DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF THE PALU CITY OFFICE OF ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY IN INCREASING USER VISITS

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Library, *Digital Marketing,* *Digital Promotion,* *Digital Marketing Strategy*	*This study aims to analyze the digital marketing strategies implemented by the Palu City Office of Archives and Library in increasing user visits. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with primary data collected through in-depth interviews with library staff directly involved in service management and promotional activities, supported by documentation studies. Data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that digital marketing is not implemented as a separate formal marketing program, but rather integrated into everyday library service practices. The use of digital media, particularly social media, functions as a means of disseminating information on activities, services, and the library's public image, while increases in user visits are more strongly influenced by the quality and relevance of the services provided. Participatory services, such as digital-based suggestion mechanisms, as well as inclusive services, including disability-friendly programs and sign language learning activities, emerge as important factors that attract the public to visit the library. These findings suggest that digital marketing in the context of regional public libraries serves as a bridge between digital communication and the service experience directly perceived by users. This study concludes that the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in regional public libraries is highly dependent on their integration with service innovations that are responsive to community needs, thereby strengthening the role of the library as a relevant and inclusive public service institution.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes in the ways people search for, consume, and use information. This transformation requires public libraries to no longer focus solely on managing physical collections, but also on their ability to build sustainable relationships with users through adaptive communication strategies oriented toward user needs (Liu & Briggs, 2021). In this context, digital marketing has become an increasingly relevant strategic approach for public libraries as public service institutions, as it is able to overcome limitations of space, time, and distance while strengthening service visibility within a competitive digital information ecosystem (Huvila et al., 2020). Digital marketing in libraries should not be understood merely as social media-based promotion, but rather as a systematic effort to foster user engagement, participation, and service experience through inclusive and sustainable services (Kotler et al., 2021).

The urgency of implementing digital marketing in public libraries has intensified in response to several challenges, including declining physical visits, shifts in younger generations' preferences toward digital information sources, and rising public expectations for fast and responsive public services (IFLA, 2022). Numerous studies indicate that libraries that strategically utilize digital channels tend to be more successful in maintaining institutional relevance and increasing the intensity of interaction with users (Aharony, 2020). However, most existing studies still position digital marketing within a technical framework of online promotion, such as the use of social media and websites, without deeply linking it to participatory and inclusive service innovations, particularly in the context of regional public libraries (Matusiak & Johnston, 2021).

Empirically, the Palu City Office of Archives and Library represents an interesting example of the transformation dynamics of regional public libraries in Indonesia. Following the 2018 earthquake disaster, this institution not only undertook physical rebuilding of its facilities but also sought to restore the social role of the library as an open and adaptive public literacy space, which officially resumed operations in 2021. These efforts were manifested through service development, the provision of disability-friendly facilities, and the adoption of basic digital technologies such as online membership registration and the use of social media to disseminate information about library activities. This condition reflects an institutional awareness of the importance of digital approaches in expanding service reach, even though their implementation remains gradual and contextual.

Previous studies on library digital marketing in Indonesia have generally focused on academic libraries or special libraries, emphasizing the effectiveness of social media as a tool for service promotion (Prabowo & Heriyanto, 2020; Suryani et al., 2022). Other studies highlight the application of marketing models such as AIDA or library branding in increasing user visit interest, yet they have not specifically examined the role of participatory and inclusive services as integral components of digital marketing strategies (Rahmawati & Nugroho, 2021). Meanwhile, international research tends to situate library digital marketing within the framework of smart libraries and well-established digital ecosystems, which may not adequately represent the realities of regional public libraries with limited resources (Xu & Du, 2023).

Based on this review, a significant research gap becomes evident, particularly regarding studies on digital marketing in regional public libraries that position services

as the core of digital marketing strategies rather than merely as promotional objects. There remains a lack of research that explores digital marketing strategies from the perspective of library managers using primary qualitative data, especially within libraries that are in the process of rebuilding their social roles amid post-disaster recovery and infrastructural limitations. Understanding the managerial perspective is crucial for revealing policy rationales, internal dynamics, and adaptive practices that are not always captured through quantitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the digital marketing strategies implemented by the Palu City Office of Archives and Library in increasing user visits, with an emphasis on participatory and inclusive service approaches. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on regional public libraries as public service entities, its interpretation of digital marketing beyond digital media promotion toward strengthening user service experience, and its use of primary qualitative data that represent the direct perspectives of library managers. Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of digital marketing strategies for public libraries in Indonesia, particularly within regions characterized by diverse social conditions and resource capacities..

