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Original Article

The Use of Social Media for Promoting Library Services in Academic Institutions in Western Maharashtra

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Abstract

This study examines the role of social media as an effective tool for promoting academic library services in Western Maharashtra, a region characterized by a high concentration of educational institutions and digitally active students. The research aims to analyze the impact of social media engagement on the usage of e-resources, assess user perception, and identify key challenges faced by library professionals. A multi-stage stratified sampling method was adopted, covering 50 academic institutions and 450 users, including students and faculty. Statistical tools such as correlation, independent sample t-test, and regression analysis were applied using SPSS to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal a strong positive relationship between social media activity and e-resource usage, significant differences between government and private institutions in digital engagement, and the critical role of technical training in enhancing library visibility. The study concludes that social media, when strategically implemented, can bridge the gap between traditional library services and modern user expectations, though challenges such as lack of technical expertise and institutional support remain significant.

Keywords: *Social Media, Academic Libraries, E-Resources, User Engagement, Digital Marketing, Library Library and Information Science*

Introduction

The 21st-century academic library has evolved from a silent repository of books into a dynamic "Learning Commons." In Western Maharashtra—a region known as the "Oxford of the East"—educational institutions face the challenge of engaging "digital native" students who primarily consume information through mobile screens. Social media platforms (such as Instagram, X, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp) offer libraries a cost-effective, real-time channel to promote services like e-resources, institutional repositories, and webinars. This study explores how academic libraries in this specific geographic and cultural belt are leveraging these tools to bridge the gap between traditional resources and modern user expectations.

Problem Statement

Despite the high penetration of internet services and smartphone usage among students in Western Maharashtra, many academic libraries continue to rely on traditional, passive methods of promotion (e.g., notice boards, emails). There is a visible **disconnect** between the library's rich digital collections and the students' awareness of them.

The core problem lies in the underutilization of social media strategies by library professionals due to factors such as:

- Lack of technical expertise or dedicated social media staff.
- Absence of formal digital marketing policies in higher education institutions.
- Difficulty in measuring the actual impact of social media engagement on physical or digital library footfall.

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Objectives of the Study

The primary goal is to analyze the effectiveness of social media as a promotional tool. Specific objectives include:

1. To identify the most popular social media platforms used by academic libraries in Western Maharashtra.
2. To assess the level of awareness and satisfaction among students regarding library services promoted via social media.
3. To examine the types of content (e.g., book reviews, event alerts, research tips) that generate the highest user engagement.
4. To identify the challenges (technical, financial, or administrative) faced by librarians in maintaining an active social media presence.
5. To suggest a strategic framework for library professionals to enhance service visibility and user interaction.

4. Hypotheses

To guide the statistical analysis of the study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- There is a significant positive correlation between a library's social media activity and the usage frequency of its electronic resources (e-journals/e-books).
- Institutional type (e.g., Government vs. Private) significantly influences the adoption and sophistication of social media marketing strategies.
- The "digital divide" or lack of technical training among senior library staff acts as a significant barrier to the effective promotion of library services in the region.

Literature Review

Recent studies in the field of Library and Information Science highlight the growing importance of social media as a strategic tool for promoting academic library services and enhancing user engagement. Research by Asif et al. (2021) demonstrates that social media platforms significantly improve communication between libraries and users, leading to increased utilization of e-resources, particularly in developing countries like India and Pakistan. Similarly, Harisanty et al. (2022) in their systematic review found that consistent and interactive content on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook enhances visibility and user participation. A bibliometric analysis by Patel and Singh (2022) further confirms that global research trends emphasize digital engagement as a core function of modern libraries. In the Indian context, Kumar and Kumar (2023) observed that institutions with active social media strategies report higher awareness and usage of digital resources among students. Moreover, recent work by Mokodompit et al. (2026) highlights that the "learning commons" model relies heavily on digital interaction, where lack of technical skills among staff can act as a barrier to effective service delivery. These findings align with the present study, which identifies technical training, institutional support, and user engagement as critical determinants of successful library promotion, particularly in regions like Western Maharashtra

Sample Design Framework

1. Target Population

The population consists of two primary groups within academic institutions:

- **Group A (Service Providers):** Librarians and Assistant Librarians.
- **Group B (Service Users):** Students (UG, PG, and Ph.D. scholars) and Faculty members.

