

Significance of Digital Marketing Initiatives to Reap the Harvest of Digital Transformation of Higher Education Institutions in India with Special Emphasis on Academic Libraries from the Perspective of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

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The higher education institutions in India are transforming their activities with the help of digital technologies. The competitive educational landscape is forcing the higher education institutions to fit themselves with the modern technology-driven world where the interest of the stakeholders of these institutions will be fulfilled. In higher education scenario, digital transformation means using technology to boost learning, streamline operations and processes, and enhance student experience. This helps in introducing online courses, learning management systems, virtual campus services, and data analytics for student outcomes. To make prominent online presence of these institutions they resort to digital marketing. Digital marketing refers to using online channels to promote the institutions, engage students, and drive enrolments. Digital marketing boosts brand awareness, attracts prospects, and enhances student experience. For successful digital transformation digital marketing initiatives emerge as a strategic necessity. Higher education institutions are taking steps for introducing digital marketing initiatives to enhance their visibility so that they can attract their stakeholders. Digital transformation and digital marketing of higher education institutions are interlinked to get a holistic result from the educational organisation's transformation perspective in this present competitive digital age. This present paper will explore the interconnectedness of these two concepts. It explores the critical role that digital marketing plays in the successful digital transformation of higher education institutions in India with a specific focus on how it aligns with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council parameters particularly in governance, outreach, innovation, and institutional best practices. Role of academic libraries of higher education institutions is dealt with in this context. This paper concludes by recommending integrated strategies for digital marketing as a core component of institutional digital transformation in the Indian higher education context. The paper involves theoretical exploration of the concept so far as the methodology is concerned.

Keywords: digital marketing, digital transformation, interconnectedness of digital transformation and digital marketing, higher education institutions, national assessment and accreditation council, india

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1. Introduction

In this present era of technological advancement every organisation (whether profit making or non-profit making) resorts to digital transformation. Digital transformation in higher education is not a choice but a necessity in today's interconnected technology-driven world. Indian higher education institutions must now reimagine themselves as student-centric, and digitally empowered ecosystems. Digital transformation happens mainly in the areas of technology and infrastructure, processes, people and skills, strategy and organisational structure and culture (Cockburn, 2024). Higher education institutions are also transforming their activities in this digital age giving emphasis on digital infrastructure, e-learning and digital content creation, data management and analytics, administrative digitisation, equity and accessibility, and human capital development (Fernandez et al., 2023). Main objectives behind this digital transformation of higher education institutions are to prepare students for a technology-rich society by enhancing access to education with equity which, in turn, uplifts the quality of higher education in India. The concept of marketization is also a driving force which is, again, the result of high competition irrespective of the nature of the organisations -- be it a profit making or non-profit making. So, to survive in this crucial juncture of tough competition every organisation thrives to transform their whole activities taking the advantage of technological development. Digital transformation is a broader aspect. It deals with digitized governance, learning management systems, virtual labs, and online learning platforms. Digital marketing acts as a connector between institutions and their internal and external stakeholders. The external and internal stakeholders include students, alumni, national and international collaborators. Digital marketing initiatives will be at the heart of this transformation. Digital marketing can be regarded as a powerful tool that enables higher education institutions to communicate their value proposition effectively in a crowded and competitive market. Digital marketing discusses about brand promotion and brand positioning. In education sector brand promotion refers to the application of strategic steps to include marketing and communication initiatives of an educational organisation for establishing a unique identity to differentiate itself in a competitive world.

Brand positioning is the long-term decision making on what one entity wants to be known for; it answers the question – "Why You Choose Us?". Digital transformation and digital marketing in higher education are interlinked and they complement each other. To yield the harvest of digital transformation higher education institutions must resort to digital marketing to attract the prospects to utilize the resources to the fullest extent.

This present paper describes the critical role that digital marketing plays in the successful digital transformation of higher education institutions in India with a specific focus on how it aligns with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council parameters particularly in governance, outreach, innovation, and institutional best practices. Here in this context the role of academic libraries of higher education institutions are discussed. It concludes by recommending integrated strategies for digital marketing as a core component of institutional digital transformation in the Indian higher education context.

2. Literature Review

Sony Kuriakose and N. K. Nikhil (2025) highlighted on the aspects like academic autonomy, shared governance, etc in the Indian higher Education landscape with respect to the draft of UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff) Regulations, 2025 that showed significant shift for the Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in India to ensure the effective implementation of National Education Policy 2020.

