
How far does the Library Association's Domain Extend Its Marketing Strategies? A Content Analysis of India and China

Pr Lanhiamliu
Assistant Librarian,
Martin Luther Christian University,
Shillong – 793006 Meghalaya
Email ID: lanhiamliu@mlcuniv.in

Chanlang Ki Bareh
Assistant Librarian, Central Library,
Nagaland University, Lumami-798627, Nagaland,
Email id: Shanlang88@gmail.com

Abstract

This study analyses the online marketing strategies of library associations in India and China via websites and blogs, applying the four Ps framework—place, promotion, product, and price—to assess digital presence, strengths, and gaps, with the aim of enhancing engagement and strengthening their educational role. Employing qualitative content analysis, it categorises data into accessibility (place), outreach strategies (promotion), services offered (product), and membership details (price) to identify trends and gaps for improving digital marketing. Also scrutinises the digital platforms' role in information dissemination, revealing barriers like usability issues, outdated content, and unclear pricing limit engagement. Further enhancing design, interactive, and targeted promotion can improve user experience, visibility and outreach. This comparative study of India and China highlights best practices, gaps, and actionable insights for enhancing engagement ensuring relevance in the digital era.

Keywords

India; China; Marketing; Libraries; Library Professionals; Library Associations

Electronic access

The journal is available at www.jalis.in
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19587769



Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 15. No.2. 2026. pp.230-236

1. Introduction

Library associations and professionals realise the importance of marketing for professional development and community engagement (Kotler et al., 2012). According to the American Marketing Association (2023), marketing encompasses the activities and processes that deliver value to users and society by focusing on user expectations, service quality, responsiveness, and staff competencies.

Marketing plays an important role in increasing awareness, fostering community involvement, and improving user experience, particularly via websites and social media platforms (Kaur, 2009). A well-designed website promotes services and enhances visibility and credibility. Since library services are user-centred, websites should prioritize user satisfaction over administration needs (Bishop & Rowley, 2012). Social media also support interaction and help libraries understand and respond to their audience (Luo et al., 2013).

The marketing mix framework, originally introduced by McCarthy (1960) as the four Ps– Product, Price, Place, and Promotion – which is a helpful tool for designing library marketing strategies. This approach can be used to attract users and promote services online (Odume & Stella, 2023). Nevertheless, numerous library websites fail to fully leverage these marketing tools, thereby overlooking valuable opportunities to promote library science education and services. This study focuses on how library associations in India and China use a mixed marketing framework as its analytical lens.

1.1 Objective of the Study:

- a) To identify the domain-specific marketing trends in India and China using the four marketing principles for places.
- b) To examine promotional strategies applied by library associations in both countries.
- c) To explore how library associations market their products and pricing online.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing strategies by libraries

Marketing of library services, it involves product design, customer interaction, advertising, and service delivery (Kotler et al., 2012). Websites are key tool

for promoting services and reaching targeted audience. For example, legislative library websites display research outputs and services, aligning with IFLA’s standards for outreach and promotion (Fraser-Arnott, 2011).

Many libraries do not use social media, unlike those in China, are adopting to platform like ‘Douyin’, ‘TikTok’, and ‘WeChat’ for better engagement (Liu et al, 2023). There are other strategies, like blog and newsletters, also helps in promoting library activities. For using this platform, social media requires an effective strategy for choosing appropriate tools and interacting with users (Mensah & Onyancha, 2021).

2.2 Factors that Influence marketing strategies and users’ experiences

Libraries that offer diverse services, easy access, and user-focused communication create better experiences (Kotler et al., 2012). Thus, the library's marketing strategy must align with user needs, with well-designed websites that increase user confidence, and features such as chat and feedback that encourage engagement (Madhusudhan, 2008). These websites should be effective, it should include- an intuitive layout, responsive design, and fast loading to satisfy its users (Garrett, 2011).

Furthermore, integrating the website with social media, interactive catalogues, and personalization features like user accounts can further improve user interaction (Casey & Savastinuk, 2007; Breeding, 2020). Also, information on the activities of libraries like outreach programs, online events, and partnerships, thus enhance community involvement (Goulding, 2006). However, there is always a limitation in areas of funding and staff shortages; marketing is crucial to maintain library relevance in a changing digital landscape (Acharya & Tippanna, 2023).

