survey
Groups	Pearson Correlation	1	0.002	0.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.965	0.853
	N	650	650	650
Marketing Strategy Exposure	Pearson Correlation	0.002	1	0.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.965		0.086
	N	650	650	650
Attitude Survey	Pearson Correlation	0.007	0.067	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.853	0.086	
	N	650	650	650

Source: Authors

Table 7 provides the descriptive statistics and the correlation between groups, marketing strategy exposure, and attitude towards the marketing library scale. The mean and standard deviation of groups, marketing strategy exposure, and attitude towards marketing library scale are 1.84 ± 0.784 , 1.44 ± 0.496 , and 100.79 ± 10.046 , respectively. However, the mean attitude score indicates a moderate variation in responses. Moreover, the results of the correlation analysis of the group variable do not show any significant variation with marketing strategy exposure (0.002 at p-value = 0.965) and attitude survey (0.007 at p-value = 0.853). On the contrary, marketing strategy exposure shows a weak positive correlation with the attitudes of users towards marketing libraries in the digital era (0.067 at p-value = 0.086). Conclusively, the library user and staff, alongside their exposure to either social media or newsletter strategies, have no influence on the attitudes of the library users on marketing public libraries in the digital era.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

The research further adopted a qualitative analysis by conducting a thematic analysis on eight in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 library professionals, including 10 library directors, five marketing coordinators, and five community engagement officers. The themes included: current library marketing practices in the digital era, challenges faced in implementing marketing, and recommendations for improvement in marketing strategies.

4.2.1 Current library marketing practices in the digital era

Most of the respondents were interviewed with respect to their experiences with the current marketing strategies adopted by public libraries to sustain their value in the digital age. However, fewer library directors have mentioned the need to incorporate digital tools and active strategies further to maintain the online presence of libraries. Hence, one of the directors stated,

"I strongly believe in adopting newer digital tools and incorporating the usage of social media platforms to the best of its potential to facilitate active digital growth of the library. A few years later, I believed that social media platforms couldn't do much about reviving and maintaining the library's influence on the community. However, I was wrong, and I did see a lot of following and active usage of my library when I launched it on social media and advertised it on Twitter and LinkedIn."

The library director also added,

"I couldn't believe when I saw the ample amount of following and recognition received by the library when it was launched on so many public forums. However, I implemented the same strategy in one of the libraries I was in charge of. Unfortunately, most of the ancient history books within the library could not be part of the digital space. However, most of the books related to the field of sociology and psychology were uploaded to the only online library forum that I made with the help of IT professionals."

He also added,

"I could also access the number of times some of the most famous books were retrieved or downloaded by the users. Also, I must mention that not only did I launch my library on public forums, but I also aimed to maintain the traditional essence of my library. It used to be open at all times throughout the day to facilitate as many users and students. A while back, when my library began losing its charm, I got very disheartened, which made me understand that in the digital world, it was highly impossible and, moreover, tougher to retain the actual charm of the library."

On the contrary, most of the marketing coordinators were interviewed on their perspectives on the attitudes of library users and staff towards marketing libraries in the digital era. Some of the coordinators mentioned,

"Yes, we did try to replenish and revamp the idea of totally digitizing the library, and we were astonished to observe and witness the essence and influence of digital media

on the digital outlook of the library. We advertised our library on websites, through newsletters, and social media platforms, and we observed the digital success of our library on all of the platforms. Moreover, we also got quite a lot of funding from the government and the related stakeholders, which really helped us pave the way to digitizing our library on digital media. We employed AI-based tools and technologies, which helped us understand our laggings and the loopholes in our marketing strategy. As of today, we can proudly say that our library has retrieved and gained back its lost charm due to all the digital media tools. Thanks to AI and the digital arena, we can now enjoy the success and the popularity of our library through marketing and monetary means.”

4.2.2 Challenges faced in implementing marketing campaigns

The interviewees were questioned about the challenges faced when implementing marketing campaigns and the respondents stated that insufficient funding and finances were one of the most major hurdles that potentially provoked challenges in implementing marketing campaigns.

Hence, one of the library directors stated,

“Initially, we faced a lot of hurdles when we thought of marketing our public libraries on the digital forum. We remember when we discussed the issue and wanted fellow directors to fund the library. However, there were very few individuals, especially some ministers from the government, who helped us. Their funding did help us in some way to retrieve the original essence of the library on public forums, but some weeks later, we ran out of enough funds, and thus, we had to resume our marketing practices.”