Vesna N Baltezarevic (2023) described that digital marketing concept helps education institutions reach, inform, and recruit students more effectively. According to him, the education sector is forced to approach innovative methods to ensure visibility and competitive advantage as well as for promotional messages to reach the targeted group.

S. Sadikov (2025) showed in his research that Uzbek higher education is rapidly digitalising and becoming more financially autonomous. As a result, it increases competition and there is the need for strong institutional positioning which necessitates for digital marketing initiatives.

Dr. C.N. Jasmine and D. Kissvar (2025) stressed on

digital marketing in higher education institutions in India. It can enhance student engagement, public reputation, and market position.

Samuel G. Rajkumar and others (2022) pointed out that ethically designed transparent digital marketing affects students' higher education enrolment decisions in southern India.

A. Comai (2025) emphasized on building organisation capabilities to make digital marketing initiatives effective for higher education.

Pawan Kumar and Ravi K. Modi (2025) described digital marketing a promotional tool as well as a strategic necessity in the present Indian higher education scenariowhere competitive landscape emerges.

Seong-Won Eum (2025) explained that digital marketing in higher education affects both departmental awareness and students' choice.

Dhote and others (2015) explained that the Indian students relied on digital marketing while taking decisions for their higher education. They argued that scrutinizing the authenticity of online educational claims is necessary before making crucial academic choices.

V. Gondane and M. Pawar (2021) in their research showed the impact of digital marketing in the education sector.

Melovic et al., (2020) showed in their research paper that digital transformation and digital marketing had impact on brand promotion and positioning.

E. N. Sheremetyeva, L. N. Gorshkova, and N. V. Mitropolskaya (2021) described that digital marketing is a key component of a digital university transforming educational processes and enhancing the reputation of modern innovative universities.

Shefa Al Sou'b and Khaled Al Shawabkeh (2025) pointed out that digital marketing and digital transformation are closely related with digital marketing benefiting from digital transformation and marketing domains benefiting from digitization.

3. Statement of the Problem

From the literature review the researcher got several research papers dealing with digital transformation in the area of higher education.

Numerous papers are dealing with digital marketing in higher education too. But digital transformation and digital marketing of higher education institutions are interlinked to get a holistic result from the educational organisation's transformation perspective in this present competitive digital age. This present paper will explore the interconnectedness of these two concepts to throw light on the significance of digital marketing to get a holistic result out of digital transformation process of the Indian higher education institutions with giving emphasis on the role of academic libraries in this context.

4. Objective of the Study

The present paper aims:

1. to explore the concepts of digital transformation and digital marketing.
2. to understand these concepts in the context of higher education institutions where interconnectedness of these two concepts is dealt with.
3. to explore different ways and significance of digital marketing initiatives to get success in the digital transformation processes of higher education institutions in India.
4. to suggest different recommendations regarding digital marketing strategies keeping in mind the role of academic libraries with respect to the NAAC parameters used in evaluating higher education institutions in India.

5. Methodology

The paper is based on primary sources of information like research papers published in this context. It is a theoretical exploration where the significance of digital marketing initiatives is discussed in the context of digital transformation of higher education institutions in India from the perspective of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with special emphasis on the role of academic libraries.

6. Scope of the Study

Higher education institutions are taken into consideration keeping in mind the seven criteria of the NAAC used in the evaluation processes of the HEIs in India. The NAAC manual for affiliated/constituent UG & PG colleges are taken for

discussion in the present paper as appeared in the NAAC portal.

7. Digital Transformation and Digital Marketing in Indian Higher Education Context

Digital transformation of higher education institutions in India refers to the process of using technology for changing the fundamental activities of the institutions to run, teach, and serve students in this digital era. These fundamental activities include teaching and learning, administration and governance, research and collaboration, and student services.

Teaching & Learning: Introduction of online blended classes is emphasised. Platforms like SWAYAM, NPTEL, and institutional LMS platforms like Moodle for delivering lectures, assignments, and exams are to be incorporated for smooth running of academic flow.

Digital pedagogy enhances teaching and learning not merely using technology as a substitute for traditional tools, but to design new interactive educational experiences. It encompasses technology, pedagogy (teaching methods) and content. Here active and collaborative learning is focussed.

Personalized learning with the help of analytics to track individual student progress is given emphasis.

