

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY PROGRAM AS A MARKETING MEDIA FOR LIBRARY SERVICE AT LKC BINUS UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL: A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

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Abstract. Libraries can make a voluntary program involving their users. The Friends of the Library Program conducted by the Library and Knowledge Center of Binus University is one example. The program allows members to get involved in the daily operations of the Library and Knowledge Center of Binus University. The program has also attracted the attention of academicians and the university leaders of Binus University International. Based on this background, this study is conducted to understand the role of this program in marketing the services of the Library and Knowledge Center of Binus University International. This study is a preliminary research using a qualitative approach with exploratory method. The results reveal that this program plays a pertinent role in marketing the services of the Library and Knowledge Center of Binus University International through the members and alumni of the Friends of the Library program.

Keywords: library marketing, academic library, word-of-mouth, library volunteerism

INTRODUCTION

The Library and Knowledge Center (LKC) of Binus University once had a program called The Ambassador of Library to market the existing services of LKC to the academic community. The Ambassador of Library was a program consisting of 10 students chosen by LKC to conduct marketing activities. However, the program was considered rather ineffective because the marketing results were not in accordance with the expectations of the program, so it was eventually discontinued.

At the end of 2010, LKC created a new program called the Friends of Library (FoL) Program. The FoL Program is voluntary and aims at obtaining operational assistance for LKC. In other words, it assists with doing librarian chores due to a lack of human resources. The FoL Program became active in 2011 at LKC in Binus University. Binus University itself has five libraries. Three of them are under the auspices of the Binus University regular program which are LKC Anggrek, LKC Kijang, and LKC Alam Sutera. Meanwhile, two more are LKC JWC and LKC FX under the auspices of an international

program at Binus University International.

All academicians who participate in the FoL Program are required to serve for four hours a week. Thus, during one semester they must fulfill 52 hours of voluntary time. In this program, academicians who are members of FoL can feel the LKC experience in doing operational activities. They help librarians and interact directly with LKC users comprised of staff, faculty, and students. This lets them see from the perspective of a librarian, know the workflow of LKC, and understand the services that are conducted by LKC.

The FoL Program at the LKC Binus University regular program does not run continuously, whereas at LKC Binus University International, it has continued since 2011. Each semester there are always students who sign up to become FoL members at the LKC Binus University International. The spirit of the FoL Program is appreciated by leaders at Binus University International. This raises the question, whether the FoL Program that was originally intended to recruit voluntary assistance has an impact on marketing the services at LKC Binus University International.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently, marketing theories are more directed to meet the needs of consumers, no longer about selling

products. «Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others» (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). In this case, the question is to build relationships between producers and consumers, thus meeting the needs of consumers in accordance with the request or even more.

As one part of an educational institution, academic libraries already have their own consumers, namely the academicians. The existence of the academic library must be known by academicians as supporting lecturers. Hence, according to Mathews (2009) libraries do not need to advertise. For the academic society, especially students, they will visit the library even if only in a state of urgency, like looking for books to reference a final project.

«By offering a balanced array of academic, social, creative, and cultural experiences, the library can become a premier campus destination, rather than just a place that students have to go» (Mathews, 2009). Referring to the opinion, marketing an academic library places more emphasis on maximizing services owned in order to become part of the students. Libraries should be productive, friendly, and supportive. So users, especially students, can make the library as a partner in their educational success by utilizing the services provided.

Librarians are required to not only make the students become familiar with academic libraries but also show them how libraries apply to them. Although a library service has been marketed in a certain way, only a few students know all the services at a library. Hence, according to Mathews (2009) marketing an academic library leads to creating a richer library experience.

One way of creating a richer library experience can be done by involving academicians in the daily operations of the library. They can be involved as volunteers. Volunteers at the library become an integral aspect for libraries as well as volunteers themselves. «Volunteerism is a vital part of the enhancing dialog and social contact between the library and the local community.» (Driggers & Dumas, 2002). There are some things that can help libraries connect to their volunteers' local communities, according to Driggers and Dumas (2002), namely:

1. Create a positive image of the library in the community.
2. Bring information about local ideas, issues, and concerns back to the library so that staff and administration can better meet community needs.

