

# The Role of Social Media Marketing in Enhancing User Engagement in Academic Libraries: A Bibliometric Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

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Social media promotion of library services goes beyond conventional approaches. It brings libraries closer to their patrons and promotes user engagement by facilitating the creation, connection, discourse, and knowledge exchange. Since this is a bibliometric analysis work, the focus is on research done in the last several years to use social media as a tool to enhance library services. This study examines all papers pertaining to this topic from 2014 to 2023. It uses bibliometric analysis to focus on the relationship between social media research constitutions and university libraries' use of these platforms for marketing.

**Keywords:** Social media; Academic Libraries; Marketing; Facebook; and Bibliometric analysis.

## 1. Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of communication and interaction across the globe, influencing various sectors, including education and library services. As described by Okolo and Eserada (2019), social media serves as a channel enabling relationships and communication between individuals via devices such as computers, smartphones, and laptops, supported by internet connection services. These platforms facilitate virtual communities where people can share ideas, information, and interests, fostering a new dynamic of engagement and knowledge exchange (Greenwood, 2016). As a powerful online communication tool, social media encompasses platforms designed for content sharing, community involvement, and participation, including wikis, forums, microblogging, social networking, and bookmarking sites (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

The rapid development of social media platforms has revolutionized marketing strategies across industries, including academic libraries (Eid et al., 2019; Khayer et al., 2020). In the context of libraries, social media offers unique opportunities for engagement, allowing users to interact in real-time, share information, and participate in discussions that shape how they access and utilise resources. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other online communities enable libraries to connect with users, disseminate information about their

services, and foster community-based activities (Sachin, 2014). This evolution of digital communication has significantly impacted how individuals, communities, and organisations interact with information in the academic space.

Despite the growing influence of social media, academic libraries have been slower in adopting these platforms as part of their marketing strategies. While higher education institutions are often equipped with robust technological infrastructure, academic libraries have been hesitant in leveraging social media to its full potential for engaging users (Garoufallou et al., 2013; Siddike et al., 2015). The ability to market resources and services effectively through online platforms is increasingly important for libraries, especially in fostering stronger connections with students, faculty, and researchers. As noted by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media's unique advantage lies in enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content, offering academic libraries a powerful tool for building interactive dialogues and enhancing the user experience.

This paper aims to explore the role of social media in enhancing user engagement in academic libraries through a bibliometric analysis of literature published over ten years (2014–2023), based on data from the Scopus database. The study seeks to understand how academic libraries have utilized social media as a marketing tool, identify trends in social media adoption within academic libraries, and provide insights into the potential impact of these platforms on user engagement. Given the widespread penetration of social media and the increasing integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in academic settings, this analysis will highlight the opportunities and challenges for libraries as they navigate the evolving digital landscape.

## **2. Literature Review**

The role of social media in marketing has gained significant attention over the past few decades, with public and non-profit organisations increasingly relying on it to engage their user communities. As part of this shift, academic libraries have adopted social media tools to promote services, connect with users, and enhance engagement. This section presents a comprehensive literature review of social media marketing in libraries, focusing on its evolution, effectiveness, and challenges, with key insights organized into sub-sections.

### **2.1. Evolution of Marketing in Academic Libraries**

The concept of marketing in libraries can be traced back to Kotler and Levy (1969), who argued that marketing is essential for the viability of non-profit organizations. Over the past three decades, academic libraries have gradually embraced marketing practices to improve services and foster stronger relationships with users (Garoufallou et al., 2013; Al-Daihani & AlAwadhi, 2015). Libraries initially relied on traditional methods, such as classroom instruction, advertisements, and face-to-face interactions (Yi et al., 2013). However, technological advancements and the rise of the internet led to the adoption of digital tools, including social media platforms, to expand outreach beyond the physical library space (Harrison et al., 2017).

### **2.2. Social Media as a Tool for User Engagement**

Social media has been recognised as a critical tool for user engagement in academic libraries. Obar and Wildman (2015) defined social media as a group of online platforms designed for content sharing, community engagement, and interaction. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have enabled libraries to establish virtual communities where users can access information, discuss ideas, and stay informed about library resources (Sachin,

2014). Research shows that these platforms facilitate real-time communication and collaboration, allowing users to interact with library services regardless of their location (Chatten & Roughley, 2016; Xu et al., 2015). Xie and Stevenson (2014) found that Facebook and Twitter were the most popular platforms in academic libraries for information sharing, marketing, promotions, and connecting with users. Similarly, studies on using WeChat in Chinese academic libraries demonstrated that social media platforms effectively support user interactions, answering queries, and publicising library events and services (Xu et al., 2015). The collaborative nature of social media also allows libraries to understand user needs better and develop targeted marketing plans (Stvilia & Gibradze, 2017).

### **2.3. Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing in Libraries**

The effectiveness of social media marketing in academic libraries has been well-documented. Studies have shown that platforms like Twitter and Facebook significantly enhance user engagement, helping libraries communicate their services more effectively (Ramsey & Vecchione, 2014). Luo et al. (2013) reported a successful case study in China where social media, specifically video marketing, was employed to engage target users and promote library resources. Yi et al. (2013) noted that social media tools like webcasts, blogs, and newsletters were among the most effective channels for promoting library services. The study found that social media tools helped raise awareness about library resources and facilitated communication with users, thus improving the library's image and enhancing user perceptions. Additionally, Al-Daihani and AlAwadhi (2015) confirmed that Twitter was particularly effective in announcing library activities and building connections with users. Another study by Khan and Bhatti (2012) emphasised the cost-effectiveness of social media marketing, noting that it allowed libraries to reach a wider audience with minimal financial investment. Moreover, users found social media platforms convenient and effective for accessing library services, particularly during awareness programs (Mensah & Onyancha, 2022).