Administration & Governance: Initiatives for introducing and sustaining ERP systems in the areas like admission, fees, attendance, results, etc through adapting digital technologies should be followed. ABC i.e. Academic Bank of Credits and data submission to the national body like NAAC and NIRF are need of the hour in this context.

Research & Collaboration: For the achievement of academic excellence research and collaboration are to be given extreme importance. Global classrooms for running twinning programs and virtual exchanges with foreign universities are examples in the research and collaboration area. Creation of digital libraries and providing remote access to top quality content bring synergetic effort to enhance research and collaboration. Cloud computing instead of using on-campus servers is becoming the backbone technology to handle scale, research, and online learning.

Handling scale, in this context, means the system can keep working smoothly even when a huge number of users, data, or requests at it. UGC encourages HEIs to migrate to NIC's cloud under "Digital India". High Performance Computing (HPC) i.e. supercomputer clusters compete in this global cutting-edge research atmosphere where PhD students in India can run simulations.

Student Services: For quick and smooth retrieval of degrees, transcripts and certificates integration of technologies like DigiLocker, AI chatbots 24*7 query resolution for admission, and automated job matching portals and arrangement for virtual interviews are to be included for bringing digital transformation of higher education institutions in India.

NEP 2020 and UGC mandates are driving it. However, some challenges include digital divide, cost, faculty training, and data privacy.

Digital marketing refers to the strategic use of online platforms and digital channels - social media, websites, search engines, content marketing, email campaigns, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), paid advertisements, and analytics - to attract, engage, and convert potential stakeholders. In higher education it serves multiple purposes:

- **Brand positioning:** Brand positioning in higher education institutions involves creating a unique Identity and value proposition to differentiate themselves from other institutions and appeal to prospective students, faculty, and stakeholders.
- **Brand promotion:** It refers to the application of strategic steps to include marketing and communication initiatives of the educational organisation. It aims to establish unique identity to differentiate itself in a competitive world.
- **Student recruitment:** Student recruitment in digital marketing of higher education institutions involves leveraging online channels to attract and engage prospective students.
- **Showcasing institutional success stories and events:** This will build credibility by making strong online presence, attract prospects i.e., students, and engage stakeholders.
- **Promoting institutional academic and research programs:** HEIs will showcase the institutions' expertise, resources, and opportunities to attract students, faculty, and industry partners.

- Improving institutional visibility: Optimising websites for search engines, increasing online visibility, creating engaging, informative, and relevant contents, making social media presence, and online reviews, HEIs can formulate digital marketing strategies to supplement the digital transformation processes of the HEIs.
- Alumni engagement: Digital marketing needs a strong network of the ex-students of the HEIs to help institutional growth. Alumni should be active in social media platforms. They can create website, online communities, arrange virtual events, and social media campaigns to support their alma mater.

Benefits of Digital Marketing in Higher Education

- Increased visibility and brand reputation
- Higher student enrolment through targeted outreach
- Improved stakeholder engagement
- Data analytics to measure impact and improve strategies
- Enhanced international collaboration opportunities

Digital Marketing for HEIs in India – The Key Components

- Website Optimization: User-friendly, informative, and SEO-optimized website is the cornerstone of digital marketing. It should include program details, admission guidelines, placement statistics, testimonials, research, and faculty profiles, and NAAC accreditation status.
- Social Media Marketing: Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter are essential for promoting events and conferences, sharing academic content and news, celebrating student and faculty achievements, and live interactions and feedback.
- Email and Newsletter campaigns: Regular newsletters serve to keep students, parents, and alumni updated, building trust and engagement.

- Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization: Search engine marketing is a digital marketing strategy that involves promoting websites by increasing their visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs) through paid advertising. Organic Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility and ranking of a website in search engine results pages (SERPs) through non-paid methods. On-page optimization, content creation, link building, technical optimisation, and local SEO are methods of organic search engine optimization for improving websites' visibility in search engine results pages. SEO and SEM are two digital marketing strategies used to increase online visibility and drive traffic to a website.
- Content marketing: Content is the backbone of digital marketing. Higher education institutions can publish blogs by faculty and students, video lectures or demo classes, research summaries and campus tour videos.
- Webinars and virtual events: Digital events provide opportunities to showcase institution's programs, interact with prospects and offer sample academic experiences.

