Chapter 8

Utilising Content Marketing Metrics and Social Networks for Academic Visibility: Content Marketing for Academic Impact

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous assumptions on research evaluation in terms of quality and relevance of academic contributions. Researchers are becoming increasingly acquainted with bibliometric indicators, including; citation analysis, impact factor, h-index, webometrics and academic social networking sites. In this light, this chapter presents a review of these concepts as it considers relevant theoretical underpinnings that are related to the content marketing of scholars. Therefore, this contribution critically evaluates previous papers that revolve on the subject of academic reputation as it deliberates on the individual researchers’ personal branding. It also explains how metrics are currently being used to rank the academic standing of journals as well as higher educational institutions. In a nutshell, this chapter implies that the scholarly impact depends on a number of factors including accessibility of publications, peer review of academic work as well as social networking among scholars.

INTRODUCTION

Academic contributions start from concepts and ideas. When their content is of a high quality and is relevant to other scholars, they could be published in renowned, peer-reviewed journals. Many researchers are resorting to online full text databases, institutional repositories or online open access journals in order to disseminate their findings. The internet has brought an increased engagement among peers, over email or video communications. In addition, the web and online academic networks have surely helped to enhance the fruitful and collaborative relationships among researchers. Notwithstanding, researchers are increasingly sharing their knowledge with colleagues as they
present their papers in seminars and conferences. After publication, their contributions may then be cited by other scholars, including students.

The researchers’ visibility does not solely rely on the number of publications they produce. Both academic researchers as well as their institutions are continuously being under scrutiny as they are rated and classified by independent reviewers. Very often citations appear in publications in highly reputable journals or well-linked homepages that promote scholarly content (Thelwall, 2008, 2009; Bonzi & Snyder, 1991). Publications are usually ranked through bibliometrics that assess the individual researchers as well as their organisational performance (Thelwall, 2008; Delgado López-Cózar, Robinson-García & Torres-Salinas, 2014). Such metrics measure the effectiveness of academic publications. Citation analysis, impact factor (IF), h-index, webometric analysis, altimetrics and social academic networks are some of the most commonly used measures that assess the quality and relevance of scholarly work. High bibliometric scores and numerous citations are widely believed to constitute the academic reward system. The most cited authors are usually endorsed by peers for their significant contribution to knowledge. As a matter of fact, citations are at the core of scientometric methods. They have been (and are being) used to measure the academic visibility and impact of scholarly work (Kousha & Thelwall, 2007; Moed, 2005, 2006; Borgman, 2000).

This chapter’s objective is to critically review and analyse extant literature on the subject of academic branding. It clearly explains how the content marketing of individual researchers’ and of their educational institutions’ publications may lead to improvements in their academic standing and increased reputation. The author re-examines the communication structures and processes of scholarly communication (Thelwall & Kousha, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Kousha & Thelwall, 2007; Borgman & Furner 2002) among academic institutions. At the same time, this contribution presents relevant literature on the most popular scholarly metrics. It also reports how the evolution of WEB2.0 and the ubiquity of online academic networks have helped individual researchers to engage with their peers. In conclusion, this chapter implies that there is potential for scholars to use content marketing metrics for their academic standing (Thelwall & Kousha, 2015a, 2015b; Orduna-Malea & Ontalba-Ruipérez, 2013; Adler & Harzing, 2009; Thelwall & Harries, 2004; Wilson, 1999; Tague-Sutcliffe, 1992).

BACKGROUND

The independent evaluation of any scholarly work is a notoriously difficult and arduous task. Ideally, academic contributions ought to be scrutinised by qualified experts in their field. These scholars are recognised and accredited for both quality and quantity according to previously established rules. Essentially, such evaluation is called peer-review and is usually carried out by research committees. Yet, very often certain journal reviewers could lack specialist knowledge to assess research, particularly empirical data. Hence, committees use secondary criteria including crude publication counts, number of downloaded documents, journal prestige, the reputation of individual authors and their institutions; as well as other metrics in order to estimate the importance and relevance of particular research fields. Hence, it is the scope of this chapter to shed light on academic marketing which relies on the use and application of different metrics to build the reputation and standing of scholars, institutions and research centres. Authoritative, multidisciplinary content covers over 10,000 of the highest impact journals worldwide, including open access journals and over 110,000 conference proceedings.
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