### **2.4. Challenges in Implementing Social Media Marketing**

While the benefits of social media marketing in libraries are evident, several challenges have hindered its widespread adoption. Mahesh (2002) identified key barriers, including a lack of a needs assessment to identify user requirements, a lack of focus on resource development rather than marketing, and a lack of marketing skills among library staff. Al-Kharousi et al. (2016) further elaborated on both internal and external factors affecting the use of Web 2.0 applications, such as low motivation, lack of training, poor internet speeds, and the absence of policies governing social media usage in libraries. Technological challenges also pose significant barriers to social media adoption. McCallum (2015) highlighted that inadequate technology infrastructure in academic libraries prevents the effective use of social media for marketing. Issues such as copyright concerns, bandwidth limitations, and lack of training in using social media tools have also been identified as obstacles (Verma, 2015). Omeluzor, Oyovwe-Tinuoye and Abayomi (2016) found that inconsistent power supplies, technophobia, and inadequate internet connectivity hindered social media use in Nigerian libraries. Additionally, concerns about privacy and security have been cited as factors limiting the use of social media in library marketing efforts. Users, particularly students, have expressed concerns about the privacy of their personal information on social media platforms (Kumar & Shokeen, 2021).

## 2.5. Strategies for Successful Social Media Marketing in Libraries

To overcome these challenges, libraries need to adopt strategic approaches to social media marketing. Pham and Gammoh (2015) suggested that effective campaigns should focus on connectivity, variety, and user engagement. Successful social media marketing campaigns also require consistent posting, user-friendly content, and attention to user feedback (Ramsey & Vecchione, 2014). Moreover, libraries can use multiple social media platforms to reach different user groups. Khan and Bhatti (2012) proposed the use of Facebook to advertise events, YouTube to share videos of library activities, and LinkedIn for professional networking. Libraries should also consider having a Content Posting Schedule (CPS) to ensure consistency in their social media presence (Payne, n.d.). Gupta et al. (2024) emphasized that long-term adoption of social media tools requires libraries to align their marketing strategies with their core values and mission. By maintaining a strong and consistent online presence, libraries can enhance user engagement and build lasting relationships with their communities.

As social media continues to evolve, libraries must stay updated with emerging trends and platforms. New social media tools and applications are constantly being developed, offering libraries more opportunities to engage with users (Sonawane & Patil, 2015). The growing penetration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) further strengthens the role of social media in library marketing, making it essential for libraries to continuously innovate their digital marketing strategies (Siddike et al., 2015).

## 3. Research Methodology

For this study, one of the largest multidisciplinary databases of peer-reviewed literature, the Scopus database, was used to access scholarly publications relating to social media and academic libraries worldwide. The search criteria adopted were ( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "Social Media" OR "Social Networking" ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "Academic Libraries" OR "Libraries" OR "Library" ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "Marketing" ) ). The search was limited to Language- English, Journal Type- Article, period- 2014-2023 and Subject Area- Social Sciences, Art and Humanities and Computer Science. The authors used 'Social Media', 'Social Networking', 'Academic Libraries', 'Libraries', 'Library' and 'Marketing' as search keywords. A total of 379 records were retrieved from Scopus and imported to Endnote Desktop software. To identify the relevant records, the author checked each record twice; duplicate and irrelevant records were then deleted. Finally, 237 records were included in the research study. The 237 refined records were used for analysis purposes. Microsoft Excel, VOSViewer and Endnote software were used for the data analysis. The whole process of bibliometric research in the field of Social Media and Academic Libraries can be illustrated in Fig. 1.