Significance of Digital Marketing Initiatives for the Success of Digital Transformation in the Indian Higher Education Scenario

Digital transformation and digital marketing are interconnected and they complement each other in the Indian higher education scenario. Digital transformation is need of the hour in India to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat by the year 2047, the 100th anniversary of Indian independence. India is now in the transition phase to become a developed country from the status of developing one. Viksit Bharat 2047 is India's vision to get holistic development in the areas of its economy, education, healthcare, communication, and other allied fields. So far as higher education in India is concerned, digital transformation is needed for the following reasons:

- Spreading education for all
- Ease of access for the whole nation to all types of education
- Inclusive growth irrespective of all sorts of hurdles
- Self-reliant India

At the micro level educational initiatives should move toward fulfilment of these objectives. So, higher education institutions in India bears the responsibility of aligning their activities with a view to fulfil the national objectives where digital transformation will play a crucial role for the HEIs.

Digital marketing starts with the finished products of digital transformation processes. To have holistic well-being of the HEIs (at micro level) as well as for the well-being of the nation (at macro level) they should not restrict their activities only on digital transformation processes. They should go farther to embrace digital marketing initiatives for a greater exposure to prove their individual uniqueness which ultimately helps the HEIs to reap the harvest of digital transformation.

So, what these finished products are from digital transformation process- these are actual platforms, systems, and services that students and staff of the HEIs are using today.

Digital marketing for higher education institutions should care for seven Cs (as developed by marketing scholars Jeffrey F. Rayport and Bernard J. Jaworski in 2001) - customer (centricity) i.e., different stakeholders, content (valuable info) i.e., educational and other ancillary outputs, context (relevance), community (engagement), convenience (ease of use), cohesion or consistency (unified message), and conversion (turning leads to sales i.e. student enrolment). These seven Cs of digital marketing provide a framework for online success, guide higher education institutions to build strong digital strategies that resonate with audiences, foster loyalty, and drive measurable results by understanding user needs and delivering seamless experiences. Initiatives like SWAYAM, PMeVIDYA, SWAYAM PRABHA, etc of the Government of India are expanding educational access pan India showing the digital path of learning. India's higher education digital transformation highlights rapid technology adoption, strong government push to embrace inclusion.

8. Areas Where the NAAC Evaluates Higher Education Institution Activities

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council play a vital role in evaluating the quality of higher education institutions in India.

The NAAC assessment criteria are divided into the following seven key areas:

1. Curricular aspects
2. Teaching-learning, and evaluation
3. Research, innovations, and extension
4. Infrastructure and learning resources
5. Student support and progression
6. Governance, leadership, and management
7. Institutional values and best practices.

9. How Digital Marketing Supports NAAC Evaluation Parameters

When digital transformation of the HEI is carried out, the HEI concerned should follow the path of digital marketing to yield the harvest of digital transformation. Digital marketing aligns particularly well with the above-mentioned criteria of the NAAC offering measurable, scalable, and cost-effective methods to improve outreach, stakeholder engagement, and institutional reputation.

Criterion 1: Curricular aspects: Industry-friendly contemporary curriculum, dynamic delivery, creating educational apps, interactive multimedia resources, etc are the catalysts for digital marketing initiatives. Curriculum design and planning will throw light on the development of real-world needs.

Criterion 2: Teaching-learning, and evaluation: Technology-driven LMS (Learning Management Systems), instant feedback mechanism, transparent evaluation processes, personalised learning should be the key aspects which will help institutional digital marketing endeavour.

Criterion 3: Research, Innovations, and Extension: The higher education institutions should promote faculty and student research outputs via digital platforms (e.g., Google Scholar, ResearchGate, institutional websites). These can use blogs, podcasts, and videos to explain ongoing innovations. These can also share extension and outreach activities on social media to showcase community engagement.

Criterion 4: Infrastructure and learning resources: Financial resources utilised by the HEIs shows expenditure on libraries and laboratories. State-of-the-art libraries and laboratories are needed for strengthening institution's digital marketing initiatives.

Digital library and open educational resources will ease the access mechanism for learning resources.

Criterion 5: Student support and progression: Digital marketing initiatives help in making email campaigns and webinars to communicate scholarships, placements, and career services. Real time updates about admission process and academic calendars are also available. It can also help in alumni engagement through LinkedIn and digital newsletters.

Criterion 6: Governance, Leadership, and Management: Digital marketing initiatives help the higher education institutions for this parameter by providing data-driven decision making through digital analytics, transparent communication via website and portals, and branding leadership initiatives and vision through digital storytelling.