By having volunteers at the library, Driggers and Dumas (2002) argue that the volunteers carry information regarding this voluntary program and also the services available at the library to people in the neighborhood. Indirectly library services are promoted by volunteers through word of mouth. This is an added

value for the libraries to be known by the users.

Spreading information about library services by word of mouth is known as word-of-mouth marketing. 'Word-of-mouth' is also a library marketing tool. It was proposed by Duke and Tucker (2007) that «Libraries market (communicate) through word-of-mouth, news releases, websites, bookmarks, flyers, electronic signs, newsletters, and giveaways.»

What is the definition of 'word-of-mouth'? According to Silverman (2001), «Word-of-mouth is communication about products and services between people who are perceived to be independent of the company providing the product or service, in a medium perceived to be independent of the company.» From that sense, it can be known that 'word-of-mouth' is a form of communication that can talk or provide testimony, directly or recorded, in a conversation between two people or in a group. The most important of these definitions is the independence of people who share information or experiences about a product or service. People who voluntarily share information or experiences are called opinion leaders. In this case, independence means no commercial benefit is derived from the opinion leader to others in sharing information or experiences.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is an approach to explore and comprehend the meaning of an act coming from individuals or groups related to a social problem (Creswell, 2014). An exploratory method is used because the researchers strive to find out more information about the roles that FoL members have in marketing services at LKC. «We use exploratory research when the subject is very new, we know little or nothing about it, and no one has yet explored it. Our goal with it is to formulate more precise questions that we can address in future research» (Neuman, 2014). Research on the role of FoL at LKC has not been done previously, so further research will be conducted on the impact of the role of FoL on all students at Binus University International.

The data collection is done through interviews with selected informants, observations, and analyses of supporting documents. This study has two types of informants: key and additional informants. The key informants are alumni and an FoL member, and the additional informants are close friends on the campus of the FoL members.

Key informants are selected through a purposive sampling method that requires certain criteria, namely:

1. Active members or alumnae from the FoL program.
2. FoL members at LKC Binus University International.

3. Academicians who have been FoL members for at least one semester.
4. Those willing to become informants.

The use of these criteria is on the grounds that FOL members who have served for at least one semester are deemed to be already familiar with the routines and services of LKC. Five key informants are used, four of whom are alumni. The the other one is still active as an FOL member.

Table 1: Key Informants

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No.	Name	Status	FOL Program Duration	Major
1	Ariana	FOL Alumnae	4 th semesters	Accounting
2	Paul	FOL Alumnae	1 st semester	Marketing
3	Sarah	Active Member	2 nd semesters	Information Systems
4	Ardi	FOL Alumnae	1 st semester	Information Systems
5	Michael	FOL Alumnae	1 st semester	Information Systems

In addition, there are also additional informants consisting of a few close friends of FOL members. These additional informants total three persons. Those interviewed are based on the successful data the authors obtained from key informants. It is a form of data matching and the development of data collection. The informants are determined using a snow ball sampling method. "Snowball sampling is a method for sampling (or selecting) the cases in a network. The method uses an analogy to a snowball, which begins small but becomes larger as we roll it on wet snow and it picks up additional snow. Snowball sampling is a multistage technique. It begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out based on links to the initial cases" (Neuman, 2014).

Table 2: Additional Informants

No	Name	Major
1	Dito	Marketing
2	Maylani	Hospitality and Tourism Management
3	Tita	Information Systems

This an early study or in the form of a feasibility study. The reason is the impact of the FoL Program felt by academicians at Binus University International is not yet known, as it only has a limited scope with FoL members's closest friends on campus. «Early research or feasibility study is referred to a small-scale survey of a complete or a pretest for a particular research

instrument such as a questionnaire or interview guide.» (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2013).

DISCUSSION

Friends of Library Program at Binus University International

The FoL Program starts at the beginning of each semester with a maximum of seven participants. Each academician who wants to become an FoL member is required to fill out a registration form available at LKC by attaching a 3x4 size photograph and a photocopy of one's Binusian ID Card. There are no special requirements or specific tests to follow in the process of admitting new FOL members. The most important thing is the academicians who sign up should be committed to become FoL members for one semester. Commitment means to follow the activities of FOL for a full semester. That, does not stop in the middle of a semester as volunteers are obligated to perform the tasks of the positions that have been taken.