Moreover, one of the marketing coordinators mentioned that funding was the main issue that potentially hindered public libraries from providing online resources to their users. They mentioned,

“To market your public library, it is essential to understand your target audience and how to engage with them. Hence, it becomes even easier to launch the library on digital forums, too, without any hurdles or hindrances. Library users and staff are usually attracted when they come across content that highly motivates them to visit such digital libraries. Hence, we reassessed our existing content and tailored our marketing content to align with the cognitive understanding of our audience.”

They also added, "We used this approach, and we observed the success of our library, which further revamped its online presence." Furthermore, the library professionals were also asked about the kind of challenges they encounter when transitioning or improving digital marketing practices, and the respondents stated,

"We update and review the content of our digital libraries almost daily; however, we face hurdles to maintain the perception of our public libraries in the community. We noticed that very few people come to visit or interact in the library. A few years back, we had to shut down our public libraries as not many people would come to visit or read in the library. Moreover, it became even harder for us to pay the monthly wage to our library staff and housekeeping. Hence, we had to completely shut down our library and its community services. However, some years later, when we learned the actual marketing practices and how to aptly use such strategies, we implemented similar strategies in our library and saw it grow digitally and community-wise. We advertised the newly launched interface of our library and also renovated and revamped the library services and resources in our physical library, which helped it to grow through both forums' community and through virtual settings."

4.2.3 recommendations for improvement in marketing strategies

Most library professionals were asked to recommend marketing strategies to improve the online presence of public libraries in the digital era, and the respondents proposed a model to market the services of public libraries online. They stated,

"In today's age, it is very important to digitally transform the perception of public libraries. With the advent of digital technologies, public libraries in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany have changed dramatically. Traditional services were improved upon and, to some degree, replaced by electronic services like an online catalog, e-books, electronic archives, and virtual reference services. In this way, these technologies made it easier for people to obtain access to library services from any place. However, with the continuous upgradation of the technology, it is essential to train the staff and ensure that the library users are digitally literate to be efficiently using such services."

Some of the respondents added,

“To market library services in the digital age, marketing strategists should adopt effective ways of digital marketing in order for them to be relevant and appeal to a wide variety of users. Social media, websites, and email newsletters are crucial ways of passing information to the wider world. Through these channels, the library is able to announce new collections and events or even communicate with the community. For instance, New York Public Library has increased its customer engagement through visually appealing content on Instagram.”

They continued, stating that,

“Artificial intelligence can offer innovative ways to enhance library services. An AI-supported model can provide personalized recommendations, virtual assistance, and data-driven insights to improve user experience and efficiency. AI can analyze what users have borrowed or searched to suggest other relevant materials. For example, if someone often borrows mystery novels, the system can recommend new releases or popular titles in that genre. This makes the library experience more tailored to individual interests, encouraging frequent visits. Moreover, AI-powered virtual assistants can handle routine questions, help users search the catalog, and provide information about library services. Available 24/7, these assistants can answer queries about opening hours, event schedules, or how to access digital resources, freeing up staff for more complex tasks. Additionally, AI can analyze patterns in how users interact with the library to identify trends and areas for improvement. For instance, data might show that specific digital resources are trendy, which can help libraries decide where to invest in new materials or which services to promote more heavily.”

Furthermore, some of the marketing coordinators and community engagement officers were asked to recommend implementation plans for public libraries to market their services in the digital era. Hence, the respondents stated,

“Libraries can implement an AI-supported model by training the library staff to learn how to use AI tools and understand their benefits. Training could include workshops on AI basics, hands-on sessions with AI tools, and ongoing support to help staff adapt to new technologies. Moreover, libraries must upgrade their digital infrastructure to support AI. This includes having strong internet connections, secure data storage, and user-friendly interfaces. Upgrades might involve enhancing IT systems to handle large datasets, ensuring cybersecurity, and developing easy-to-use interfaces for patrons. Hence, it is essential to involve the community in transitioning to AI-supported services.

Libraries can host workshops, webinars, and information sessions to explain the benefits of AI. Engaging with the community can include focus groups to understand user needs, promotional campaigns highlighting new AI features, and events showing how AI can enhance the library experience.”

The respondents continued,

“To ensure the AI model is successful, libraries should regularly review its work. This could involve user satisfaction surveys, tracking how often AI tools are used, and analyzing how efficient service delivery has become. Regular evaluations will help libraries adjust their strategies to better meet the needs of their users. Public libraries can remain essential resources in the digital age by adopting these digital marketing strategies and implementing an AI-supported model. This approach ensures that libraries meet the evolving needs of their communities, providing accessible and personalized services that enrich lives and foster learning.”