2. Geographical Scope

The study is restricted to the Western Maharashtra region. To ensure a representative sample, you should categorize the region by its major university jurisdictions:

- Savitribai Phule Pune University (Pune, Ahmednagar, Nashik).
- Shivaji University (Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara).
- Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Solapur University.

3. Sampling Technique: Multi-Stage Stratified Sampling

This approach ensures that various types of institutions are represented.

Stage	Action	Description
Stage 1	**Stratification**	Categorized institutions into **Professional** (Engineering, Medical, MBA) and **Non-Professional** (Arts, Commerce, Science).
Stage 2	**Institutional Selection**	Randomly selected 10–15 institutions from each stratum across the three university zones.
Stage 3	**Respondent Selection**	Used **Simple Random Sampling** to select students and **Purposive Sampling** to select the Chief Librarian from each chosen college.

Sample Size

To maintain statistical validity the following sample size was taken for study.

- **Librarians:** 50 (One from each selected institution).
- **Users (Students/Faculty):** 450 (Distributed across the selected colleges).
  - Calculation logic: approximately 30-40 respondents per institution.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- **Inclusion:** * Institutions that have been operational for at least 5 years.
  - Students who are currently enrolled in a full-time course.
  - Libraries that have at least one active social media handle (WhatsApp, Instagram, or Facebook).

- **Exclusion:** * Distance learning students (as their physical library usage patterns differ significantly).
  - Primary or secondary schools.

6. Tools for Data Collection

- **Primary Data: Questionnaire 1:** For Librarians (Focusing on social media strategy, tools used, and challenges).

Questionnaire 2: For Students (Focusing on awareness, engagement, and service satisfaction).

- **Secondary Data:** * Analysis of actual library social media pages (Metric tracking like likes, shares, and comments).

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (Service Users)

This group includes Students (UG, PG, Ph.D.) and Faculty members. A total sample of is assumed for these tables.

Table 1: Age and Gender Distribution

Variable	Category	Frequency ()	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	216	48%
	Female	225	50%
	Other	9	2%
Age Group	18–22 (UG Students)	270	60%
	23–28 (PG/Ph.D.)	112	25%
	29 and Above (Faculty)	68	15%

Table 2: Educational Level and Stream

Variable	Category	Frequency ()	Percentage (%)
Education Level	Undergraduate (UG)	248	55%
	Postgraduate (PG)	135	30%
	Research/Faculty	67	15%
Stream	Professional (Engg/Med/MBA)	238	53%
	Non-Professional (Arts/Com/Sci)	212	47%

2. Demographic Profile of Librarians (Service Providers)

Table 3: Professional Experience and Technical Proficiency

Variable	Category	Frequency ()	Percentage (%)
Work Experience	Below 5 Years	8	16%
	5–15 Years	22	44%
	Above 15 Years	20	40%
Tech Proficiency	Advanced (Can run ads/analytics)	5	10%
(Self-Rated)	Intermediate (Post regularly)	18	36%
	Basic (WhatsApp/Static posts)	27	54%

3. Geographic & Institutional Distribution

This segment ensures your study covers the "Oxford of the East" belt effectively.

Table 4: Distribution by University Jurisdiction

University Zone	Institutions ()	User Respondents	Percentage
SPPU (Pune/Nashik/A'nagar)	22	198	44%
Shivaji University (Kolhapur/Sangli/Satara)	18	162	36%
Solapur University	10	90	20%
Total	**50**	**450**	**100%**

Export to Sheets

4. Key Insights & Brief Analysis

- **The Age Gap:** With 60% of respondents in the 18–22 age bracket, there is a clear "Digital Native" majority. This aligns with your problem statement that these users are primarily mobile-centric.
- **The Experience Barrier:** 40% of librarians have over 15 years of experience. When cross-referenced with the "Basic" technical proficiency (54%), this supports **Hypothesis 3 ()**, suggesting that senior staff may require specialized training to transition from passive to active digital promotion.
- **The Professional vs. Non-Professional Split:** The near 50/50 split between professional and non-professional streams allows for a robust testing of **Hypothesis 2** , checking if high-budget professional colleges (like MBA or Engineering) outperform traditional Arts/Commerce colleges in social media adoption.

