

Comparative Analysis of Library Users' Expectations and Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

This study compares library users' expectations and perceptions regarding the marketing strategies employed by academic libraries at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala. The primary objectives are to evaluate and compare the expectations and perceptions of library users concerning the library marketing strategies at these two institutions. Data was collected from 766 users (PG and Research Scholars) of Arts and Science Colleges affiliated with Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala through a structured questionnaire. The analysis involved descriptive statistics and paired sample text. The findings show that marketing information products and services available in college libraries is insufficient to meet the users' expectations. Users of libraries in Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University differ significantly in expectation and perceived scores. Library orientation and other promotional activities have not effectively reached the users. The null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level and interpreted that users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala differ significantly in their expectation and perceived experience of marketing library resources and services except on staff cooperation. This paper offers a unique contribution by comparing library users' expectations and perceptions of marketing strategies. By highlighting differences and similarities in user experiences, the study aims to inform more effective marketing strategies tailored to the specific needs of each university's library users.

Keywords: Academic library, library users, expectations, perceptions, marketing strategies, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and University of Kerala

INTRODUCTION

In the modern academic setting, libraries are no longer just repositories of books and other physical documents. They have advanced into dynamic centers of information and learning, contributing an inclusive choice of products and services intended to meet the various needs of their users. Effectively marketing these library products and services is vital to ensure that the academic community is aware of and can fully utilize their resources. Rowley (2001) noted that library marketing is not just about promoting existing services but also about understanding user requirements and developing services that meet those needs. This proactive marketing approach involves various strategies, including digital tools, outreach programs, and personalized services, to engage users and enhance their experience (Siess, 2003).

Library users' expectations and perceptions perform a dynamic role in determining the usefulness of marketing strategies employed by academic libraries. Considering these expectations and perceptions is critical for emerging marketing approaches that resound with the scholarly community. They also forestall that libraries will include progressive technologies and digital resources to enable continuous access to information (Kumar & Mahajan, 2014). Perceptions of marketing strategies in academic libraries are influenced by how well these strategies align with users' needs and the quality of services provided. (Zeithaml et al., 2018) suggest that users perceive marketing efforts positively when they experience personalized services, effective communication, and value-added resources.

Moreover, academic libraries need to adopt a user-centric approach to marketing by actively seeking feedback and involving users in developing new services. As Rowley (2001) highlighted, engaging users in dialogue helps libraries understand their preferences better and adapt marketing strategies accordingly. This participatory approach enhances user satisfaction and fosters a sense of ownership and loyalty among the library's user base (Rowley, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic librarians engaged in diverse marketing activities and had differing views on the most effective methods for promoting services and resources Yi et al., (2013). Correlation analysis indicates that demographics, human capital, and library characteristics significantly influence librarians' perceptions of successful marketing techniques. (Shah & Siddiqui 2021) study revealed that students' expectations were higher than their perceptions. Therefore, Effective marketing strategies should focus on demonstrating the value of library services, ensuring high levels of user engagement, and consistently meeting or exceeding user expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Actual marketing can lead to enlarged usage of library resources, better user satisfaction, and a more vital expectation and perception of the library as an essential part of the academic institution (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010). According to Kumar and Mahajan (2014), users expect academic libraries to deliver appropriate, applicable, and effortlessly accessible information.

OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the expectations and perceptions of library users on marketing strategies

To compare the expectations and perceptions of library users at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University regarding library marketing strategies.

To compare the expectations and perceptions of library users at the University of Kerala regarding library marketing strategies.

Significance of the study

The study titled "Comparative Analysis of Library Users' Expectations and Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Academic Libraries" is significant as it aims to bridge the gap between what users expect and perceive regarding marketing strategies in academic libraries. By evaluating and comparing these expectations and perceptions at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala, the study provides crucial insights that can help these institutions enhance their marketing efforts, improve user satisfaction, and better align their services with user needs. This comparative analysis will contribute to developing more effective marketing strategies tailored to the specific contexts of these academic libraries, ultimately fostering a more engaged and satisfied user base.

METHODOLOGY

The primary data for this study were collected using a standard survey method targeting postgraduate (PG) students and research scholars affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala. The sample size for the study was 766 participants. To gather the data, a questionnaire was administered online and offline, ensuring accessibility and convenience for all respondents. The collected data were systematically coded and entered into an Excel sheet for initial organization. Subsequently, SPSS software was utilized for comprehensive data analysis. The analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics to summarize the data and provide a clear overview of the responses. Additionally, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the expectations and perceptions of library users regarding marketing strategies at the two universities. This approach provided a robust statistical framework for understanding the differences and similarities in user perceptions and expectations across the two institutions.