4.3 Case studies

This section elucidates the assessment of three profound and most notable libraries within the Middle East, namely King Salman Library, King Fahd Library, and King Abdelaziz Library. However, these libraries manifest active marketing strategies and social media campaigns to enhance their online presence. With the active involvement of the government and stakeholders, these libraries have aimed to retain their reputation and community value by replenishing their online presence within the digital era. Hence, the Saudi Digital Library has positively impacted the Kingdom by revolutionizing the aspect of researching and revamping the modern digital environment of learning to comprehend effective knowledge and research in the era of digital technology (Taala, Franco, and De Sagun, 2019).

4.3.1 King Salman Library

King Salman Library, also known as the King Salman bin Abdulaziz Center for Historical Material Conservation or Tarmeem, is located in the Al-Murabba Quarter, Central Riyadh. It helps preserve and provide services for historical sources, including restoration, sterilization, digital imaging, color imaging, training and consulting, and

forgery detection across historical sources. The library services include binding historical sources received from governmental and private institutions alongside individual researchers and owners of private libraries. The library provides training and consulting services to similar centers and detects the authenticity of historical books and resources. King Salman Library is recognized for its innovative digital campaigns that include converting resources into digital copies and saving the contents into CD-ROM and color imaging sections to copy documents and manuscripts. Essentially, the center has contributed to preserving important historical assets of the Saudi Kingdom, including the first issues of Umm al-Qura Newspaper, Sharia deeds, and awqaf (endowments) documents. This center offers a mobile service for sterilization, employing special vehicles that contain ozone sterilizers, which travel to historical assets' locations across the Kingdom. Hence, the library, through its digital media campaign, relies on leading through sustainable measures and reviving the essence of historical resources and books within the digital era. Moreover, numerous efforts have been made to preserve historical manuscripts. Hence, the King Salman Central Library at King Saud University developed a manuscript center to provide resources to in-campus and off-campus researchers. The manuscript center has digitally improvised its services to interact and connect to a wider audience and communities within diverse cultural groups and ethnicities (Hussain and Abalkhail 2013).

4.3.2 King Fahd Library

King Fahd Public Library, located in Jeddah, was launched in 2014 to provide services across various scientific fields and knowledge. This library facilitates electronic indexing to enhance the Arabic community's cultural and historical identity. Moreover, the library plays a pivotal role in educating and developing numerous cultural and educational activities. The idea behind the launch of the library was proposed by Prince Majid bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, who later approved it by King Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. Hence, this library was controlled by the management of King Abdulaziz University to provide its services as a public library. In the digital era, the majority of libraries have adopted digital means to revive and introduce their online presence. Likewise, King Fahd Library developed and introduced its online services to facilitate a wider range of target audiences. This library comprises six sections:

1. The main Library aims to facilitate research and scientific services, including rooms to read and utilize direct research services.
2. Library for visually impaired individuals, providing IT methods to facilitate easier reading and writing services to special students.
3. Children's Library aims to enhance the interest and learning motivation of children in an environment that delivers knowledge and pleasure to learn.
4. Women's Library targets the interests of women with respect to reading books, magazines, and vocational training programs.
5. Youth Library, which is dedicated to Saudi Arabian youth, involving girls and boys, that offers informational resources to align with the preferences and interests of library users.

Furthermore, in 2020, the King Fahd Public Library launched its electronic library through the Knowledge Giving and Growth initiative, which features a collection of various books that cover numerous fields, for instance, literature and novels, history, geography, science, and arts (SaudiPedia, 2024).

4.3.3 King Abdulaziz Library

The King Abdulaziz Library aims to provide access to electronic resources, which include journals and e-books, which are available to King Abdulaziz University staff and students. This library facilitates a wider range of national and international audiences methodically and reliably. Moreover, the digital library aims to archive and describe the information sources related to King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud while providing advanced research to access the enhanced information. The digital library aims to support research and studies that relate to the biography and achievements of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. However, this university aimed to devise a pandemic framework as an approach to leverage and enhance social media usage to sustainably manage the performance and activities of higher education institutions during the crisis. The proposed methodological framework included five components of strategic social media adoption, including social media governance, resilience, utilization, decision-making capability, and institutional strategy. Hence, this framework was incorporated to analyze the gaps and inefficiencies in the planning of social media activities to actively mitigate challenges that arose due to the pandemic (Ai-Youbi et al. 2020).