On the application form there are three options for positions: a library assistant, a library promotional staff member, and a translator. Until now LKC Binus University International only accepts positions for library assistants. The reason is because it is the only required position at LKC Binus University International today.

Academicians who have become FoL members are obliged to spend four hours a week on duty in LKC with flexibility in the scheduling. The point is FoL members can volunteer when they have free time outside their study or work hours on campus. If an FoL member is unable to be on duty for four hours in a week, the individual must replace the shortage of hours later. The reason is for one semester they have to fulfill 52 hours as FoL members in LKC. They are required to fill in an attendance sheet when on duty and when off duty to determine the number of hours that have been filled.

FoL members receive some special facilities in LKC, even though the FoL Program is voluntary. They are allowed to borrow an additional two books in a semester for a total of up to five books. They also receive a certificate at the end of the semester which contains a statement that they have completed the program. This certificate states the number of hours that have been fulfilled by FoL members. It is useful to gain additional points for SAT (Student Activity Transcript). A Student Activity Transcript is an attachment of student activities during college that is one of the undergraduate graduation requirements. Students must earn at least 150 points based on a specific scoring system. An FoL program certificate is worth 52 points according to the number of hours filled by students during a semester. The points are calculated with one hour worth one point.

In addition to the certification and the additional number of books borrowed, FoL members also participate in various activities in LKC as committee members. LKC regularly holds activities at Binus University International in a year, such as seminars, workshops, and/or exhibitions. Besides the internal activities, LKC is also often invited to attend seminars or workshops from other institutions. FoL members are also invited as participants, who are accompanied by a librarian if the seminar does not clash with their class schedules.



Figure 1: FoL Members and a Librarian Posing after a Seminar Held by LKC

Relationship Building around the Friends of Library Program

The FoL program enables its members to socialize with new people. Those people are librarians and users. According to them, the relationships that are built from these activities assist them to understand the activities of the librarians in providing services to users. In addition, they also make new friends from different majors and class years.

FoL members say that they form relationships with the librarians because they often interact while on duty. Before becoming FoL members, they were timid and reluctant to ask librarians about the services available in LKC. After following this program, their reluctance began to disappear because of the interactions with the librarians.

FoL members participate in the program to learn more about the LKC routines. The activities undertaken by the FoL members increase their knowledge about the services carried out by LKC, as well as the back office activities that they previously did not know about. FoL members revealed that they are more familiar with the ins and outs in LKC that are not visible on the outside. This enables them to understand the policies made by LKC that are applied to its users.

As stated above, the FoL members also form new relationships with students from different majors and class years. The new friendships are made among FoL members and also the library users. The bonds are usually formed when they are on duty.



Figure 2: An FoL Member is Assisting a Patron in Borrowing a Book

Librarians usually introduce all FoL members who have signed up in a semester. FoL members are even also introduced to FoL alumnae and other FoL members when they are on duty. Quite often they work together. The program members are from different majors and class year, so that new friendships are formed.

Meanwhile, relations with users are established when FoL members serve them, whether it is while assisting patrons in borrowing and returning books or helping patrons find needed information in LKC. FoL members are often asked by library patrons or friends about the activities carried out in LKC. The FoL members even meet new friends from their respective faculties that they did not previously know.

When questioned by friends or other library users, FoL members explain about the program conducted. They say that many colleagues find out about the FoL program in LKC. This is because LKC is not involved in the new student orientation activities at the undergraduate level. This is unfortunate because according to Rhoades Jr & Hartsell (2008) an orientation program for new students is an ideal opportunity to introduce library services. This activity can result in positive interactions when students enter a college.

Marketing by Friends of Library Members

When students participate to become FoL members, it raises an opinion regarding the services available in LKC. That argument is related to the lack of marketing services at LKC to the academic community, especially students at the undergraduate level. There is an uneven dissemination of information about LKC services among the students. Only a handful of undergraduate level students know about them.

One of the main informants, Paul, revealed that most of his friends from the same department do not know that the campus has LKC. For his friends that know about LKC, they do not know about the services rendered, even how to borrow course books. Paul said that his friends knew that the campus has LKC, where they can borrow books, only after a few semesters.