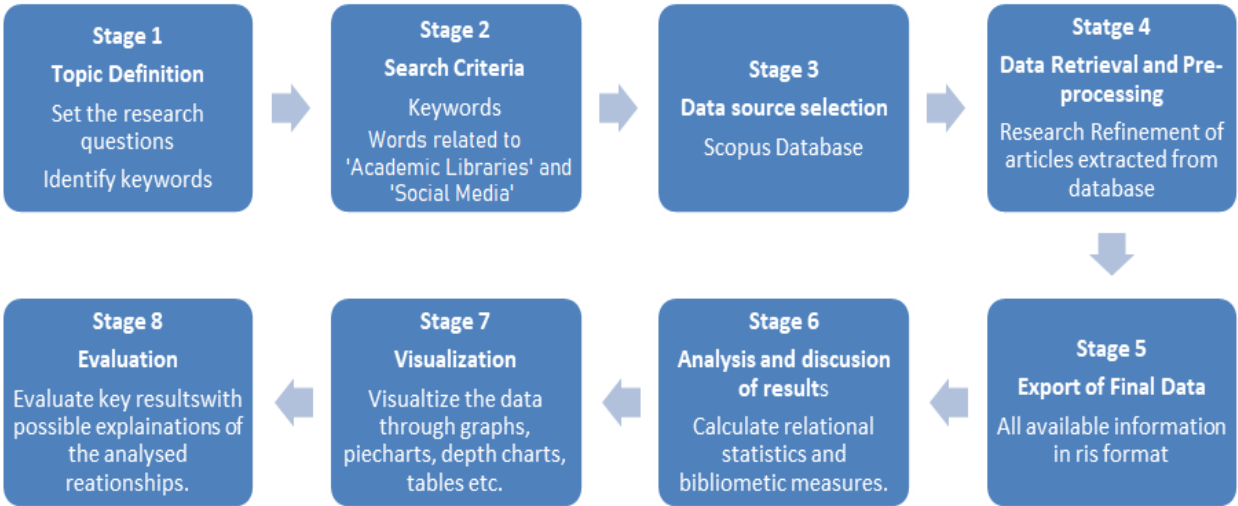
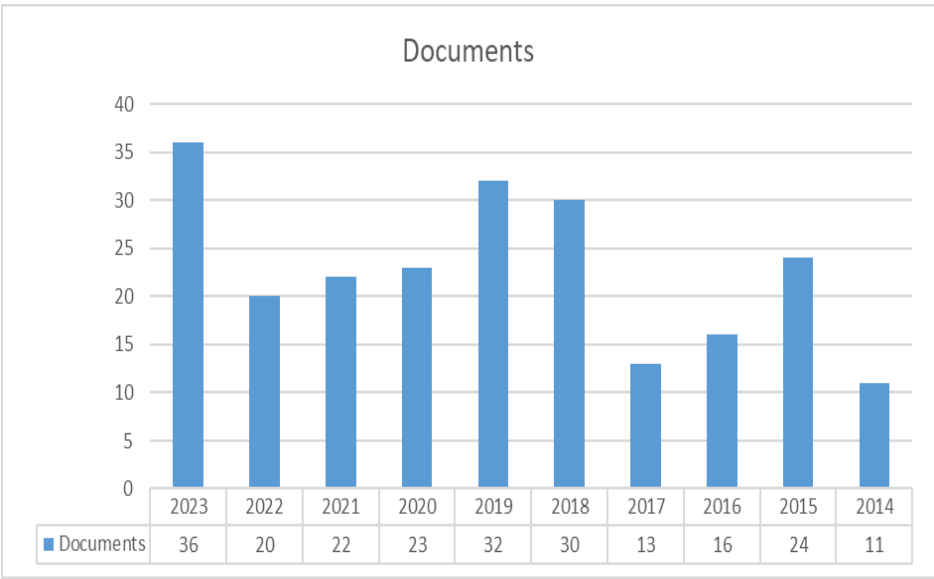


Figure 1: Process of Bibliometric Analysis

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Annual Publications



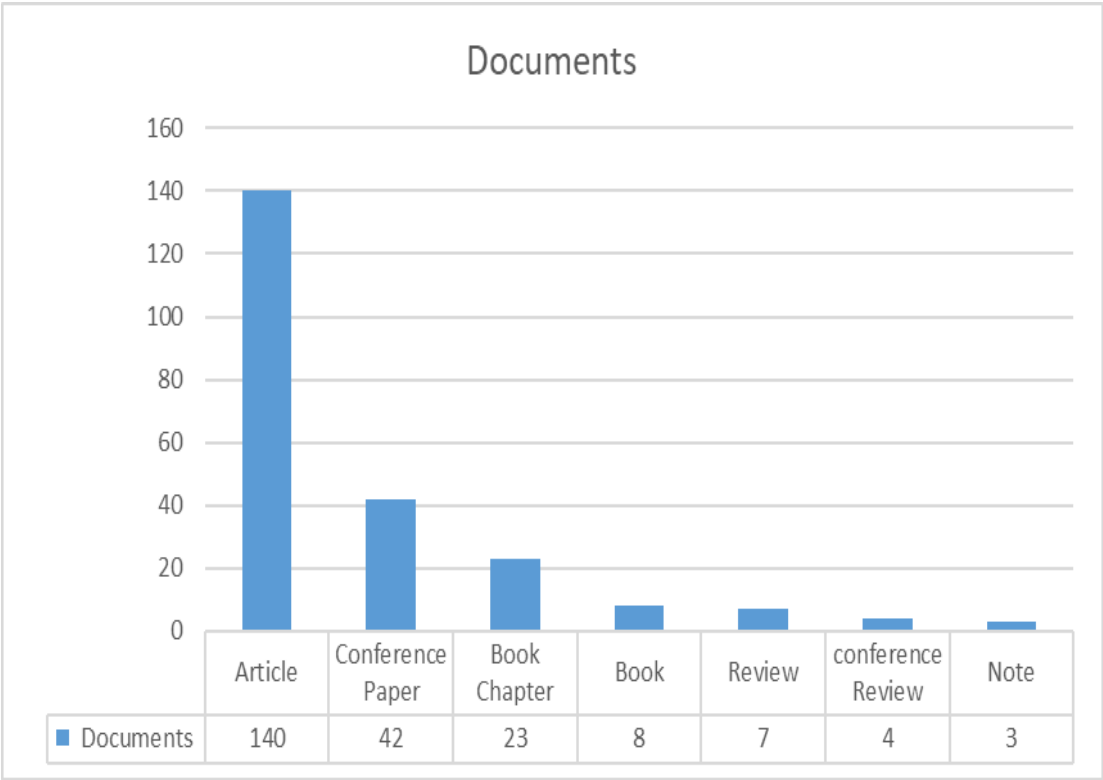
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Figure 2: Annual Publications

As illustrated in Figure 2, the year 2023 marked the highest level of research output in the domain, with a total of 36 articles published on the use of social media in libraries. This notable increase reflects a growing scholarly interest in the subject, suggesting that the integration of social media within library services is a relatively recent and evolving area of study. The upward trend in publications indicates that the field is still in its formative stages, offering considerable scope for further exploration and research. The surge in academic attention underscores the relevance and potential of social media as a transformative tool in library science.