Criterion 7: Institutional values and Best Practices: Digital marketing initiatives can play a significant role in respect of this criterion. Institutional values like gender equity drive, green campus, and other best practices and success stories will get reflected in the form of annual reports which can be properly digitised.

10. Role of Libraries in Accelerating the Digital Marketing Initiatives of the Higher Education Institutions

As an integral part of the higher education institutions academic libraries must take care of the digital transformation processes of the HEIs. Criterion 4 of the NAAC evaluation parameters viz., infrastructure and learning resources emphasizes on the facilities provided by the libraries. With traditional services like print book lending, providing reading spaces for reference, computer facility, etc. digital services for the users should be ensured. Digital transformation should take place for the other departments of the HEIs as well as for the constituent library simultaneously. After the transformation, which is rather an ongoing process, of the whole entity, the HEIs should adopt digital marketing initiatives. Digital transformation will facilitate digital marketing efforts.

Constituent library should continue the digital transformation of its different activities which include the following:

- Acquisition sub-system
- Cataloguing sub-system
- Circulation sub-system
- Report generation sub-system
- Feedback mechanism

Various internationally acclaimed software is now available in the market to execute the above sub-system which will ultimately help in digital transformation process of the library. Besides, provision of digital databases, e-books, e-journals, building institutional digital repository, real-time online public access catalogue, automatic email alert service, research support tools, e.g. plagiarism checker software, reference tools, etc. should be made to ensure digital transformation of the library concerned.

Digital marketing measures of the library and information services to support the HEI include the following:

- Social media marketing
- Content marketing
- Search engine optimization
- Email marketing
- Digital reference and information services
- Data analytics

11. Recommendations for NAAC-aligned Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital marketing yields several advantages. However, Indian higher education institutions are facing the following hurdles.

- Limited budgets for marketing in public institutions
- Lack of trained personnel
- Inconsistent branding strategies
- Resistance to change among administrators

To overcome the above challenges higher education institutions should upskill internal staff with digital marketing training. These institutions can collaborate with edtech companies and consultants. They must create a unified institutional marketing policy with dedicated funds in institutional budgets. The following recommendations regarding pursuing digital marketing initiatives will be made effective for a successful digital transformation of the HEIs in India:

- Evaluation of current digital presence: HEIs conduct audit for existing platforms, branding and user experience.
- Creation of digital marketing cell which will include faculty, students, IT experts and communication professionals.
- Aligning digital content with NAAC metrics: HEIs will create digital evidence (videos, reports, dashboards) for assessment.
- Analytics for reporting: These institutions will use analytics for reporting to track web traffic, social media engagement, and student conversion rates. Student conversion rates in digital marketing measure how many website visitors (potential students) take a desired action, like signing up for info or enrolling, out of the total visitors, typically calculated as Conversions divided by total visitors, taken as a percentage measure.
- Digital literacy programs to train stakeholders on content creation, branding, and ethical communication.
- Showcasing accreditation and achievements to display NAAC status and institutional accolades prominently online.
- Each of Access will be there to design inclusive websites for differently-abled users and offer multilingual content.

12. Conclusion

According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (2025) India's higher education system is comprised of 1386 universities and 53074 colleges. However, it faces the following challenges:

- Regional disparities in respect of access to digital facilities

- Traditional marketing approaches undertaken for branding and outreach
- Inadequate marketing infrastructure
- Slow adoption of educational technologies

The COVID - 19 pandemic exposed the digital divide but also served as a catalyst for digital innovation in education. HEIs' digital transformation acts as a driver of social oriented innovations (Kaputa et al., 2022). It can improve individual skills in the new knowledge society. It acts as catalyst in the way of reducing costs related to education. Institutions that adapted swiftly stood out - most notably those that invested in digital branding, communication, and outreach.

Participating in the ranking agency's evaluation processes can be treated as a major digital marketing initiatives in the present digital age. Because the concerned agency's website reflects information regarding participating HEIs' working. Information like 'median salary of placed graduates per annum' reflecting, for example, in the NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework) website based on the submitted data of the participating HEIs will surely attract students to make the conversion rate higher of such HEIs.

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill 2025 aims to establish a regulatory body for higher education where higher education institutions' digital transformation as well as digital marketing initiatives will be playing a significant role in shaping the total education scenario in India. Future discussion in this regard will take a bigger place in academia.

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