



## **Full Length Research Article**

### **USING INTERNET FOR MARKET RESEARCH: A CASE STUDY OF THE LIBRARY NETWORK OF VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY – HO CHI MINH CITY**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The paper mentions concepts, common methods of online market research and advantages, disadvantages of each method. The author then suggests some solutions to strengthen the effectiveness of online market research application in the Library network of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Most of libraries in the developed countries have been enhanced online marketing application to improve the effectiveness of marketing. Although Vietnam is a country with great potential in development of online marketing because of the highest growth in the number of internet users in Southeast Asia but online marketing, including online market research, is lack of understand and using in most libraries in Vietnam. Nowadays, market research in the Library network of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City is mainly in traditional form and low efficiency. Therefore, the paper will suggest some solutions to improve the efficiency of market research in the Library network by using the Internet.

##### **Limitation**

The paper just focuses on online market research activities in the Library network of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City. The Library network is operated by the Central Library and seven member university libraries, as figure below:

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#### **Market research through the Internet: the forms and implementation methods**

Market research through the Internet is also known as online market research. This is the process of collecting and analyzing data related to the market to find out business opportunities by using the Internet. Online market research allows organizations to discover who their target market is and what their consumers think about products and services before those products and services become available to the public.

Forms of online market research include:

- Using online questionnaires to collect data;
- Conducting in-depth interviews via forums, chat rooms or net meeting;
- Collecting feedback placed on organization's websites;
- Understanding customer behavior from access when they visit organization's websites.

Organizations have to define objectives of the research such as what are they trying to achieve from the research? Or what do they need to know? After considering objectives, organizations can use many types of research techniques and methodologies to capture the data that they require. Methods of online market research are the same methods used in the

traditional market research: focus group, in-depth interview and survey but the Internet is the tool of research.

### Focus group

Some of people gathered together to deal with certain topics or issues via online forums, chat rooms or net meeting. This group is led by an interviewer who uses predetermined questions, however, the participants are no longer dependent on the interviewer as traditional method so they can free sharing their opinions.

### Advantages

- Time of interviews are flexible because of using the Internet;
- Places of interviews are flexible and more convenient because participants do not have to move to a specific location for the interview;
- Ideas can be become more diversity because participants can think independently when they take the interview.

### Disadvantages

- Difficulty tracking veracity of the information is given in the interview because the interviewer and the interviewee do not communicate directly;
- Some technical applications are required such as application software dedicated to video conferencing, forums or message chat, voice chat;
- Progress of the interview can be slow because interviewers do not control participants directly.

### In-depth interview

Organizations use this method to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation through the internet. Interviewers give questions to professionals/experts and get answers through the Internet as well. This type of interviews can be deployed by using mail groups, chat rooms or net meeting. Advantages of in-depth interview by using the Internet are:

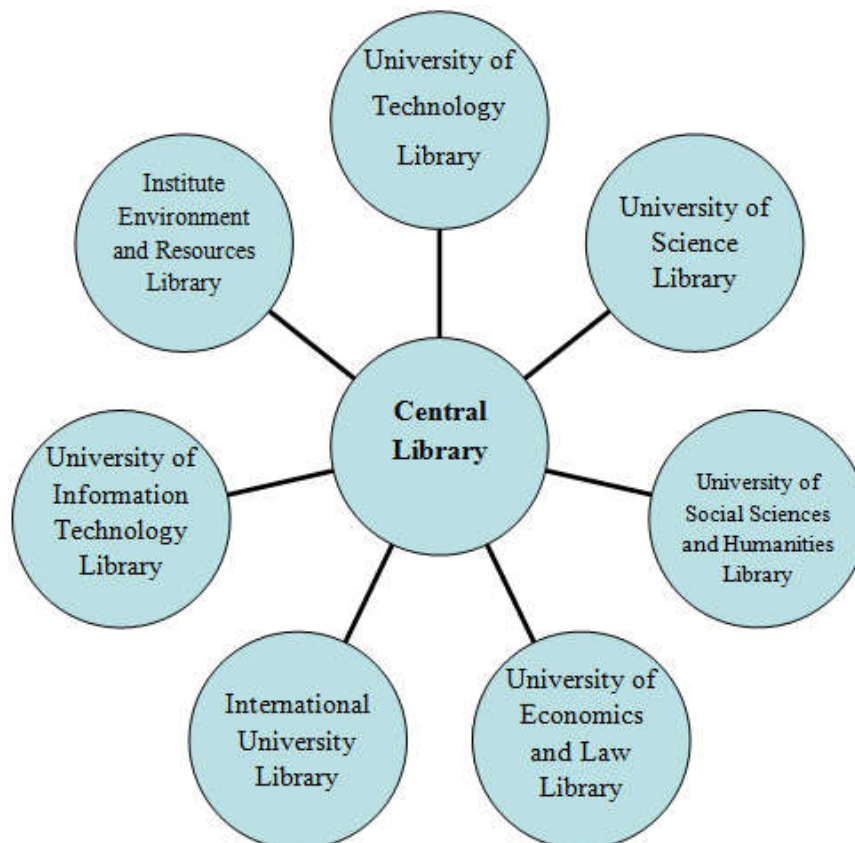
- More information can be get from interviewees because in-depth interviews are useful for exploring interesting topics;
- Large numbers of participants can be reached at the same time;
- Data can be more details because interviewees have enough time for thinking during the process or discussing with other interviewees as well.