4.2. Type of Documents

According to Figure 3, which shows the distribution of research by document type, research articles accounted for 140 of the publications, with conference papers accounting for 42, book chapters accounting for 23, books accounting for 08, and reviews accounting for 7. Scopus shows that there are five studies in the book genre. In addition, this topic is covered in three notes and four conference reviews. The findings imply that researchers typically use the genre of research articles to share the results of their work.

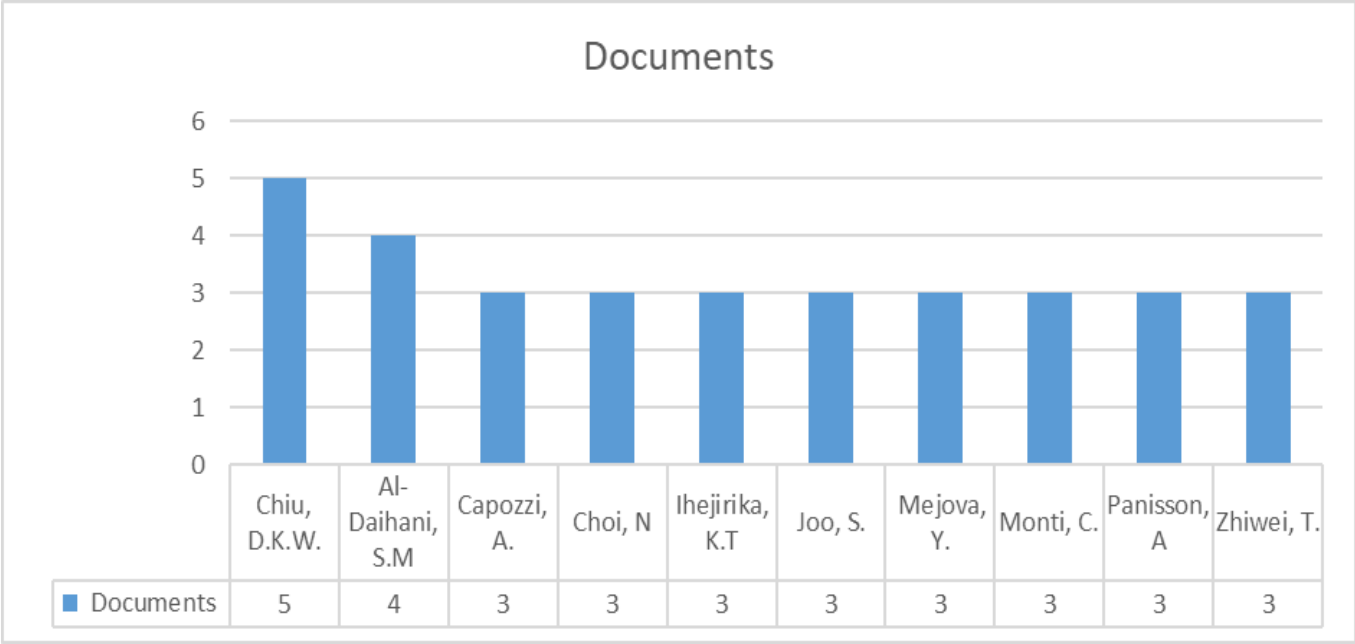


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Figure 3: Type of Documents

4.3. Top 10 Authors

Based on the number of published works in the field from digital literacy to the impact of social media marketing on library service delivery and user engagement the most prolific writers were identified in the bibliometric analysis of the role of social media marketing in boosting user engagement in academic libraries.



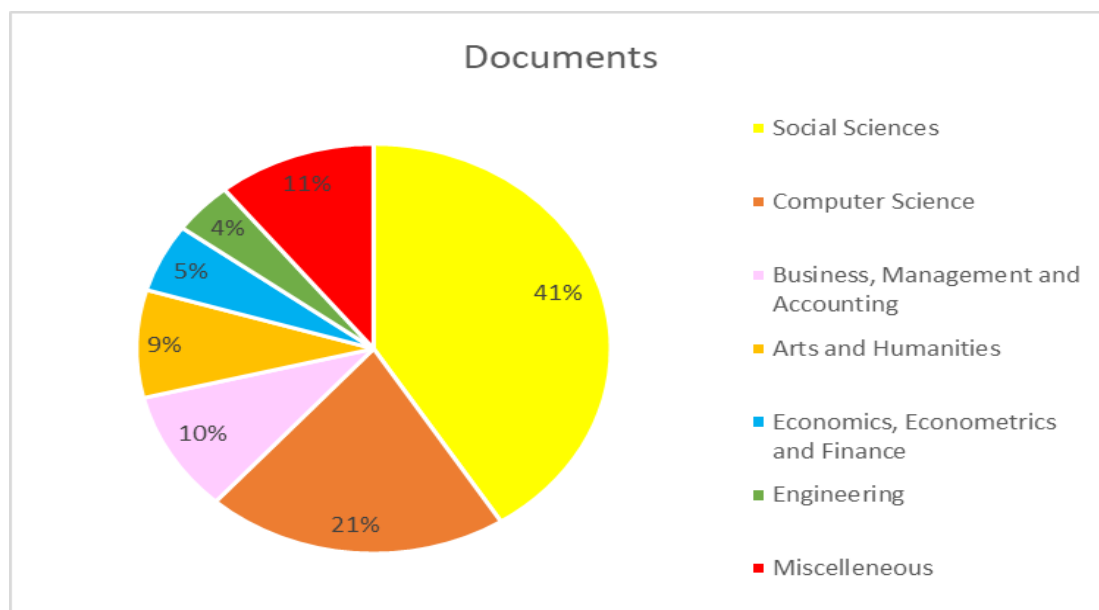
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Figure 4 –Top 10 Authors