Analysis and Interpretation

Gender-wise distribution of Respondents – User Category

Table 1 Gender-wise distribution of Respondents

S.No	Gender	University		Total
		Manonmaniam Sundaranar	Kerala	
1	Male	139(36.3)	116(30.3)	255(33.3)
2	Female	244(63.7)	267(69.7)	511(66.7)
Total		383(100.00)	383(100.00)	766(100.00)

Source: Primary data; Note: Items inside the parenthesis are in percent

Table 1 shows the gender-wise distribution of respondents among the user category, females are more than males in both universities and it is proportionate to the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions in both universities. Among the total respondents, one-third are male, and the remaining two-thirds are females. This is the actual enrolment status of males vs females in Arts and Science Colleges at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and University of Kerala.

Expectations of Users on Marketing Vs Perceived Experience on Marketing

Marketing in academic libraries is carried out to reach the available information products and services to the user community, especially to the students through planned programmes. The expectation of users through marketing activities of the library and the actual they gained or experienced are analysed and presented under this heading. In Arts and Science Colleges, target users are students of UG programme, PG programme and Research. Since students of PG, M.Phil and Ph.D programme are consuming more information sources and services than UG students, their opinion are studied to find whether their expectations are satisfied through marketing.

Marketing is carried out with the goal to reach available information products and services to the users. For this purpose, they have employed several marketing strategies to reach the target users. Every user has some expectations about their libraries and its products. The opinion expressed by them on a five-point scale whether these expectations are fulfilled through marketing carried out by the libraries are analysed. The analysis is done in terms of the difference between expectations and actual gain. The difference in expectations and actual gain is calculated using paired t-test and the details are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Expectations of Users on Marketing Vs Perceived Experience on Marketing

Expectation Vs Perceived	Expectation		Perception		Gap (E-P)		Paired Samples Test	
	Mean	Std.D ev.	Mean	Std.D ev.	Mean	Std.D ev.	t	p value
Sufficiency of documents	3.93	1.1	4.05	1.03	0.11	1.46	2.09	0.03
Promotion of the services through user orientation, exhibition and brochures	4.18	0.96	3.44	1.31	0.74	1.58	12.97	0.00

User feedback system	4.04	1.14	3.29	1.36	0.75	1.80	11.52	0.00
Promotion of the services through Social Networking Sites	3.87	1.18	3.16	1.31	0.71	1.56	12.70	0.00
Provision for quick services	4.05	1.02	3.86	1.16	0.19	1.48	3.61	0.00
System to alert the users the new arrivals	3.70	1.34	3.33	1.34	0.36	1.61	6.33	0.00
Provision for services at the right time	3.73	1.32	3.65	1.22	0.08	1.66	1.41	0.15
Use of quick strategies to promote the services	3.94	1.14	3.47	1.27	0.47	1.59	8.17	0.00
Consulting the users while preparing the acquisition list	3.82	1.20	3.30	1.34	0.52	1.64	8.83	0.00
Sufficiency of staff in promoting the library services	3.90	1.72	3.52	1.25	0.38	1.58	6.61	0.00
Availability of technically skilled staff	3.86	1.23	3.06	1.38	0.80	1.56	14.1	0.00
Cooperation of Staff	3.92	1.14	3.80	1.18	0.11	1.61	1.95	0.05
Availability of service-oriented staff	3.88	1.21	3.65	1.23	0.22	1.55	4.06	0.00
Use of user-friendly marketing strategies	4.06	1.04	3.59	1.28	0.46	1.58	8.14	0.00
Constant touch of the librarian with the users	3.97	1.16	3.62	1.24	0.34	1.55	6.17	0.00
Awareness of the library about the new strategies for promoting the services	4.09	1.02	3.36	1.33	0.72	1.59	12.55	0.00
Encouragement from the library to the users to use the library frequently	3.77	1.27	3.97	1.07	0.19	1.56	3.47	0.00

Source: Primary data; Note: Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 describes the mean score of expectations and perceived gains through marketing among the users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala. From the table, it is seen that the mean expectation score of respondents on the sufficiency of documents in the library is 3.95 and their corresponding perception score is 4.05, which is more than their expectations. Thus, the documents available in libraries are more than expected. This indicates that marketing helps the libraries to keep updated on the availability of documents. However, for the remaining aspects, perceived scores are less than the expected score. This indicates that the marketing of information products and services available in college libraries is not sufficient to meet the expectations of the users.

The highest difference in expectation and perception score among the users is 0.80 found in the case of the availability of technically skilled staff followed by a user feedback system and promotion of library services through library orientation, exhibition, and use of brochures. The minimum difference was found among the users on the cooperation of staff.