3. Methodology

The researchers used the quantitative content analysis method of Coe and Scacco (2017) to evaluate information that was readily available in textual or visual features from library associations’ web domains (i.e., websites or blogs). This data collection technique posed no risk as the observed subjects were publicly accessible online (O’Brien et al., 2018). The researchers manually evaluated each digital presence and then quantified the findings.

Prior to analysis, 19 checklists comprising 57 items were developed to ensure consistency across marketing criteria, mapped to McCarthy’s Four P’s - product, price, place, and promotion – within library contexts (see Tables 1-3). Data were collected from Indian and Chinese library associations occurred during February and March 2024.

The sample comprises of 50 library associations - regional (n=7), state (n=12) and national level (n=10) associations – selected for comparable characteristics such as population size, geographical proximity, and research output (see dataset: <https://tinyurl.com/14checklists>). Using the checklist, frequencies and mean percentages were calculated using SPSS to create contingency tables and identifying the strengths and gaps in digital marketing strategies across both countries.

4. Analysis and Interpretations

4.1 Demographic

The demographic of the library associations from both countries is displayed in figure 1. The figure shows that 42 percent of the sample comes from China and 58 percent was represented by India. According to the association types, 62 percent of the sample belongs to state, 12 percent were represented by the national associations and 14 percent from regional associations. On the domain section, 82 percent of the total sample have website, followed by 10 percent with blog, and only 8 percent of the domain with both website and blog.

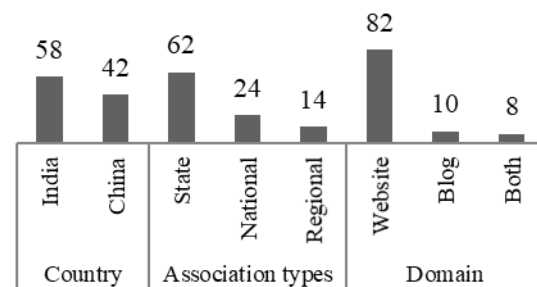


Figure 1. Demographic of the Library Associations

4.2 Marketing Principles for Places

A web domain serves as an essential platform to present the identity, services, and accessibility of library associations. The analysis of the “Place” component, presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Marketing for Places by India and China

Marketing Places	Items	China	India
About page (ABT)	About us or history	21 (100%)	28 (96.6%)
	Vision & mission statement	21 (100%)	21 (100%)
	Testimony (personal/professors/users, etc.)	0 (0.0%)	4 (13.8%)
Discovery service (DIS)	Search box within the domain	11 (52.4%)	6 (20.7%)
	Provision to create/join a special interest group	6 (28.6%)	3 (10.3%)
	Search engine marketing tools (e.g., Pop-up notification, SEO tools, etc)	1 (4.8%)	1 (3.4%)
Communications (COM)	Website subscription or RSS feed	7 (33.3%)	15 (51.7)
	Online helpdesk assistance/chat service/discussion forum	4 (19%)	4 (13.8%)
	Contact info. like email/address/phone no.	21 (100%)	29 (100%)
Social media (SOC)	Bookmarking facility	17 (81%)	21 (72.4%)
	Social media icons embed on the domain	7 (33.3%)	15 (51.7%)
	Highlight popular social media post or campaign	1 (4.8%)	2 (6.9%)
Security & Privacy (SNP)	Cookie or privacy policy	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Collect data sites and store cookies	10 (47.6%)	13 (44.8%)
	Secure the domain by employing secure https	11 (52.4%)	16 (55.2%)

Source: data collected from the website

Most associations in India (69%) and China (66.6%) share establishment details and mission statements, showing a common focus on basic institutional transparency. Discovery features are stronger in China (52.4% vs. 20.7%), suggesting higher emphasis on navigability, though both countries show weak investment in optimisation tools.

India leads in communication through subscriptions and RSS feeds (51.7% vs. 33.3%), indicating stronger efforts to maintain user engagement, while both ensure universal access to contact details. However, social media use shows contrasting priorities: China favours bookmarking (81% vs 72.45%), while India

emphasises direct integration through social icons (51.7% vs 33.3%).

Privacy and security remain underdeveloped in both, with no published policies and only about half of the sites using cookies and HTTPS, reflecting limited attention to digital safety.