As shown in Figure 4, based on the statistics, Chiu, D.K.W. has the most publications, having written five research papers, or 2.10% of the total. Closely trailing with four articles, or 1.68% of the research, is Al-Daihani, S.M. Each of the remaining writers has produced three publications. Since this field is still in its infancy, there isn't yet a leading author. Nonetheless, a number of academic fields stand to gain from this trend as social media usage in libraries continues to rise and the fields of associated study also continue to increase quickly.

4.4. Subject Areas of Published Documents

Research by Subject Area is shown in Figure 5, which shows that the majority of publications were in the Social Sciences (41%), Computer Science (21%), Business, Management and Accounting (10%), Arts and Humanities (09%), Economics, Econometrics (5%), Engineering (4%), and Miscellaneous (11%). Based on the findings, it appears that researchers mostly use the Social Sciences to share the results of their work.

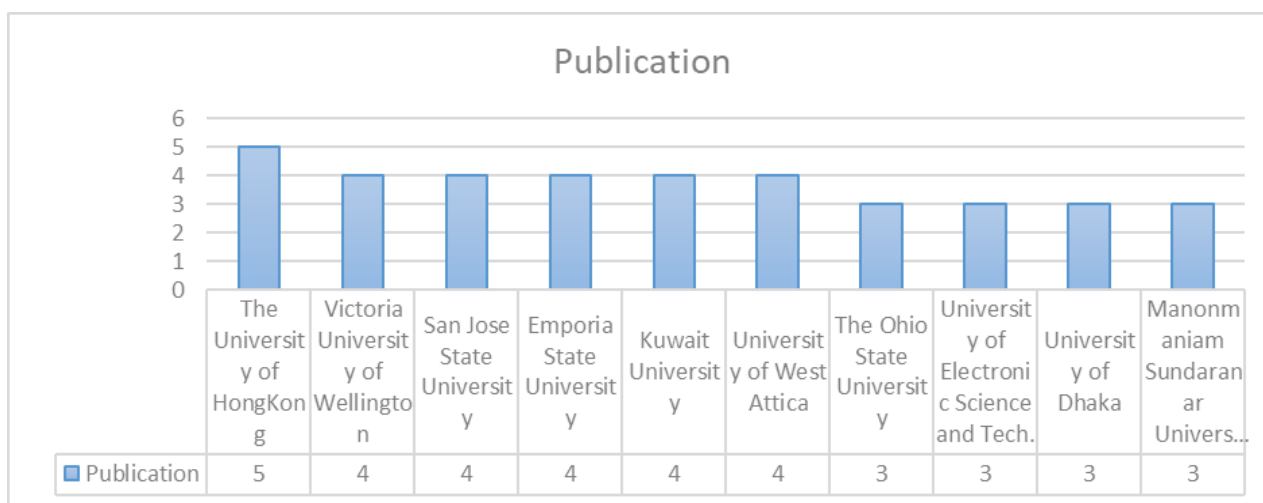


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Figure 5 –Top Subject Areas

#### 4.5. Top 10 Affiliations

Among the various research publications on Social Media and Academic Libraries, the ten institutions that produce the most publications are shown in Figure 6. The contributions of each institution were ascertained by analyzing the publication count after the data was analyzed using the Scopus database. With five publications, or 2.10% of the 237 research documents in total, the University of Hong Kong emerged as the top university. Following closely behind, each with four publications and 1.68% of the total, were Kuwait University, University of West Attica, San Jose State University, Emporia State University, and Victoria University of Wellington. The universities with three publications apiece were The Ohio State University, University of Electronic Science and Tech., University of Dhaka, and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.



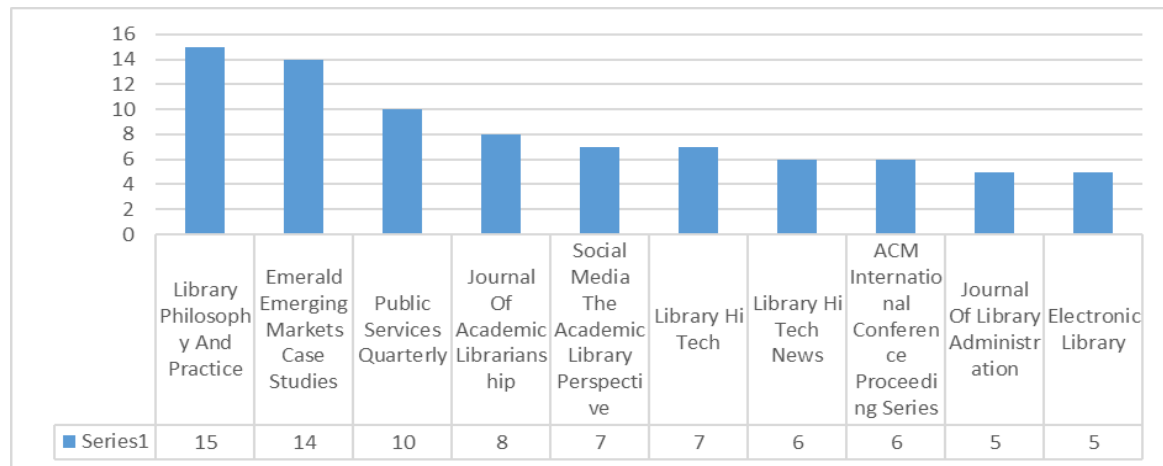
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Figure 6 - Top 10 Affiliations



#### 4.6. Top journals

Figure 7 displays the top ten primary journals that have published social media research in academic libraries.



