The Role of Digital Marketing Strategies in Strengthening Information Literacy at Gramedia

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

A This study was motivated by Indonesia's relatively low level of digital literacy, which has not yet kept pace with the rapid advancement of digital technologies and media usage. Gramedia, as a commercial literacy institution, has sought to utilize digital marketing strategies to strengthen reading culture and public information literacy. The purpose of this study is to analyze how Gramedia's digital marketing strategies contribute to enhancing users' informational awareness, evaluative ability, and literacy participation. A descriptive qualitative approach was applied, employing semi-structured interviews with three key informants namely a digital content manager, a marketing staff member, and an active user of Gramedia Digital alongside document analysis from multiple Gramedia digital platforms. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify emerging patterns and meanings within the digital marketing practices. The results indicate that Gramedia's digital marketing has evolved into an effective educational medium, transforming users' behaviour from passive information consumers into active participants within the literacy ecosystem. The study concludes that digital marketing strategies designed with educational values can serve as strategic instruments for strengthening information literacy while providing both conceptual and practical contributions to the advancement of Library and Information Science in the digital transformation era.

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid digital advancement, the public's access to information via online media and platforms has grown significantly. For instance, Indonesia's internet penetration has reached very high levels, yet digital literacy scores among the population still exhibit serious shortcomings (Afrina, Zulaikha & Jumila, 2024). This condition demonstrates that although technological access is increasingly facilitated, users' ability to understand, evaluate, and utilise information critically is not fully aligned. In the field of information services and librarianship, this phenomenon presents a major challenge: service institutions are no longer merely providers of physical collections or catalogues, but must navigate digital trajectories and ensure the

enhancement of users' information literacy. Hence, investigating how digital marketing strategies can become part of information services becomes highly relevant and urgent.

Another supporting phenomenon for this research's urgency is the integration of digital marketing functions in the context of library and literacy institution services. A study by Supriati & Murbayanto (2022) indicates that libraries in Indonesia have begun to adopt digital-based promotions to reach users, yet research on how such strategies affect information literacy remains limited. Meanwhile, international library research shows that digital marketing literacy is an important variable yet underexplored in library science scholarship (Ali, 2025). The gap between the application of digital marketing strategies and the dimension of information literacy presents a new research opportunity especially when commercial-literacy institutions like Gramedia also take an active role in disseminating information and public literacy.

Although some studies have addressed digital literacy in Indonesia more broadly for example, Harmawati et al. (2024) measured digital literacy of students based on media usage ability, advanced digital media use, and ethics/safety; and Zahra (2023) reviewed the national digital literacy index and its challenges research that specifically explores the interaction between institutional digital marketing strategies and public information literacy enhancement is relatively scarce. Similarly, in library science literature, studies such as Yunita (2024) examine the transformation of digital libraries in supporting information literacy, but few view digital marketing as an information service mechanism within retail-literacy institutions. Therefore, this study occupies a unique and strategic position: connecting the fields of digital marketing, information services, and information literacy in a commercial-literacy institution context.

This research is important to address because institutions such as Gramedia operate at the intersection of two major functions: as providers of books and literacy content, and as actors in digital marketing with wide user reach. If digital marketing strategies focus solely on commercial aspects without strengthening information literacy, then the potential of those institutions' information services is not optimised. Conversely, by positioning digital marketing strategies as part of information services while simultaneously enhancing users' information literacy— literacy institutions can play a broader role in the national literacy ecosystem. Theoretically, therefore, this research will contribute new understanding in library and information science literature about "digital marketing as information service," and practically provide recommendations for literacy institutions to design digital strategies oriented towards literacy.

Methodologically, this article will delineate a discussion flow starting from background phenomena, problem formulation, literature review related to information literacy and digital marketing, to the case study of digital marketing strategy implementation at Gramedia, and analysis of how significantly it influences users' information literacy. The anticipated end result is a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and facilitating factors of successful digital marketing strategies in the context of information literacy, along with practical recommendations for literacy institutions in Indonesia. Consequently, this article is expected to become a contribution to the development of digital information services and societal literacy in the era of digital transformation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how digital marketing strategies contribute to the enhancement of information literacy at Gramedia. This approach was selected because it allows researchers to explore socio-informational phenomena contextually, namely the relationship between digital marketing practices and users' information-literacy behaviour (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative framework is most appropriate for uncovering meanings behind non-quantifiable phenomena such as users' perceptions of literacy-based digital content or institutional strategies for disseminating informational messages (Silverman, 2021). The descriptive orientation was applied to provide a systematic and factual representation of informational-communication activities within Gramedia's digital platforms without manipulating research variables (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2019).

Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with three key informants Gramedia's digital-content manager, digital-marketing staff, and active users of the Gramedia Digital platform to explore directly the marketing strategies and their relation to information-literacy improvement (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2022). Secondary data consisted of industry reports, Gramedia's official websites, and academic publications addressing digital marketing and information literacy (Harrison, Birks & Franklin, 2023). A triangulation of sources was conducted to ensure data validity and minimise interpretative bias (Flick, 2018).

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, focusing on identifying patterns, themes, and relationships between digital marketing strategies and information-literacy aspects. The procedure followed open, axial, and selective coding stages as recommended by Braun & Clarke (2021), allowing the researcher to build conceptual categories from interview transcripts and secondary documents. Validation of findings was achieved through member checking and inter-researcher discussions to maintain interpretative consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This methodological framework is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing can function not merely as a promotional tool but also as an educational medium that strengthens public information literacy

RESULTS

The findings of this study reveal that Gramedia's digital marketing strategy has shifted from a purely promotional focus toward a more educational and participatory approach. Field observations illustrate that Gramedia utilises its digital channels such as Instagram, YouTube, the official website, and the Gramedia Digital app not merely to advertise books but to cultivate a vibrant literacy ecosystem. The visual narratives and textual elements employed in campaigns like #AyoBacaSetiapHari and #BukuUntukSemua carry informative messages that foster literacy awareness among the public. These campaigns are intentionally designed to transform audiences from passive consumers of information into active producers of knowledge who share their perspectives and reflections on the reading materials they engage with. This phenomenon is evident from users who frequently repost Gramedia's content, write short reviews on social media, and participate in online discussions about literacy-related issues.

The collected data indicate that digital interaction between Gramedia and its users is dynamic and reciprocal. Users respond to Gramedia's online posts in multiple ways through reflective comments, inspirational quotes, or independent book reviews demonstrating a fundamental transformation in their information behaviour: from passive readership to active participation in digital information exchange. Most informants acknowledged that Gramedia's literacy-oriented content had successfully nurtured reading habits, strengthened interest in literacy, and stimulated critical thinking skills when navigating digital information. Consequently, Gramedia's digital marketing activities not only enhance audience engagement with the brand but also extend their social function as instruments of learning and information-literacy empowerment.

Data analysis further indicates that the influence of Gramedia's digital marketing on information-literacy development manifests across three key dimensions: informational awareness, evaluative ability, and literacy participation. Informational awareness is reflected in users' heightened attention to content that promotes reading and knowledge exploration. Evaluative ability appears as users demonstrate more critical information behaviour verifying the authenticity of sources, consulting multiple book reviews, and comparing content before purchase. Meanwhile, literacy participation is visible through the growing engagement of Gramedia's digital community in Book Talks, Online Book Discussions, and various hashtag-based reading challenges. These activities transform Gramedia's digital space into a collaborative learning environment where readers exchange ideas and enrich each other's perspectives.

Nevertheless, the study also uncovers several challenges in implementing literacy-oriented digital marketing. The primary obstacle is the gap in users' digital literacy levels. Audiences in areas with limited internet access or insufficient devices face difficulties in using the Gramedia Digital app or engaging with interactive content. Additionally, the content-recommendation system is not yet fully personalised, leaving some users without tailored reading experiences. Internally, the marketing team still concentrates on commercial performance metrics such as engagement rates and traffic rather than evaluating success through information-literacy outcomes. Despite these limitations, the overall results demonstrate that Gramedia's approach has effectively bridged marketing communication with the advancement of public information literacy. In sum, this study highlights that Gramedia's digital marketing strategy has evolved beyond its promotional roots into an educational medium that reinforces Indonesia's digital literacy ecosystem. The company's online initiatives have created a new learning arena in which information, interaction, and inspiration coexist within an integrative communication framework. By engaging users actively and participatively, Gramedia exemplifies how digital technology can be harnessed to enhance public information-literacy awareness and foster a society that is more critical, reflective, and knowledge-oriented.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that Gramedia's digital marketing strategy no longer functions merely as a promotional instrument but as a transformative medium for fostering information literacy and participatory engagement among the public. The active involvement of users in literacy-based campaigns such as *#AyoBacaSetiapHari* illustrates a behavioural shift from passive consumption toward reflective information production. This pattern aligns with Jenkins' (2009) concept of Participatory Culture, which emphasizes that

digital media users are not simply message recipients but active agents in the creation and circulation of meaning. In the context of Library and Information Science (LIS), such participation reflects processes of information creation and knowledge sharing that situate digital communities as dynamic learning ecosystems (Lloyd, 2020). Through its digital channels, Gramedia has operationalized these principles by repositioning its users not merely as consumers but as collaborators in the dissemination of information and literacy.