4.2 Marketing principle for promotions

Table 2 displays the promotions of the library association activities of both countries, India and China.

Table 2: Promotions by India and China

Promotional marketing	Items	China	India
LIS events (EVN)	Post LIS (self)	16 (76.2%)	24 (82.8%)
	Post LIS (others)	10 (47.6%)	8 (27.6%)
	Dedicated webpage for library events	6 (28.6%)	23 (79.3%)
LIS news/ads (ADS)	Post LIS news/ads (self)	17 (81%)	20 (69%)
	Post LIS news/ads (others)	13 (61.9%)	10 (34.5%)
	Promote online marketing (Eg., email/social media campaign, etc.)	5 (23.8%)	14 (48.3%)
Job guidance	Provide job guidance to freshers	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

(JOB)	Provide placement assistance	2 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)
	Offer internship	3 (14.3%)	3 (10.3%)
Awards (AWD)	Awards to professionals	5 (23.8%)	16 (55.2%)
	Awards to libraries	2 (9.5%)	4 (13.8%)
	Offer distinguished honour to contributors/members	5 (23.8%)	15 (51.7%)
Community engagement (CEN)	Engagement with local community	15 (71.4%)	17 (58.6%)
	Engage with community libraries	16 (76.2%)	22 (75.9%)
	Engage with National/International community	16 (76.2%)	22 (75.9%)
Funding (FUN)	Sponsor library events in any forms	16 (76.2%)	25 (86.2%)
	Offer financial support for professional growth	11 (52.4%)	13 (44.8%)
	Receive internal/external funding to support self	14 (66.7%)	20 (69%)
Transparency (TSP)	Publish annual report	2 (9.5%)	4 (13.8%)
	Guidelines or policies for the selection of executive/honour members	10 (47.6%)	10 (34.5%)
	Guidelines or policies for administrative or financial auditing	9 (42.9%)	10 (34.5%)

Source: data collected from the website

Indian associations emphasise visibility and recognition, with strong event promotion (82.8% own events, 79.3% dedicated pages) and higher use of modern promotional tools like emails and social media (48.3%). They also lead in professional recognition, offering awards (55.2%) and honors (51.7%), supported mainly through event sponsorship (86.2%). In contrast, Chinese associations focus on broader aspects, sharing more external events (46.6%) and advertisements (61.9%), while providing greater financial support for professional development (52.4%). Community engagement is strong in both contexts, though slightly higher in China (71.4%). Transparency remains a shared weakness, with few annual reports and limited disclosure of governance policies, indicating that while India prioritizes visibility and recognition, China emphasizes outreach and professional growth.

4.3 Marketing Principle for Products and Pricing

Membership is more open in India (72.4%) than in China (52.4%), with Indian associations also offering stronger member benefits (62.1% vs 38.1%). Pricing models are common in both India 96.6%, China 76.2%), but membership fees are rare, limiting inclusivity. Study material access is comparable, though China leads in e-resources (57.1% vs. 51.7%) and audio visual content (42.9% vs. 20.7%). Both

countries provide about half of these materials free, reflecting some commitment to open access.

Publications are modest but slightly stronger in India. Journals are published by about half of the associations in both, but newsletters are more common in India (58.6% vs. 33.3%). Open-access publishing is also more prevalent in India, while Chinese associations rely more on pricing models.

Educational offerings are limited, with certificate or diploma programs present in only about one-fifth of associations in both countries. Training programmes are more frequent in China (52.4% vs. 34.5%), but pricing models in both restrict wider access. Furthermore, technology adoption is weak in both contexts. App appears in only about 14% associations, and AI tools are almost absent, indicating minimal digital innovation.

Scholarship and grants remain scarce, with only two associations in each country offering scholarships and slightly more professional grants (China 19%, India 10.3%). However, in research engagement, China shows clear strength, with 61.9% of associations undertaking projects compared to 31% in India, and more opportunities extended to members (42.9% vs. 20.7%).