Other key informants also expressed an opinion

about the lack of marketing services at LKC. They revealed that the majority of their friends only know about the borrowing and returning of books service in LKC. But they do not know that LKC also has other services, such as references and multimedia. Even key informants also learned that LKC has these other services only after participating in the FoL program.

Key informants were aware of the lack of marketing services at LKC from the questions posed by their friends. According to key informants, their friends asked about services in LKC since knowing they were members of the FoL program. The majority of questions asked were about the e-journal, borrowing books, and fines imposed by the library.

Key informants described each service at LKC when asked by their friends. Sometimes they also explained other services provided by LKC. In fact, they also offered their friends to join the FoL program.

One informant named Sarah said that her friends from the same major also inquired about the system LKC used. This question was related to the task subjects they take as students in the Information Systems Program. Sarah then explained the system of borrowing and returning books in LKC. In addition, she also explained about the systems on campus that are integrated with LKC. So the experience as an FoL member are an added value for Sarah. The new experience provides work force experience, such as cooperation among departments within an organization and interactions with colleagues and clients.

A few close friends of the key informants were contacted. The aim was to confirm the explanations of the key informants. The main informants' close friends were additional informants in this study.

The additional informants confirmed that the main informants described some services at LKC. The explanation given by the key informants were related to the services they inquired about. However, the key informants also added other information about the services at LKC.

One additional informant named Dito said that he received information about the program from a friend who was an FoL member. His friend also described other services provided by LKC. So he came to know about the services at LKC, which he previously was unaware of. Even Dito also registered as an FoL member on the recommendation of his friend.

The additional informants had their own reasons to ask about the services at LKC to their friends who became FoL rather than directly to the librarians. One additional informant named Maylani said that she felt more comfortable asking friends because of their close ages. Meanwhile, she felt a little awkward when she asked librarians who were not friends or of a different age group.

The additional informants also said that having friends who were FoL was a distinct advantage in certain cases. The advantage was to obtain information seminars held on campus or LKC. They also found it easier to know the services at LKC, as well as to receive more assistance in using the sources from their friends who are FoL members.

Information about LKC services was more easily accepted by additional informants as delivered by their own friends, the key informants. The reason is because friendships have close personal relationships. According to Mathews (2009), in marketing this is called the psychodemographic approach, i.e. those with a sedentary lifestyle, similar personal outlook, comparable characters, or the same aspirations will be gathered into one group. They are joined in this group if they have a similar way of thinking and the same behavior. Therefore they will be more accepting of one's opinion, because they have the same way of thinking.

The information provided by key informants to additional informants is through indirect market services at LKC by word-of-mouth. This is done by key informants because the services at LKC are less marketable. The closeness with the librarians also encourages them to market the services at LKC without any commercial elements.

The key informants revealed it is very unfortunate that the services at LKC are rarely known by the students. Nevertheless, LKC has a nice service in supporting the activities of their lectures. They say that the services at LKC will be very useful for students in the future, especially when they are working on a thesis.

The key informants expressed a lack of sufficient marketing to the librarians. They even suggested that LKC should provide an introduction about the services held at the new student orientation undergraduate level. The goal is to make the LKC services more familiar for students.

CONCLUSION

The FoL program is based on volunteering activities organized by LKC Binus University. The program allows students to experience the daily operations of LKC Binus University International. Experience in the FoL program forms their views of LKC Binus University International. FoL members have come to understand various aspects about the services and operational activities at LKC Binus University International.

The interactions that occur in this program are a unique opportunity for FoL members and the librarians themselves. These interactions build close relationships between FoL members and the library as an organization. This makes FoL members feel they have become a part of LKC Binus University International.

Relationships are formed and the knowledge possessed by members of FoL turns out to have implications on the marketing activities at LKC Binus University International.

FoL members play a role in the marketing of LKC Binus University International services through word-of-mouth. They have become opinion leaders for classmates either intentionally or inadvertently. Their experiences in the FoL program are significant for them as opinion leaders. This becomes an advantage for the marketing activities of LKC Binus University International services. Despite that, it still needs to be traced back to the impact of word-of-mouth that has been carried out by FoL members.

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