The strategic meaning of these findings can also be understood through the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy (2016), particularly the frames Information Creation as a Process and Searching as Strategic Exploration. When Gramedia users compare sources, review book credibility, or evaluate the reliability of digital content prior to reading or purchasing, they are essentially embodying the epistemic dimensions of information literacy outlined in that framework. The exploratory behaviour observed within the Gramedia Digital platform represents a form of strategic exploration the reflective and context-sensitive navigation of information environments (Head et al., 2020). In this light, Gramedia's digital marketing strategies contribute indirectly to the development of epistemic literacy skills, enabling users to recognize that each text, review, or promotional message embodies a specific construction of authority and contextual meaning.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study's results strongly resonate with Bruce's (1997) Seven Faces of Information Literacy, especially the information-wise and knowledge construction dimensions. These stages represent advanced forms of literacy in which individuals not only access and evaluate information but also transform it into new knowledge through interpretive engagement. The behaviours observed in Gramedia's digital communities writing reviews, participating in online discussions, and curating personal reading recommendations constitute tangible expressions of these higher-order literacies. Consequently, this study extends Bruce's relational model into the commercial-literacy context of Indonesia, suggesting that non-academic institutions such as Gramedia can serve as informational learning spaces parallel to modern libraries. This contribution expands current LIS discourse by asserting that information literacy can flourish not only in academic settings but also within market-based and participatory digital environments.

From the perspective of digital marketing, the behavioural transformation and participatory engagement revealed in this study align with the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) and the broader paradigm of Marketing 4.0 proposed by Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2017). At the Action stage, users no longer stop at purchase but proceed to Advocacy—sharing experiences, reflections, and book recommendations within their online communities. This evolution signifies the successful integration of social learning into marketing communication. Consistent with Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), effective digital marketing today transcends transactional objectives and fosters meaningful engagement grounded in educational value. The study therefore contributes theoretically by positioning digital marketing as an instructional layer of information services, revealing how promotional communication can simultaneously advance public literacy outcomes.

Nonetheless, several limitations identified in the field deepen the analytical discussion. Disparities in digital literacy among users, insufficient content personalization, and the predominance of commercial performance metrics highlight that information literacy has not

yet been established as a key indicator of digital marketing success. This aligns with Horsfall's (2020) critique that marketing of information services in the digital age must integrate evaluative and educational dimensions rather than rely solely on economic logic. Furthermore, Indonesia's relatively modest digital literacy index (Kominfo, 2024) reinforces the need for collaborative frameworks between commercial literacy institutions, public policy actors, and grassroots literacy movements. Therefore, literacy-oriented marketing strategies should not only shape consumer behaviour but also expand equitable access to knowledge across diverse sociocultural and geographic contexts.

The academic contribution of this study lies in its integration of information-literacy theory and digital-marketing practice within the operational framework of a commercial literacy institution. Conceptually, the findings affirm Lloyd's (2020) proposition that information literacy is a socio-material practice distributed across multiple domains, including market and cultural spaces. Practically, this research offers a model for designing literacy-driven digital campaigns that blend content curation, community activation, and measurable literacy outcomes. Recognizing its limitations such as the small number of participants and the absence of longitudinal behavioural data future studies are encouraged to employ mixed-methods designs, conduct A/B testing on literacy content formats, and perform longitudinal analyses of information-literacy indicators across demographic and regional variations. Overall, this discussion reaffirms that Gramedia's digital marketing strategy embodies a concrete synergy between business communication and the mission of information literacy, thereby enriching both theoretical discourse and applied practice within Library and Information Science in the digital transformation era.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Gramedia's digital marketing strategy has evolved into an effective educational medium that strengthens public information literacy in the digital era. Through participatory content and interactive engagement across multiple digital platforms, Gramedia has successfully shifted users' orientation from passive consumers to active participants within the information-literacy ecosystem. These findings address the study's central aim by demonstrating that digital marketing strategies when designed with educational and collaborative principles can significantly enhance users' awareness, evaluative ability, and literacy participation. Theoretically, this research contributes to the advancement of Library and Information Science by integrating information-literacy frameworks such as the ACRL model and Bruce's relational approach with knowledge-driven digital marketing practices. Practically, the study recommends that literacy institutions, publishers, and libraries adopt digital marketing strategies that prioritise not only audience reach but also the sustainable strengthening of public information-literacy capacities. Future research is encouraged to employ mixed-methods and longitudinal analyses to evaluate the long-term effects of digital campaigns on information-literacy behaviours across diverse demographic and regional contexts.

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