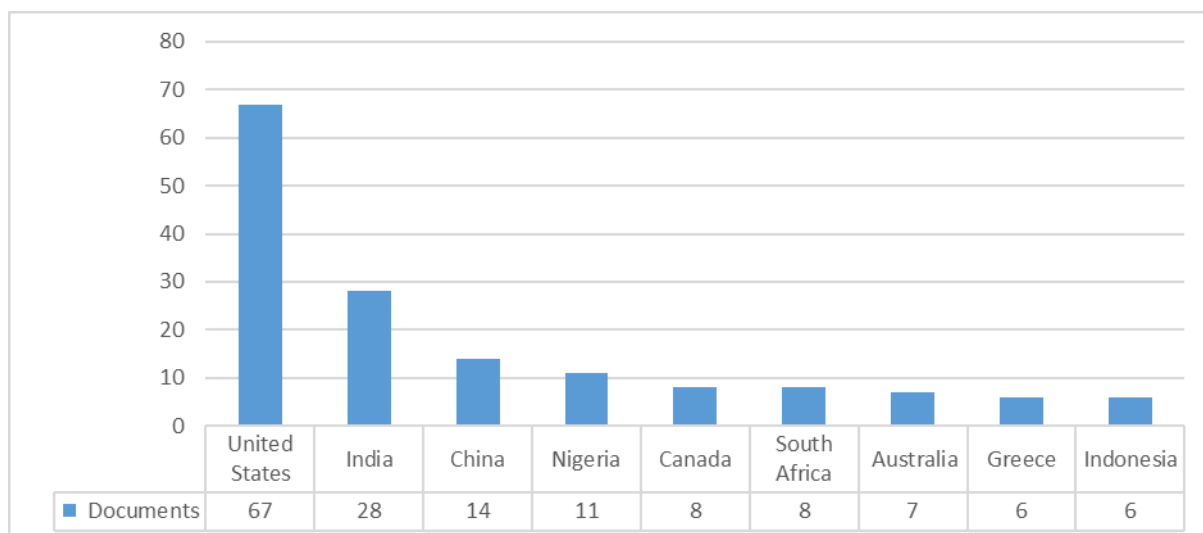
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Figure 7 - Top journals

Figure 7 shows that out of 237 research papers, Library Philosophy and Practice was the journal with the most publications, with a total of 15 research documents, or 6.32% of the total. Public Service followed in second place with 14 articles, or 5.90% of the research papers, and Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies 10 publications every quarter, or 4.21% of all research papers, are produced.

#### 4.7. Top 10 countries

The countries with the highest number of publications are shown in Figure 8. The United States produces the most publications. India, China and Nigeria follow the United States.



**Source(s):** Author's own creation

Figure 8 - Top 10 countries

The information in Figure 8 illustrates how Social Media research is distributed across countries in libraries. The United States, followed by India, China and Nigeria, was the site of the most research. Developing countries have contributed remarkably little to the body of library research on social media. This could result from these countries' lack of infrastructure, making it difficult for them to adapt to these highly modern environments (like social media in libraries). Further research is still required to determine how developed and developing countries might collaborate to encourage the widespread use of social media in libraries. It's also important to make the most of open-access resources in order to guarantee that Social Media is used in libraries in an inclusive manner.

Table 2 - Networking clustering

Cluster	Keywords	No. of Keywords	Primary Focus	Tools/ Platforms	Key Themes	Future Research Directions	Research Gaps
<b>Cluster 1</b>	academic libraries, blogs, COVID-19, design/methodology/approach, digital library, electronic resources, ICT, Internet, librarians, libraries, library, library 2.0, library services, library user marketing, social media, social networking, social networking sites, technology, university libraries, web2.0, world wide web	22	Social media and library services	Blogs, Library 2.0, Web 2.0, Social networking sites	User engagement, digital libraries, pandemic impact on libraries, academic libraries	Explore long-term effects of COVID-19 on social media usage in libraries; Investigate how emerging technologies (e.g., AI, blockchain) can further enhance library services via social media; Assess the impact of social media on virtual library services and user satisfaction	Limited empirical studies on the long-term effectiveness of social media marketing in libraries post-pandemic; Insufficient research on the role of advanced technologies (AI, blockchain) in transforming library services through social media
<b>Cluster 2</b>	altimetric, collaboration, communication,	15	Collaboration and academic	ResearchGate, Social media platforms,	Scholarly communication,	Investigate the impact of altmetrics on	Limited cross-disciplinary studies on the