Moreover, the difference in expectation score and perception score on the availability of documents is 0.11. The paired sample t test indicates that the gap score is significant at 0.05 level ($t=2.09$, $p<0.05$). This shows that the availability of documents in the libraries is significantly higher than the expectations. However, paired sample t test on remaining aspects of marketing are significant at 0.05 level and perceived scores are significantly lower than their expectations except on the cooperation of staff. Users do not differ significantly on cooperating aspects of marketing.

From the observations on expectation score and perception score, it is interpreted that the quality of marketing information products and services carried out by the libraries of Arts and Science Colleges are not up to the expected level of users. The most important insufficiencies are a lack of technically skilled staff; ineffective library promotion activities through library orientation, exhibition, and use of brochures; ineffective feedback mechanism; lack of using social networking tools; *and lack of creativity in framing marketing strategies*.

Expectations Vs Perceived Experience of Users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University on Marketing

The difference in users' expectations and perceived experience of marketing library resources and services among the users of Manomaniam Sundaranar University are analysed using paired sample t-test. The details of the analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Expectations Vs Perceived Experience of Users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University on Marketing

Expectation Vs Perception	Expectation		Perception		Gap (E-P)		Paired Samples Test	
	Mean	Std.D ev.	Mean	Std.D ev.	Mean	Std.D ev.	t	p value
Sufficiency of documents	3.74	1.17	3.96	1.05	0.22	1.6	2.66	0.00
Promotion of the services through user orientation, exhibition and brochures	4.10	1.01	3.34	1.31	0.75	1.58	9.34	0.00
User feedback system	3.89	1.27	3.32	1.38	0.56	1.94	5.68	0.00
Promotion of the services through Social Networking Sites	3.71	1.26	3.07	1.3	0.63	1.71	7.22	0.00
Provision for quick services	3.89	1.09	3.73	1.19	0.16	1.6	2.00	0.04
System to alert the users the new arrivals	3.75	1.31	3.20	1.39	0.55	1.7	6.01	0.00
Provision for services at the right time	3.52	1.35	3.52	1.25	0.005	1.8	0.56	0.95
Use of quick strategies to promote the services	3.76	1.22	3.36	1.30	0.39	1.7	4.45	0.00

Consulting the users while preparing the acquisition list	3.75	1.22	3.24	1.32	0.51	1.7	5.7	0.00
Sufficiency of staff in promoting the library services	3.76	1.22	3.39	1.30	0.36	1.6	4.24	0.00
Availability of technically skilled staff	3.73	1.26	2.76	1.36	0.97	1.64	11.57	0.00
Cooperation of Staff	3.67	1.22	3.56	1.30	0.11	1.87	1.19	0.23
Availability of service-oriented staff	3.71	1.30	3.57	1.26	0.14	1.64	1.73	0.08
Use of user-friendly marketing strategies	3.94	1.13	3.52	1.33	0.41	1.76	4.63	0.00
Constant touch of librarian with the users	3.98	1.18	3.50	1.26	0.47	1.66	5.59	0.00
Awareness of the library about the new strategies for promoting the services	3.97	1.12	3.29	1.35	0.67	1.76	7.51	0.00
Encouragement from the library to the users to use the library frequently	3.62	1.35	3.85	1.15	0.23	1.75	2.59	0.01

Source: Primary data; Note: Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 shows the mean expectation and perception score of users in Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University on marketing library information sources and services and the score differences and t value along with significance. The table reveals that the mean expectation score of all aspects related to marketing is higher than the perception score except for the sufficiency of documents. On the availability of documents, the expected score is lower than the perception score. Thus, the trend prevailing on expectation and perception score among the users in libraries of Arts and Science Colleges under Manonmaniam Sundaranar University is similar to the trend that prevails among the total respondents. This indicates that the effectiveness of marketing in Arts and Science Colleges is below the users' expected level.

Moreover, the highest difference in expected and perceived scores among the users in colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University is 0.97 on the availability of skilled staff, followed by promotion services through user orientation, exhibition and brochures, and lack of awareness in framing new marketing strategies.

The paired sample t-test on expectation score and perception score reveals that the calculated value of t is significant at 0.05 level except for cooperation of staff ($t=1.19$; $p>0.05$) and availability of service-oriented staff ($t=1.73$; $p>0.05$). Hence, it is interpreted that users of libraries in Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University differ significantly in expectation and perceived scores.