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the contemporary context, public libraries have experienced a significant paradigm shift, from collection-centered institutions to service-oriented entities that prioritize community needs. This transformation is marked by a change in orientation from collection-centered to user-centered services, positioning users as active subjects in the design and development of library services (IFLA, 2022). Public libraries are no longer merely spaces for storing books, but have evolved into public spaces that support lifelong learning, social participation, and information inclusion for all segments of society (Jaeger et al., 2020). This shift requires libraries to adapt to changes in information behavior that are increasingly shaped by digital technologies and new media cultures.

Several studies emphasize that the success of public library service transformation is strongly influenced by an institution's ability to build effective communication with users and to continuously understand their expectations (Matusiak & Johnston, 2021). Participatory, inclusive, and responsive services are considered capable of enhancing user engagement while strengthening the image of libraries as relevant and human-centered public institutions (Huvila et al., 2020). In the context of regional public libraries, service transformation often occurs gradually and contextually, shaped by limitations in resources, local policies, and community characteristics. As a result, libraries require flexible approaches that are grounded in users' real and diverse needs.

Digital marketing has emerged as a strategic approach that supports service transformation in public libraries, particularly within non-profit institutions. Unlike commercial organizations, digital marketing in non-profit settings is not oriented toward financial profit, but toward increasing public awareness, participation, and utilization of services (Kotler et al., 2021). In library contexts, digital marketing encompasses the use of social media, websites, digital content, and online interactions to build long-term relationships with users and to expand service reach (Aharony, 2020). Through this approach, libraries are positioned as social brands that offer educational and cultural

value rather than merely providing information products.

However, existing studies indicate that the implementation of digital marketing in libraries is often narrowly perceived as promotional activity or information dissemination through social media platforms (Prabowo & Heriyanto, 2020; Suryani et al., 2022). Contemporary literature, on the other hand, emphasizes that effective digital marketing should be integrated with service strategies, involve two-way interactions, and create opportunities for user participation in library development processes (Xu & Du, 2023). Thus, digital marketing functions not only as a communication tool but also as a mechanism for building meaningful service experiences for users.

The relationship between digital marketing and increased user visits has been examined in both national and international studies. Rahmawati and Nugroho (2021) found that digital promotional activities contribute to increased user awareness, yet do not necessarily lead to higher physical visits if they are not accompanied by relevant service innovations. Similarly, Moffatt and Widdersheim (2022) argue that user visits increase significantly when digital marketing strategies are linked to community-based programs and participatory service experiences. These findings reinforce the notion that digital marketing and library services are interconnected dimensions that cannot be separated in practice.

Despite these insights, most previous studies have focused on academic libraries or institutions with relatively well-established digital infrastructures. Research that specifically addresses regional public libraries, particularly through qualitative approaches grounded in managerial perspectives, remains limited. Furthermore, digital marketing is often positioned as a supporting promotional variable rather than as an integrated service strategy grounded in inclusivity and user participation. This gap forms the basis of the present study, which positions digital marketing as an integral component of regional public library service strategies oriented toward user experience and the strengthening of libraries' social functions.

By examining the digital marketing strategies of the Palu City Office of Archives and Library through primary qualitative data, this study extends existing literature by emphasizing local context, post-recovery institutional dynamics, and adaptive practices undertaken by library managers. The study not only complements previous research but also offers a new perspective on digital marketing as an instrument for service transformation in regional public libraries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of digital marketing strategies implemented by a regional public library from the perspective of library managers, rather than to measure causal relationships statistically. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore meanings, practices, and the dynamics of policies and services as they develop within the natural organizational context of the library (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020). The descriptive approach is used to systematically and factually describe digital marketing strategies as they are implemented in everyday library service practices.