The results of this current study potentially guide the assessment of the marketing strategies of public libraries in the digital era. Among the numerous digital marketing tools, social media, email newsletters, and library websites have been efficient in developing interaction among users while enhancing the quality of library services (Haider, Ya, and Hussain 2023). The quantitative results of the current study show that most library professionals adopted the social media strategy to enhance and market library services in the digital era. Moreover, the results indicated a positive correlation between gender and the marketing attitude of library professionals.

However, a positive correlation was noted between library users and their choice to adopt social media strategies to inculcate effective library marketing in the digital era. These results align with the results of Ashiq, Rehman, and Mujtaba (2020), Shontz, Parker, and Parker (2004), and Mahmutović (2021), indicating that public libraries significantly incorporate the use of social media strategies to market their online presence. Moreover, the success stories of library professionals indicate the potential of targeted digital campaigns and community partnerships to enhance user engagement and library events. However, limited budgets, lack of personnel, and permanent need to adopt newer methods, techniques, and technologies impose significant hurdles and challenges (Cheng, Lam, and Chiu 2020; Tella 2019).

These findings show that public libraries should develop innovative strategies to maximize their marketing potential in the digital era. However, such advancements and efficiencies in using social media platforms will provide a better online reputation for public libraries whilst replenishing their need within the community. However, marketing strategists should continue to invest and develop their position across social media networks to provide a better social media platform for libraries to sustain. Their success in keeping users interested via email newsletters should be treated as a core component of library marketing programs and initiatives. The identified challenges for maintaining existing digital content and ensuring digital accessibility reinforce the need for continuing professional development and perhaps increased funding or shifting of existing resources. Hence, libraries should be committed to developing and sustaining community partnerships to enrich successful engagement and support.

Moreover, positive feedback from professionals regarding personalized communication and virtual events leads to recommending, exploring, and implementing more user-oriented approaches and innovative digital solutions to serve the emerging

learning demands and needs of diverse communities. However, most of the results coincided with the general perception of public libraries and their improved appearance and usage across digital platforms. However, the results of the current study stated that the library professionals' numerous hurdles, especially essential funds and finances, challenged the launching and marketing of public libraries across digital forums. Furthermore, the results of the qualitative analysis also provided evidence that the apt knowledge of the target audience helped the library professionals to market their libraries and provide essential services to online users. However, they found that most of the active library users were active members of social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, which gave the libraries even more attention from the targeted users. Moreover, the respondents mentioned the active use of digital libraries, which helped them gauge areas that needed improvement, whilst the attitude and perception scale manifested the perspective of the library professionals, staff, and users with potentially using social media strategies and tools to facilitate and enhance the marketing of public libraries across digital forums. Hence, the current research highlights the importance of digital tools and community partnerships in library marketing. By responding to the challenges found and embracing the strengths of various marketing methods, public libraries can better serve their constituents and continue to be of potential use within the digital arena.

5 CONCLUSION

This research is beneficial for understanding and comprehending the marketing strategies implemented by public libraries in the digital era. Digital marketing tools, such as various social media platforms, email newsletters, and library websites, aim to promote library services and maintain user dialogue and interaction. The successful marketing campaigns demonstrate strong digital efforts and partnerships with communities that result in increased user engagement and the commencement of library events. However, numerous challenges have been identified, including a lack of budget, understaffing, and the constant need to adapt to newer technologies and user preferences. Thus, digital marketing tools are essential for public libraries to remain relevant and engaged with the digital community. The tools employed in social media and email newsletters are especially effective in reaching and retaining stakeholders. Additionally, communication

with the users, both offline and online, is crucial to market library services, alongside employing virtual events. Hence, community partnership is highly effective in promoting library services to the general community and expanding communication and engagement across diverse ethnocentric groups. Thus, public libraries are recommended to continue to improve their efforts on social media, alongside incorporating email marketing as a strategy to attract customers. Moreover, it is crucial to use user-centered approaches, virtual events, and community partnerships alongside investing in training library staff. Future research studies should investigate the effects of newer technologies on library marketing while facilitating long-term research to develop the patterns of user engagement and combating issues related to diversity and inclusion. In addition, future research studies should show user attitudes, behaviors, and preferences toward using public libraries. Thorough implementation of such recommendations can promulgate a positive perception of public libraries as community assets in the digital era.

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Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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