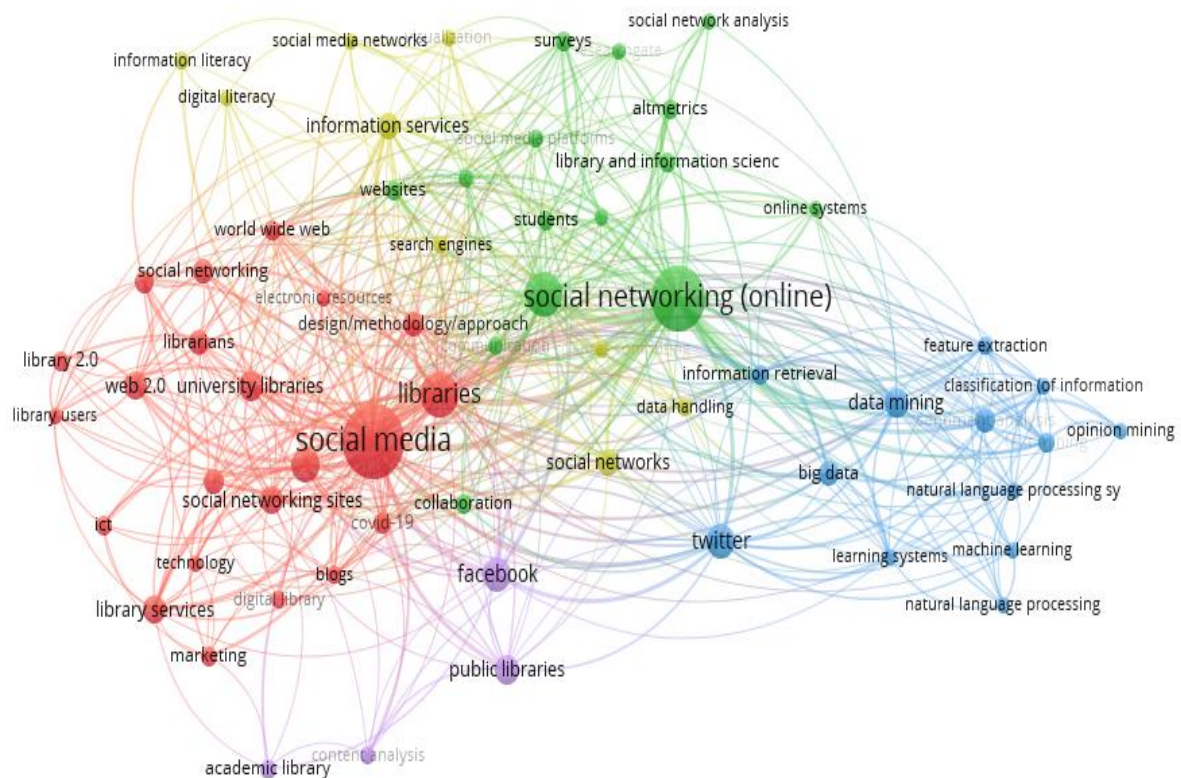
	digital libraries, information management, information science, library and information, online system, researchgate, social media platforms, social networking analysis, social networking (online), students, surveys, websites		communication	Websites	altmetrics, surveys, digital libraries	research evaluation in different disciplines; Explore collaboration trends and information sharing across digital libraries globally; Assess how academic institutions use social media to foster cross-institutional research collaborations	impact of altmetrics on research evaluation; Lack of understanding of the sustainability of long-term collaborations fostered through digital libraries and social media
<b>Cluster 3</b>	big data, classification (of information), data mining, feature extraction, information retrieval, learning systems, machine learning, natural language processing, opinion mining, sentiment analysis, text mining, Twitter	13	Data-driven approaches and analysis	Twitter, Machine learning, Data mining, Text mining	Data analysis, sentiment analysis, opinion mining, information retrieval	Examine the ethical concerns related to data mining in library services; Investigate how machine learning algorithms can enhance information retrieval in academic libraries; Study the use of sentiment analysis to	Insufficient research on the ethical implications of using big data and machine learning in academic library services; Lack of standardisation in data mining practices across different libraries

						predict user satisfaction and needs	
<b>Cluster 4</b>	data handling, digital literacy, information literacy, information services, search engines, social media networks, social networks, social sciences computing, visualization	9	Information and digital literacy	Search engines, Social media networks	Information literacy, digital literacy, social sciences, data handling	Explore the relationship between digital literacy initiatives and social media engagement in libraries; Investigate how visualization tools can enhance user understanding of library resources; Assess the role of libraries in promoting digital literacy in underserved communities	Gaps in evaluating the effectiveness of digital literacy programs about social media usage in libraries; Lack of studies focusing on visualisation tools to improve library resource accessibility
<b>Cluster 5</b>	academic library, content analysis, Facebook, public libraries	4	Public and Academic Libraries Content Analysis	Facebook	Social media content analysis, user engagement, public libraries	Analyze the effectiveness of different social media platforms for public library marketing; Study how user-generated content on platforms like	Limited research comparing the effectiveness of different social media platforms for public library engagement; Lack of studies on how user-generated

						Facebook influences library service improvement; Investigate the role of libraries in shaping community discourse through social media engagement	content influences decision-making in libraries
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4.8.    **Networking clustering**

The bibliometric analysis, conducted using the Scopus database, identified five distinct thematic clusters based on the co-occurrence of keywords. The analysis employed the complete counting method to quantify the frequency and interrelation of keywords across selected publications. The results of this clustering are presented in Table 2 and visually illustrated in Figure 9, highlighting the conceptual structure and emerging trends within the domain of social media use in libraries. The co-occurrence analysis of keywords was conducted using VOSviewer to identify thematic focus areas and emerging trends in the application of artificial intelligence in libraries. As illustrated in Figure 9, the size of each label and corresponding circle reflects the frequency of term appearances within the dataset. The connecting lines represent significant associations between terms, with line thickness and proximity indicating the strength of their co-occurrence. For example, the close placement of the terms "*social media networking*" and "*academic libraries*" suggests that these keywords frequently appeared together across multiple studies (Vasishta et al., 2024). Furthermore, the analysis revealed five distinct clusters, each representing a thematic grouping derived from keyword co-occurrence patterns in the Scopus-indexed articles. These clusters provide insights into the conceptual structure and research directions within the field.