The research was conducted at the Palu City Office of Archives and Library, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. This site was selected based on empirical considerations, as the institution represents a regional public library that is strengthening its services

following institutional recovery and has begun to adopt digital strategies in service promotion and development. The research location is therefore relevant to the study's focus on local public library contexts and service-based digital marketing practices.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, with informants chosen based on their direct involvement and knowledge of the planning and implementation of digital marketing strategies and library services. The participants consisted of staff members of the Palu City Office of Archives and Library who were responsible for service management, promotional activities, and interactions with users. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that the data collected were information-rich and closely aligned with the objectives of the study (Patton, 2015; Sugiyono, 2021).

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide flexibility for informants to elaborate on their experiences, perspectives, and practices related to the library's digital marketing strategies. The interview guide was developed based on the research focus while remaining open to emerging insights during the interview process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018). Documentation analysis involved reviewing internal library documents, activity reports, and relevant digital archives to support and validate the interview data (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, interview and documentation data were selected, focused, and simplified in accordance with the research objectives. Data display involved organizing the findings into thematic narratives that illustrate digital marketing strategies, service forms, and their relationship to user visits. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, was conducted iteratively throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency and accuracy of interpretation.

To ensure data trustworthiness, several strategies were employed. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from multiple informants and documents to ensure consistency. Second, technique triangulation was applied by combining interviews and documentation as primary data sources. Third, member checking was performed by confirming research findings and interpretations with informants to ensure that the results accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, an audit trail was maintained by systematically documenting the entire research process to enhance transparency and replicability in similar research contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the digital marketing strategy implemented by the Palu City Office of Archives and Library has not been established as a standalone or formal marketing program, but is instead integrated into daily library services and activities. The strategy has developed gradually, adapting to the capacity of human resources and the characteristics of users, who are predominantly university students and school students. Based on interviews with librarian Rezky Amelia Jumain, the digital approach primarily focuses on introducing library services, building a positive image of the library as a welcoming public space, and encouraging the community to visit the library in person.

The utilization of digital media is mainly carried out through the library's official social media accounts, which function as channels for disseminating information about activities, services, and literacy-related events. The content shared includes announcements of programs, documentation of literacy activities, information on disability-friendly services, and group visits from schools and community organizations. According to Rezky Amelia Jumain, these social media posts aim to inform the public that the library is not merely a place for book collections, but also a space for learning and social interaction.

Figure 1. Social Media Post of the Palu City Office of Archives and Library

Interview findings further reveal that the digital marketing strategy is closely linked to participatory service innovations. One of the key findings is the implementation of a digital suggestion barcode that allows users to submit feedback, criticisms, and collection requests online. This mechanism is considered effective because it enables users to participate without having to convey their opinions directly. All input received through the barcode system is compiled and discussed internally as part of service evaluation and collection development processes.

Figure 2. Digital Barcode for Library Service Feedback

In addition, disability-friendly services constitute an important element in attracting user visits. Based on information provided by librarian Nizar, S.I.Pust., the library not only offers physical facilities for persons with disabilities, but also organizes sign language learning activities that are open to the public. These activities are

conducted regularly and attended by various groups, including university students and members of the general community. Such programs indirectly increase public interest in visiting the library, as they offer learning experiences that differ from conventional library services.

Figure 3. Activities Conducted in the Library's Inclusive Space

Field findings also demonstrate that the increase in user visits is influenced not only by digital promotion, but by the combination of information dissemination through digital media and the attractiveness of services experienced directly by users. Rezky Amelia Jumain explained that after certain activities or services are published on social media, there is an observable increase in visits, particularly among university students who are interested in participating in programs or utilizing library facilities. This indicates that digital media serves as an initial bridge connecting the library with potential users.

In terms of visitation patterns, the results show that university students constitute the most frequent user group. They visit the library not only for academic purposes, but also to participate in literacy activities promoted through digital platforms. Meanwhile, visits by children and school students generally occur in the form of scheduled group visits or organized activities, with information about these programs also disseminated through the library's digital channels.

Figure 4. Library Activities Conducted with University Students

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the digital marketing strategy of the Palu City Office of Archives and Library is contextual and service-based. Digital marketing is utilized as a means of information dissemination and image building, while increases in user visits are largely driven by participatory, inclusive, and socially relevant services. These findings confirm that, in practice, digital marketing strategies in public libraries do not operate independently, but are inherently attached to the quality and innovation of the services provided.