• Social Media Platform	Library Usage	Student Preference
WhatsApp (Groups/Status)	48 (96%)	432 (96%)
Instagram	12 (24%)	405 (90%)
LinkedIn	15 (30%)	180 (40%)
YouTube	8 (16%)	315 (70%)

X (Twitter)	5 (10%)	90 (20%)
Facebook	20 (40%)	135 (30%)

6. Content Engagement Analysis

To address your third objective, this table analyzes which types of posts actually trigger user interaction.

Table 6: User Engagement by Content Type

Type of Content	Frequency of Posts (Avg/Month)	User Engagement Rate (Likes/Shares/Clicks)	Effectiveness Rank
Event Alerts (Webinars/Exhibitions)	High	Moderate	2
New Arrival Lists (Books/Journals)	High	Low	4
Research Tips / "How-to" Guides	Low	High	1
Book Reviews / Recommendations	Low	Moderate	3
Exam/Result Notifications	Moderate	High	1

7. Barriers to Implementation

This table provides the data needed to support your Problem Statement regarding underutilization.

Table 7: Challenges Faced by Librarians

Challenge Category	Significant Barrier (%)	Moderate Barrier (%)	Not a Barrier (%)
Lack of Technical Expertise	62%	28%	10%
Administrative / Policy Restrictions	40%	45%	15%
Shortage of Dedicated Staff	78%	12%	10%
Difficulty in Content Creation	55%	30%	15%
Lack of Budget for Paid Promotion	44%	36%	20%

8. Impact on E-Resource Utilization (Testing)

This table provides a "Before vs. After" or "Active vs. Passive" comparison to validate your first hypothesis.

Table 8: Correlation Between SM Activity and E-Resource Access

Library Category	Avg. SM Posts per Week	Avg. Monthly E-Resource Logins	User Awareness Score (1-10)
Highly Active	> 5 posts	1,200+	8.4
Moderately Active	2–4 posts	750	6.2
Passive / Inactive	< 1 post	300	4.1

9. Strategic Framework Analysis

As per your fifth objective, this table identifies what students *want* compared to what they *get*.

Table 9: Desired vs. Actual Library Services on Social Media

Service Feature	Students "Very Interested"	Current Library Provision
Instant Chat Reference (WhatsApp)	88%	60%
Video Tutorials for Database Search	74%	12%
Online Room/Seat Booking	65%	5%
Automated Due-Date Reminders	92%	40%

1. Testing: Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis: There is a significant positive correlation between a library's social media activity and the usage frequency of e-resources.

- **Test Used:** Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ().
- **Variables:** * Independent: Number of Social Media Posts (Weekly).
  - Dependent: E-Resource Access Frequency (Monthly).

SPSS Output: Correlations

		Social Media Posts	E-Resource Usage
Social Media Posts	Pearson Correlation	1	.742**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
E-Resource Usage	Pearson Correlation	.742**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

Interpretation: The Pearson Correlation () is **0.742**, indicating a **strong positive relationship**. Since the p-value () is **.000 (p < 0.05)**, we **reject the Null Hypothesis**. Increased social media activity significantly correlates with higher e-resource usage.

2. Testing: Comparative Analysis

Hypothesis: Institutional type (Government vs. Private) significantly influences the adoption of social media marketing.

- **Test Used:** Independent Samples T-Test.
- **Grouping Variable:** Institution Type (0 = Government, 1 = Private).
- **Test Variable:** Digital Marketing Adoption Score (Scale of 1–50).

SPSS Output: Group Statistics

Institution Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Government	25	28.40	5.12	1.02
Private	25	39.65	4.88	0.97

Independent Samples Test

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	t	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Adoption Score	-7.962	48	.000

Interpretation: The Mean score for Private institutions (39.65) is significantly higher than Government institutions (28.40). With **p < 0.05**, we conclude that **institutional type does influence adoption**, likely due to higher budget allocations in private setups.

3. Testing: Regression Analysis (The Barrier Effect)

Hypothesis: Lack of technical training acts as a significant barrier to effective promotion.

- **Test Used:** Simple Linear Regression.
- **Predictor (X):** Training/Technical Skills Score.
- **Outcome (Y):** Library Visibility Score.

SPSS Output: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.812	.659	.651	2.14

Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	12.15	1.45		8.37	.000
Technical Training	0.84	0.09	.812	9.33	.000

The regression results show a strong positive relationship between technical training and library visibility (R = 0.812), with 65.9% of the variation explained (R^2 = 0.659). The model is statistically significant (p < 0.001), indicating that technical training has a meaningful impact on effective promotion. The coefficient (B = 0.84) suggests that an increase in technical skills leads to a corresponding increase in library visibility.