**Source(s):** Author's own creation

Figure 9 - Networking clustering

To gain deeper insights into the thematic structure of research surrounding social media marketing in academic libraries, a network cluster analysis was conducted using VOSviewer. This analysis identifies key areas of focus by clustering related keywords, reflecting the diversity of topics and research trends in the literature. The clusters reveal various themes, highlighting the interconnectedness of social media, academic libraries, and emerging technologies. Below is an interpretive discussion of the key clusters derived from the analysis.

### **Cluster 1: Social Media and Library Services**

The first cluster revolves around the core themes of academic libraries, social media, and library services, with associated keywords like blogs, library 2.0, ICT, and web 2.0. This cluster underscores the transformative role of social media in reshaping library services and user interactions, particularly in academic settings. Keywords such as COVID-19 suggest that libraries significantly leaned on social media platforms to maintain communication and service provision during the pandemic. The incorporation of technologies like the Internet and electronic resources shows the ongoing integration of digital tools into library operations. Furthermore, this cluster highlights the role of library users, reflecting the user-centric nature of modern library services facilitated by social media. This cluster points to the pivotal role of social media in enhancing the digital presence of libraries, creating a bridge between users and services through platforms that support dynamic interactions.

**Cluster 2: Communication and Collaboration**

Cluster 2 emphasises collaboration, communication, and information management in academic libraries, focusing on digital platforms like ResearchGate and social networking sites. The presence of keywords like students, surveys, and online systems suggests that this cluster pertains to how academic libraries are leveraging social media for scholarly communication, collaboration, and engaging students in information-sharing practices. The cluster also includes terms like altimetric and social networking analysis, highlighting the growing importance of using metrics to assess the impact of academic publications and research dissemination through social media platforms. This cluster indicates that social media is used for marketing and as a tool for fostering academic collaboration and managing information resources in a digital environment.

**Cluster 3: Data-Driven Approaches in Social Media**

Cluster 3 is heavily focused on big data, machine learning, and data mining, reflecting the increasing integration of advanced data analytics into the analysis of social media interactions. Keywords such as Twitter, sentiment analysis, and opinion mining show that research in this cluster often focuses on extracting insights from social media platforms using data-driven methods. The inclusion of natural language processing and text mining indicates the use of sophisticated algorithms to analyze user-generated content on social media platforms, which can help libraries understand user preferences, attitudes, and feedback more effectively. This cluster signifies a more technologically advanced approach to understanding how social media data can inform library services and user engagement strategies.

**Cluster 4: Literacy and Information Services**

Cluster 4 is centred around information literacy, digital literacy, and information services, suggesting a focus on how libraries use social media to promote these literacies. Keywords like search engines, social media networks, and visualisation highlight libraries' tools and strategies to improve information retrieval and digital skills among their users. This cluster reflects the evolving role of libraries as not only repositories of information but also as educators in digital and information literacy. The focus on social sciences computing further indicates this cluster's interdisciplinary nature, showing social media's relevance in facilitating research and learning across various fields.

**Cluster 5: Content Analysis and Public Libraries**

The fifth cluster emphasises content analysis and using Facebook as a dominant platform for social media marketing in academic and public libraries. This cluster focuses on how libraries analyse content generated through social media platforms to better understand user needs and preferences. Keywords such as public libraries indicate that social media marketing is not limited to academic libraries but extends to public institutions aiming to engage a broader community. The presence of content-focused terms suggests that libraries are leveraging platforms like Facebook to disseminate information, promote services, and foster interactions with their user base. The use of content analysis as a research method demonstrates that libraries are actively measuring the effectiveness of their social media strategies to enhance service delivery and community engagement.

**Conclusion**

The bibliometric analysis conducted in this study highlights the increasing relevance of social media marketing in academic libraries over the past decade. The findings confirm that social media has become a vital tool not only for

promoting library resources but also for fostering real-time interaction, user engagement, and scholarly collaboration. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are frequently used to build communities, disseminate information, and support the evolving digital needs of academic library users. The upward trend in publications, particularly in the last five years, underscores growing academic interest and institutional efforts to integrate social media into library services. Despite these advancements, the study also reveals persistent challenges such as limited digital infrastructure, lack of trained personnel, and concerns over privacy, all hindering the optimal use of social media tools. Furthermore, while research on the role of social media in library marketing is expanding, there are significant gaps—especially in the context of emerging technologies, ethical data usage, and user-centric strategies. To move forward, academic libraries must embrace a more strategic and inclusive approach by aligning their social media activities with user expectations, institutional goals, and technological developments. Developing comprehensive social media policies, investing in librarian training, and leveraging advanced tools such as data analytics, sentiment analysis, and visualization platforms will be crucial. Future research should focus on cross-disciplinary applications, long-term user engagement outcomes, and comparative studies across developed and developing nations to deepen the understanding of how social media can transform academic librarianship.

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