Table 3. Product and Pricing in India and China

Product & Pricing marketing	Items	China	India
Membership (MEM)	Membership open to all	11 (52.4%)	21 (72.4%)
	Exclusive access to contents for members	8 (38.1%)	18 (62.1%)

	Pricing models for membership	16 (76.2%)	28 (96.6%)
Study materials (STM)	Link to LIS e-books/e-journals (self & others)	12 (57.1%)	15 (51.7%)
	Link to LIS audio-visual materials (self & others)	9 (42.9%)	6 (20.7%)
	Pricing models for study materials	10 (47.6%)	14 (48.3%)
Publications (PUB)	Offer journal publication	10 (47.6%)	15 (51.7%)
	Offer e-newsletter or e-zines	7 (33.3%)	17 (58.6%)
	Pricing models for journal publication	9 (42.9%)	17 (58.6%)
Education & training (EDU)	Offer certificate or diploma programmes	4 (19%)	6 (20.7%)
	Give LIS training programmes	11 (52.4%)	10 (34.5%)
	Pricing models for these training programmes	8 (38.1%)	9 (31%)
AI tools/apps (APP)	Offer an apps	3 (14.3%)	4 (13.8%)
	Embed AI tools (E.g., Federated search, Audio translator, etc.)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.4%)
	Pricing models for Apps/AI tools	1 (4.8%)	3 (10.3%)
Scholarship (SCH)	Offer scholarship to freshers	2 (9.5%)	2. (6.9%)
	Offer grants to working professionals	4 (19%)	3 (10.3%)
	Offer scholarships/grants given to either fresher’s/professional’s	4 (19%)	3 (10.3%)
Research projects (RES)	Post about research projects	13 (61.9%)	6 (20.7%)
	Undertake LIS research projects	13 (61.9%)	9 (31%)
	Invite/Grant research projects	9 (42.9%)	6 (20.7%)

Source: retrieved from the website of the library association

Table 3 clearly shows the differences between India and China in product and pricing. India offers greater accessibility and structured pricing in memberships and publications, while China leads in research and scholarship. However, both lag in education and training, highlighting distinct priorities in professional development.

5. Discussion and Limitations

The quantitative content analysis revealed both strengths and shortcomings in how these associations engage users through their online domains using the 4Ps marketing strategy.

5.1 Place

The digital presence of library associations is central to member engagement and access to content. Indian associations show greater inclusivity (72.4% open membership vs China’s 52.4%), stronger member benefits through exclusive, content access (62.1% vs. 38.1%), reflecting a focus on value-driven membership, while China lags in member- oriented services.

Resource accessibility is comparable between e-books and e-journals (China 57.1%, India 51.7%), but China outperforms in audio-visual content (42.9% vs. 20.7%), reflecting more diverse strategies. Both countries show weak technological adoption, with

minimal app service (≈14%) and negligible AI integration.

Professional development support is critically low. Only two associations in each country offer scholarships, while grants remain limited (19% in China, 10.3% in India), with equally few platforms dedicated to such opportunities. This neglect of financial support for professional development undermines long-term capacity-building.

5.2 Price

Membership strategies show wider adoption in India (96.6%) than China (72.2%), with only six associations overall offering free enrolment, affirming a fee-based orientation. Study materials reflect moderate open access, with nearly half of associations in both countries providing free options (India 48.3%), China 47.6%). Journal access follows a similar trend, though more Indian associations offer free access (58.6%) compared to China (42.9%); fully open-access journals remain limited to 7 (in India, 3 in China). Training programmes mostly follow cost-recovery model, particularly in China (38.1%) versus to India (31%). Digital innovation lags significantly, with free tools offered by the Indian (3) and the Chinese (1) associations reflecting an early stage of technology adoption.

5.3 Product

Both countries position scholarly publishing and professional development as key functions. Journal output is moderate, with near parity between China (47.6%) and India (51.7%). India, however, shows stronger emphasis on continuous engagement through newsletters or e-magazines (58.6% vs. 33.3%). Formal academic programmes remain rare, offered by only about one-fifth of associations in each country. Skill-building diverges, with China prioritising training (52.4% vs. India's 34.5%). Research involvement is where Chinese associations clearly outpace India – 61.9% report projects and updates, 42.9% secure or grant research initiatives, compared to India's 20.7% and 31%, highlighting a more research-oriented culture in China.

5.4 Promotion

Promotional practices in both countries reveal a nuanced pattern in publication activity and in research visibility. Newsletters or magazine publications are more common in India, suggesting stronger communication and outreach to members. In contrast, Chinese associations are more active in training and conducting research projects, highlighting their research capabilities, institutional relevance, and contributions to the field.