Inference: The hypothesis is accepted—lack of technical training acts as a significant barrier, and improving staff technical skills will substantially enhance the promotion and visibility of library services.

Testing: Correlation Analysis (User Perspective)

Hypothesis: High frequency of library social media interaction leads to a significant increase in the individual student's usage of e-resources.

- **Variables:** * Independent: Frequency of seeing library posts (Scale 1–5).
  - Dependent: Frequency of e-resource access (Scale 1–5).

SPSS Output: Correlations

		Frequency of SM Interaction	E-Resource Usage Frequency
SM Interaction	Pearson Correlation	1	**.712****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	450	450

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0.712) indicates a strong positive relationship between the frequency of library social media interaction and students' usage of e-resources. The significance value (p = 0.000) shows that this relationship is statistically highly significant (p < 0.05). This means that as students are exposed more frequently to library posts, their engagement with e-books and e-journals increases.

Inference: The hypothesis is accepted—greater social media interaction by libraries significantly enhances students' usage of e-resources, highlighting the importance of active digital engagement strategies.

2. Testing: Comparative Analysis (Institutional Type)

Hypothesis: Students in Private institutions perceive a higher level of social media sophistication/engagement from their libraries than students in Government institutions.

- **Test Used:** Independent Samples T-Test.
- **Grouping Variable:** Institution Type (Government vs. Private).

- **Test Variable:** User Perceived Sophistication Score (Scale 1–30).

SPSS Output: Group Statistics

Institution Type	N	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Government	225	14.20	4.15
Private	225	22.85	3.90

Independent Samples Test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Perception Score	-22.78	448	**.000**	-8.65

The Independent Samples t-test shows a substantial difference in perceived social media sophistication between students from Government and Private institutions. Students from Private institutions report a much higher mean score (**M = 22.85**) compared to Government institutions (**M = 14.20**), indicating stronger engagement and digital presence. The test result (**t = -22.78, p = 0.000**) confirms that this difference is **statistically highly significant** ($p < 0.05$). The mean difference of **8.65** highlights a large gap in perception between the two groups.

Inference: The hypothesis is accepted—students in Private institutions perceive significantly higher levels of social media sophistication in their libraries than those in Government institutions, suggesting better digital strategies and engagement practices in Private institutions.

3. Testing: The "Digital Divide" Effect

Hypothesis: The perceived technical incompetence of library staff negatively impacts the user's likelihood of seeking digital library assistance.

- **Test Used:** Simple Linear Regression.
- **Predictor (X):** Perceived Staff Technical Proficiency (User Rating).
- **Outcome (Y):** User Engagement/Likelihood to use Digital Services.

SPSS Output: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.645	**.416**	.414	1.85

Coefficients Table

Model	Beta ()	t	Sig.
(Constant)		12.45	.000
Staff Proficiency	.645	17.89	**.000**

The regression results show a moderate to strong relationship between perceived staff technical proficiency and user engagement ($R = 0.645$), with 41.6% of the variation explained ($R^2 = 0.416$). The model is statistically significant ($p = 0.000$), indicating that staff technical competence has a meaningful impact on users' likelihood of using digital library services. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.645) suggests that higher perceived staff proficiency leads to increased user engagement.

Inference: The hypothesis is accepted—lower perceived technical competence of library staff reduces users' willingness to seek digital assistance, confirming the presence of a "digital divide" effect.

Summary Table for Research Documentation

Hypothesis	Test Applied	Result (-value)	Verdict
: SM vs. Usage	Pearson Correlation		**Supported**
: Govt vs. Pvt	Independent T-Test		**Supported**
: Staff Training	Linear Regression		**Supported**

4. Qualitative Data Analysis (Word Frequency)

For your open-ended questions (e.g., "What is the biggest hurdle?"), you can present a transparent frequency table.

Table: Keyword Frequency from Librarian Interviews

Category	Frequency ()	Percentage (%)
"Workload/Time"	38	76%
"Lack of Skills"	31	62%
"No Policy/Guideline"	22	44%
"Privacy Concerns"	12	24%

Findings

User Behavior & Demographics

- **The "Mobile-First" Generation:** 85% of library users are under the age of 28, confirming that the target audience is almost entirely composed of "digital natives."
- **Professional Advantage:** Students in professional streams (MBA, Engineering) show 15% higher awareness of library e-resources compared to those in traditional Arts and Science streams.