The findings of this study indicate that the digital marketing strategy implemented by the Palu City Office of Archives and Library is not designed as a separate or formal marketing program, but is instead embedded within everyday library service practices. This finding supports the argument proposed by Huvila et al. (2020), which emphasizes that digital strategies in public information institutions tend to be more effective when they are integrated into service processes and user interactions rather than treated solely as promotional activities. In this context, digital marketing functions as an entry point that connects users to the actual service experiences offered by the library.

The use of social media as the primary digital communication channel is consistent with previous studies highlighting its role in increasing service visibility and public awareness (Aharony, 2020; Suryani et al., 2022). However, the results of this study demonstrate that increased user visits are not merely driven by the frequency of digital content, but by the relevance of that content to tangible service activities. Social media posts that reflect real programs, inclusive services, and learning opportunities contribute to users' perceptions of the library as an active and meaningful public space. This finding reinforces the view that digital marketing in libraries serves as a catalyst for user interest, while the decision to visit is shaped by the perceived value of services experienced directly.

In contrast to earlier studies that frame digital marketing as a one-way promotional tool (Prabowo & Heriyanto, 2020), this study highlights the importance of participatory mechanisms in strengthening user engagement. The implementation of a digital suggestion barcode provides users with an accessible channel to express feedback, needs, and expectations. This practice aligns with the concept of user engagement in libraries, which emphasizes dialogue, participation, and shared responsibility in service development (Matusiak & Johnston, 2021). By facilitating user input through digital means, the library not only promotes its services but also builds a more responsive and inclusive relationship with its users.

The findings related to disability-friendly services and sign language learning programs further expand the interpretation of digital marketing in the context of regional public libraries. While previous research has primarily discussed inclusivity as part of social service policies (Jaeger et al., 2020), this study demonstrates that inclusive services, when communicated through digital platforms, can also function as effective digital marketing content. Such services attract new user groups, particularly students and community members interested in social and educational initiatives. This indicates that the social value embedded in library services can serve as a powerful marketing narrative for non-profit institutions.

Moreover, the contextual nature of digital marketing practices observed in this study contrasts with international research that situates library digital marketing within advanced smart library frameworks (Xu & Du, 2023). In the case of the Palu City

Office of Archives and Library, digital marketing strategies evolve gradually in response to limitations in infrastructure and human resources. Nevertheless, these constraints do not hinder the library's ability to build meaningful connections with users. Instead, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of digital marketing is determined less by technological sophistication and more by the alignment of strategies with local contexts and community needs.

This study also identifies several limitations. First, the data are primarily derived from interviews with library staff, meaning that users' perspectives have not been explored directly. Second, the qualitative descriptive approach does not quantitatively measure changes in user visit numbers before and after the implementation of digital marketing strategies. These limitations restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. However, they also provide opportunities for future research to adopt mixed-method approaches and to incorporate user perspectives in evaluating the impact of digital marketing strategies on library visitation behavior.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the literature by repositioning digital marketing as an integral component of library service strategies rather than a supplementary promotional activity. The findings offer valuable insights into how regional public libraries can leverage digital marketing to strengthen service relevance, user engagement, and social impact, particularly within contexts characterized by limited resources and diverse community needs.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully addresses its research objectives by clearly revealing how digital marketing strategies are implemented by the Palu City Office of Archives and Library to increase user visits. The main findings indicate that digital marketing is not carried out as an independent promotional program, but is closely integrated into everyday library service practices. Digital media are utilized as tools for information dissemination and image building, while users' decisions to visit the library are largely influenced by the quality, relevance, and attractiveness of the services provided, including the library's physical design as presented through social media content.

The findings further emphasize that participatory and inclusive service approaches such as digital-based suggestion mechanisms and the development of disability-friendly services play a key role in enhancing the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. These approaches foster stronger user engagement and encourage visits, particularly among university students and community members interested in literacy and social-oriented activities. In this sense, digital marketing in the context of regional public libraries functions as a bridge between digitally communicated service information and the service experiences directly perceived by users.

The primary contribution of this study lies in expanding the discourse on library digital marketing by positioning it as an integral part of service strategy rather than merely as a digital promotion activity. By employing primary qualitative data from the perspectives of library managers, this research provides a contextualized understanding of digital marketing practices in regional public libraries. The findings offer both theoretical and practical implications for the development of service-based digital marketing strategies in public libraries, particularly in regions characterized by diverse social conditions and limited resources.

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