### Questionnaires

Traditional printed questionnaires have some limitations to distribute questionnaires, analyze data but online questionnaires can restrict those things because:

- Questionnaires can be sent faster than usual and at the same time;
- Costs are cheaper than printed questionnaires;
- International market research becomes easier because questionnaires can be sent to everywhere through the Internet.

However, perhaps online questionnaires have less response without support, encourage and motivate participants.



*The Library network of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City*

## **Solutions to apply online market research in the Library network of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City**

Nowadays, many libraries have used the Internet as a tool to do their market research strategies, for example, some libraries have inserted online questionnaire into their website to collect data related to user's needs such as The National Library of Finland, Mälardalen University Library etc. Other libraries have collected data by using feedback on their website as Explore the British Library feedback of British Library, Website user feedback of National Taiwan University Library etc. Besides that, Binghamton University Libraries and Texas A&M University Libraries have used instant messaging through the Internet such as Yahoo, Google talk, MSN messenger for communication, collecting data and getting user's needs and building relationship between librarians and users.

Users at the Library network include management staff, lecturers, researchers, non-academic staff, and students in Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, libraries also provide library and information products or services to people outside and libraries are allowed to charge fees for this group. Up to now, all members of the Library network of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City do not use online market research in their activities. As presented above, online market research is becoming more popular because there is almost no difference between online market research and traditional market research. However, online market research does not take costs and give results faster than traditional methods due to data can be analyzed, statistics automatically. Therefore, the Library network should make plans to conduct online market research as soon as possible.

### **Contents of online market research**

Libraries should begin an active program which focus on the needs frequently and the needs unexpected of users to collect enough information so that libraries can know exactly user's needs, satisfaction, and the impact of libraries resources. Libraries also need measure user satisfaction when they use products and services that libraries offer. In addition, libraries should know attitude of librarians when they provide products and services to users, quality of their serving and build close relationships with users to capture new demands of users and then adjust libraries activities if necessary. In general, libraries can design and implement questionnaires that provide information on determining who users and potential users are, how and why the libraries are used (or are not used), what libraries resources are used (including traditional materials, multimedia documents, databases, digital collections etc.), what user's needs are; how satisfied users are with the libraries; what users feel about other sources such as equipment, librarians who provide services to users etc.

Libraries can create user's profile with information about age, occupation, information needs, habits, information behaviors etc. These information will help libraries know how to approach, satisfy user's needs in the future.

## **Methods of online market research**

### ***Using online questionnaires***

To ensure the survey via online questionnaires have good effective, libraries should be aware of the following issues when creating a questionnaire:

- Identify the purpose of the survey and the information that libraries want users provide and ask users the right questions;
- Create encourage, motivation to make users think that they have reasons to join in a survey and take time to complete a survey;
- Design questionnaires in simple way, easy to understand. Questionnaires should be designed from the user perspective. Questions should be short, simple, and clear to users;
- Use questions for asking detail information. Libraries should use closed questions with five levels to measure user satisfaction. In addition, libraries can use opened questions so that users can write their comments (if any), or recommendations to improve service quality. However, libraries should not give too many opened questions, libraries should give questions with multiple choose instead of;
- Test online questionnaires to know the time needed to answer the questionnaires, and to understand if the questions are easy or not so that libraries can adjust their questions before conducting real survey.

After completing online questionnaires, libraries have two ways to distribution the questionnaires. Firstly, libraries can share link point to online questionnaires on their website or social networking site such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn etc. Secondly, libraries can send the questionnaires to email of users by the following methods:

- Use websites that offer online survey services to create the online questionnaires, then send link that access to the questionnaires to user's emails;
- Create questionnaires as document file format by Microsoft Word (.doc) and then attach these file to email which will be sent to users. Therefore, users can download questionnaires and send them back via email or fax.

### **Using feedback**

Libraries should use feedback to collect data or receive comments from their users. It is not difficult to attach feedback on library's websites. However, feedback is suitable for short questions only.

### ***Using online interview via forums, social networks or online community***

This is a form for exchange information through the Internet that has good effect and become popular in recently years. Libraries should build a forum on the library's websites, join in forums which have same topics or related to library field. This is a good channel exchange information between libraries

and users. On those forums, users will be able to meet and exchange information on topics that interest them, make comments, reviews, opinions and suggestions about all of library activities or just leave questions etc. For the libraries, they can give advice to users, answer the questions, receive feedback from users to improve their activities and promote what they have.

#### *Analyzing the habits and behaviors of users*

Libraries can use tracking software or websites which have tools to analyze such as Google Analytics, Clickheat, ClickTale etc. to follow users when they visit library's websites. Especially, if libraries would like to conduct online marketing, libraries need to know about the number of people access their website, the number of site are considered by visitors, the time visitors stay on their website, how they access library's websites etc. Those information will affect on library's decisions when they design library website and find out solutions to attract users access library's websites.

#### **Conclusion**

Libraries have become aware of the need to market their products and services. Library and information products and services are now being recognized as commodities that can be sold, exchanged, lent, and transmitted. The results of market research will help libraries know many parameters of user's needs, how they evaluate library and information products and services etc. so that libraries can make plans, strategies to improve library evaluation, their products and services as well. Libraries should use online market research due to it has more advantages compare to traditional market research because of faster, easier, low costs etc. It is helpful for strengthen the marketing activities in libraries, especially when user's demands become increasingly complex.

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