The overall result of the principles of promotions illustrates a different interpretation. The Chinese counterpart appears to focus on showcasing the scholarly output and research leadership, while the Indian associations emphasise frequent and accessible communication. Though both countries' associations contribute to visibility and engagement through distinct strategies.

5.5 Limitations

There are several limitations that should be acknowledged while interpreting the findings of this study are:

- a) Firstly, the dataset for the Chinese library associations may be incomplete, as the identification of the associations relied on the assistance of a local scholar. Due to this, there may be an omission of some relevant associations. Also, a number of web domains were either inactive or inaccessible during the data collection period, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the analysis.
- b) In this study, 19 checklist items were employed, in alignment with the four Ps of marketing; the dynamic and multifaceted nature of digital

marketing could not be fully captured within this framework. Features such as user experiences, web interactivity, content quality, and long-term engagement were outside the scope of this analysis.

- c) Lastly, the focus on two countries limits the cross-cultural applicability of the findings.

6. Conclusion

This study presents a comparative analysis of how library associations in India and China adopt digital marketing strategies based on the Four Ps. Through a systematic content analysis of publicly available resources such as websites, the finding offers a detailed landscape of digital presence and strategic engagement by library associations in both nations

The results show that Indian library associations excel in free membership policies, digital publishing, and promotional events, while China display strength in navigability, access to study materials, and visibility of research activities. Both, however, reveal significant gaps in areas such as AI integration, open-access resources, and financial transparency. These insights contribute to the growing discourse on digital transformation within professional associations, particularly in the library sector, where online visibility is critical for advocacy, networking, and knowledge dissemination. Importantly, the study reaffirms that digital marketing in the library context must go beyond basic web presence and embrace user-oriented, innovative, and inclusive strategies.

References

- 1) Acharya, S. K., & Tippanna, V. (2023). Library services marketing: An overview of strategies and outcomes. *IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology*, 8(1), 1–4.
- 2) American Marketing Association. (2023, May 9). *What is marketing? — The definition of marketing — AMA*. <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>
- 3) Bishop, T., & Rowley, J. (2012). Digital marketing in independent libraries in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 45(4), 323–334.
- 4) Breeding, M. (2020). *Library systems report 2020*. American Libraries.
- 5) Casey, M. E., & Savastinuk, L. C. (2007). *Library 2.0: A guide to participatory library service*. *Information Today*.

- 6) Coe, K., & Scacco, J. M. (2017). Content analysis, quantitative. In J. Matthes, C. S. Davis, & R. F. Potter (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods*.
- 7) Fraser-Arnott, M. (2020). The marketing mix in parliamentary library websites. *Journal of Library Administration, 60*(8), 875–888.
- 8) Garrett, J. J. (2011). *The elements of user experience: User-centered design for the web and beyond*. New Riders.
- 9) Goulding, A. (2006). Public libraries in the 21st century: Defining services and debating the future. Ashgate.
- 10) Kaur, K. (2009). Marketing the academic library on the web. *Library Management, 30*(6–7), 454–468.
- 11) Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., Tan, C. T., Ang, S. H., & Leong, S. M. (2012). *Marketing management: An Asian perspective*. Pearson Education.
- 12) Liu, Y., Chiu, D. K. W., & Ho, K. K. W. (2023). Short-form videos for public library marketing: Performance analytics of Douyin in China. *Applied Sciences, 13*(6), 3386.
- 13) Luo, L., Wang, Y., & Han, L. (2013). Marketing via social media: A case study. *Library Hi Tech, 31*(3), 455–466.
- 14) Madhusudhan, M. (2008). Marketing of library and information services and products in university libraries: A case study of Goa University Library. *Library Philosophy and Practice, 175*.
- 15) McCarthy, E. J. (1960). *Basic marketing: A managerial approach*. Irwin.
- 16) Mensah, M., & Onyancha, O. B. (2021). A social media strategy for academic libraries. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 47*, 102462.
- 17) O'Brien, P., Young, S. W., Arlitsch, K., & Benedict, K. (2018). Protecting privacy on the web. *Online Information Review, 42*(5), 734–751.
- 18) Odume, N., & Stella, N. C. (2023). Application of place and promotion marketing strategies to library and information services in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Journal of Management and Science, 13*(2), 77–83.