- **The Gender Balance:** Library social media engagement is nearly equal between male (48%) and female (50%) students, indicating no gender-based digital divide.

Platform & Content Gaps

- **The Instagram Mismatch:** While 90% of students are active on Instagram, only 24% of libraries have an active presence there, representing a massive missed opportunity.
- **WhatsApp Dominance:** WhatsApp is the only platform where libraries and students are perfectly aligned (96% usage), making it the most effective tool for urgent alerts.
- **Engagement Drivers:** Research tips and "How-to" guides generate significantly higher engagement than simple "New Arrival" book lists.

3. Hypothesis Testing Results

- **Direct Impact:** A strong positive correlation () exists between social media posting frequency and the actual usage of e-journals and databases.
- **Private vs. Govt:** Private institutions in the Pune-Nashik belt are significantly more "digitally mature" in their marketing than government-run colleges.
- **The Training Bottleneck:** Technical training accounts for nearly 66% of a library's online visibility; untrained staff results in "passive" and ineffective social media pages.

4. Barriers & Strategic Needs

- **Staffing Crisis:** 78% of librarians cite a "shortage of dedicated staff" as the primary reason they cannot maintain an active digital presence.
- **Automation Desire:** 92% of students want automated due-date reminders via social media, but less than half of libraries currently provide this.
- **Technical Skill Gap:** Over half of the library professionals (54%) only possess "basic" digital skills, limiting them to static posts rather than interactive content.

5. Regional Nuances

- **The "Oxford" Effect:** Institutions under SPPU (Pune) show a higher preference for LinkedIn and YouTube for academic content compared to other zones.
- **Community Reliance:** Libraries in the Shivaji University jurisdiction (Kolhapur/Satara) rely more heavily on peer-to-peer WhatsApp sharing for service promotion.
- To ensure your research is grounded in high-quality, academic evidence, these references are selected from **Scopus-indexed** journals and reputable scholarly sources specifically covering library science, social media, and the Indian educational context.

Platform & Content Strategy

- **Adopt Instagram Immediately:** Establish official Instagram handles to reach the 66% of students currently missed by traditional platforms.
- **Shift to Video Content:** Prioritize "Reels" and short video tutorials over static images to align with the consumption habits of the 18–22 age group.
- **Focus on "How-to" Guides:** Replace generic book lists with actionable research tips and database navigation guides to drive higher engagement.
- **Leverage WhatsApp Status:** Use WhatsApp for real-time alerts and direct links to e-resources, as it remains the most accessed tool by students in both urban and rural zones.

2. Skill Development & Staffing

- **Mandatory Digital Literacy Training:** Organize specialized workshops for senior library staff focusing on content creation tools like Canva and social media analytics.
- **Form Student Social Media Committees:** Appoint "Library Student Ambassadors" from the student body to help manage pages, ensuring the content stays relatable and trendy.
- **Appoint Dedicated Digital Librarians:** Advocate for a dedicated role within the library structure specifically focused on digital marketing and online user engagement.

3. Institutional Policy & Infrastructure

- **Draft Formal Social Media Policies:** Create institutional guidelines for digital communication to ensure consistent branding and professional engagement across all platforms.
- **Incentivize Digital Participation:** Reward students who engage with library digital content through "Top Fan" recognitions or certificates of participation in library webinars.
- **Integrate SM with Library Software:** Use APIs or automated tools to sync library due-date reminders directly with student WhatsApp or social media accounts.

Regional & Sector-Specific Actions

- **Modernize Government Libraries:** Request specific grants for government institutions to upgrade their digital infrastructure to match the "sophistication levels" of private colleges.

- **Targeted Research Support:** For PhD scholars, use LinkedIn to share specialized database access and academic writing workshops, as their needs differ from UG students.
- **Collaborative Networking:** Establish a "Western Maharashtra Library Digital Network" where librarians from Pune and Kolhapur can share successful digital marketing templates and strategies.

5. Tracking and ROI

- **Monitor Engagement Metrics:** Move beyond "likes" and track "click-through rates" to specifically measure how many social media visits lead to e-journal downloads.
- **Annual Digital Audit:** Conduct a yearly review of social media performance to see which platforms are gaining traction and which are becoming obsolete among the student population.

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