Thus, in total, marketing strategies employed by the libraries of Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University are not effective and below the users' expected level. Library orientation and other marketing strategies framed by individual libraries have not reached the target users effectively. So, the authorities concerned should take necessary steps for framing marketing strategies among the users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

Expectations Vs Perceived Experience of Users of University of Kerala on Marketing

Similar to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, the difference if any in users' expectations and perceived experience on the marketing of library resources and services among the users of University of Kerala are determined using paired sample t-tests. The details of the t-test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Expectations Vs Perceived Experience of Users of University of Kerala on Marketing

Expectation Vs Perception	Expectation		Perception		Gap (E-P)		Paired Samples Test	
	Mean	Std.D ev.	Mean	Std.D ev.	Mean	Std.D ev.	t	p value
Sufficiency of documents	4.13	0.98	4.13	0.90	0	0	0	0
Promotion of the services through user orientation, exhibition and brochures	4.27	0.91	3.54	1.30	0.72	1.5	8.9	0.00
User feedback system	4.19	0.97	3.25	1.33	0.93	1.6	11.22	0.00
Promotion of the services through Social Networking Sites	4.04	1.05	3.24	1.33	0.79	1.38	11.29	0.00
Provision for quick services	4.21	0.91	3.98	1.11	0.22	1.36	3.21	0.00
System to alert the users the new arrivals	3.65	1.37	3.46	1.26	0.18	1.39	2.64	0.00
Provision for services at the right time	3.95	1.25	3.78	1.18	0.16	1.49	2.16	0.03
Use of quick strategies to promote the services	4.11	1.01	3.57	1.23	0.54	1.41	7.5	0.00
Consulting the users while preparing the acquisition list	3.89	1.18	3.35	1.36	0.53	1.51	6.89	0.00
Sufficiency of staff in promoting the library services	4.05	1.10	3.65	1.19	0.39	1.48	5.18	0.00
Availability of technically skilled staff	3.99	1.17	3.37	1.35	0.62	1.47	8.34	0.00
Cooperation of Staff	4.16	1.0	4.05	0.99	0.11	1.29	1.70	0.08
Availability of service-oriented staff	4.04	1.09	3.73	1.20	0.31	1.45	4.18	0.00
Use of user-friendly	4.17	0.93	3.66	1.22	0.51	1.37	7.31	0.00

marketing strategies								
Constant touch of librarian with the users	3.96	1.15	3.74	1.22	0.21	1.41	2.98	0.00
Awareness of the library about the new strategies for promoting the services	4.21	0.88	3.44	1.30	0.77	1.40	10.70	0.00
Encouragement from the library to the users to use the library frequently	3.92	1.18	4.08	0.97	0.16	1.35	2.33	0.02

Source: Primary data; Note: Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 shows the mean expectation and perception score of users in Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to University of Kerala on marketing library information sources and services along with difference in the scores and t value along with significance. Table discloses that the mean expectation score on availability of documents and perception score are the same among the users of University of Kerala. For the remaining aspects, the mean expectation scores are higher than experience or otherwise perceived scores. This shows that marketing strategies employed by the libraries of Arts and Science Colleges affiliated to University of Kerala are below their expectations and their expectation are not fulfilled by the existing practices.

The difference in expectation and perception score is more among the users on the cooperation of staff, followed by awareness of the library about the new strategies for promoting the services; and promotion of services through user orientation, exhibition and brochures.

Table 4 also reveals that the paired sample test of the difference between expectation and perceived score shows that the calculated value of t is significant at 0.05 level except for the sufficiency of documents and cooperation of staff. Hence, it is interpreted that users have differences in their expectations and experience through marketing library resources and services.

Therefore, marketing strategies employed by the college libraries affiliated to University of Kerala are not up to the expected level of the users. Library orientation and other promotional activities have not effectively reached the users.

Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in expectation and perceived experience of users on marketing library resources and services based on university

From Table 2, it is found that users differ significantly at 0.05 level on the expectation score and perception score on all aspects of marketing except the cooperation of staff when the total sample is considered. It is found from Table 4, that users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University differ significantly at 0.05 level on the expectation and perception scores on all except cooperation of staff and availability of service-oriented staff. Similarly, Table 4 reveals that users of University of Kerala differ significantly at 0.05 level on their expectations and their experience in marketing library resources and services except for the cooperation of staff and availability of documents.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level and interpreted that users of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and University of Kerala differ significantly in their expectation and perceived experience of marketing library resources and services except on the cooperation of staff.

CONCLUSION

The study on comparative analysis of library users' expectations and perceptions discloses critical insights into how postgraduate students and research scholars at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and the University of Kerala perceive and expect marketing strategies in their libraries. By assessing and comparing these perspectives, the study highlights significant gaps and alignments between user expectations and perceptions. The findings underscore the need for both universities to refine their marketing strategies to better meet user needs, ultimately enhancing user satisfaction and engagement with library services. The marketing strategies employed by the college libraries affiliated to University of Kerala are not up to the expected level of the users. Library orientation and other promotional activities have not effectively reached the users. The users have differences in their expectations and experience through marketing library resources and services.

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