



The Need to Consider the Nature of Public Libraries in Providing Services to Businesses

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Article History: Received 19 January 2023 Received in revised form 3 March 2023 Accepted 28 March 2023 Available online 29 March 2023</p> | <p>Objective: Numerous studies highlight the critical role of public libraries during economic downturns, which often lead to increased usage. This study aims to explore the provision of public library services tailored to businesses. Method: The research examines resources related to the role of public libraries in delivering business services, analyzing key factors that contribute to business success. Findings indicate that public libraries can promote economic growth through organizational innovation in business and product marketing, fostering social capital and creativity, and serving as creators and developers of business-oriented services. Conclusion: In light of technological advancements, it is recommended that policymakers and public library administrators enhance the role of libraries to ensure effective service delivery and sustainable revenue generation while prioritizing customer-focused services and user satisfaction. The findings of this study may support income-generating initiatives, business development, and the provision of specialized services in public libraries.</p> |
| <p>Keywords: Public Library, Business, Development, Service, Interaction.</p> | |

1. INTRODUCTION

Public libraries, as free and unbiased communal areas that are open to all, play a critical role in promoting information exchange and knowledge acquisition. They serve as ideal environments for providing guidance and business education [1]. Furthermore, these establishments have historically functioned as repositories of knowledge and as agents for social change in the communities they serve [2].

But today, public libraries are facing various challenges due to technological advancements. The emergence of innovation ecosystems within libraries, which focus on co-creation and coding processes between different agents, has transformed public libraries into community spaces.

The emergence of emerging technologies during the 1980s, the advent of the Internet in the 1990s [3], and the financial downturn and crisis of 2008 [2] served as catalysts for the reformation of public libraries' roles. Public

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libraries have been identified as a key component in promoting economic prosperity and development, and have evolved into critical information service providers for local businesses and communities [4].

Implementing strategic management, business process re-engineering, privatization, and outsourcing are some examples of the business practices that libraries have adopted.

Following increased pressure to operate more like businesses, public libraries have made some changes in response to public and governmental critiques. However, even with the push towards a more business-like model, public libraries have been unable to successfully transition to private enterprise. What is the explanation for this phenomenon, and should public libraries pursue a professional trajectory? These are two ambiguous questions that necessitate critical examination.

Therefore, this study explores the importance of public libraries in facilitating business development and generating revenue, given their limited budget amidst technological advancements. The research provides practical recommendations on how to attract more attention to these institutions to foster economic growth and development in the country.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Public libraries have long been recognized as vital community resources, but their evolving roles in supporting local businesses and fostering economic development warrant closer examination. This literature review synthesizes recent findings on the services that public libraries provide, particularly in the context of business support, and identifies key gaps in the current understanding while suggesting future research directions.

Scott (2011) articulates that public libraries serve as essential community hubs that promote engagement and collaboration among residents [5]. This role extends to businesses, as libraries provide valuable resources such as networking opportunities, market research, and access to information that can aid business development. The adaptability of libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic further emphasizes their capacity to meet the needs of local businesses. Park et al. (2020) note that libraries maintained communication with their communities, offering remote services that were critical for businesses navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic. This adaptability reinforces the argument that libraries must consider their unique nature as community-centric institutions when developing tailored services for businesses [6].

Mainka et al. (2013) highlight the significant contribution of public libraries to culture-led urban regeneration, indicating that libraries can foster entrepreneurship and innovation [7]. This cultural dimension is crucial for businesses, as libraries can serve as venues for promoting local culture and supporting business initiatives. The findings suggest that libraries should leverage their unique position to enhance community economic vitality, thereby establishing themselves as essential partners for local businesses.

Similarly, the discussion on innovations in public libraries during the pandemic points to the necessity of adapting services to meet the evolving needs of businesses. By focusing on innovation and engagement, libraries can fulfill their role as crucial support systems, ensuring that they remain relevant in the business ecosystem [8].

Smith (2020) explores the role of libraries in combating misinformation, which is particularly relevant for businesses navigating a complex information landscape. By providing accurate and reliable resources, libraries can enhance business literacy and informed decision-making. This highlights the need for libraries to recognize their potential as educational hubs for businesses, contributing to a more informed community [9].

The exploration of how public libraries support entrepreneurial researchers underscores the importance of collaboration between libraries and local economic development entities (Gómez et al., 2012). Libraries can play a critical role in fostering entrepreneurship through tailored support and resources, which can significantly impact local economies. This necessitates that libraries consider their unique nature in developing services that effectively meet the needs of the entrepreneurial community [10].

While the existing literature underscores the importance of public libraries in supporting businesses, several gaps remain. First, there is a need for more empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of specific library services

tailored for businesses. Research could explore which services are most beneficial and how libraries can better align their resources with the unique needs of local enterprises.

Additionally, the literature suggests that libraries should enhance their collaboration with academic institutions and economic development organizations. Future research could investigate the impact of such collaborations on business outcomes and community engagement [9].

Finally, as libraries continue to adapt their services in response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of these adaptations on business support services would provide valuable insights into the evolving role of libraries in economic development.

Gichuhi, Onyancha, and Dal (2017) conducted a study on how public libraries in Meru Division, Kenya meet the information needs of small-scale business enterprises (SBEs) in the region [11]. They found that a small number of SBEs who obtained business information from public libraries expressed high satisfaction levels. Standard language is used alongside high-level vocabulary throughout the text, and all sections are commonly included. Public libraries serve a functional and facilitating role in collaborating with like-minded stakeholders to provide business information to SBEs. All technical term abbreviations are explained when initially introduced to maintain clarity. Consistent style and formatting features are observed, with citations marked and filler words avoided. The text is grammatically correct, with precise word choices and balanced positions on subjects striving for formal register writing. The study suggests the equitable distribution of business information and the refocusing of public libraries as hubs for community growth by furnishing business information solutions that are tailored to specific sectors and grounded in values.

In their 2016 study exploring the impact of rural public libraries on small business development in the Appalachian region, Bishop, Mehra and Party concluded that public libraries can provide resources and services that facilitate economic development [12]. These resources include open and public access, adequate space, training opportunities, and access to materials focused on various business-related topics. In this study, objective evaluations and recommendations are provided regarding the evaluation of activities and strategies to improve the efficiency of public libraries. To achieve clarity and logical progression, technical term abbreviations are explained upon first use, and a causal connection is established between statements. The language used is formal, value-neutral, and free from grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. Adhering to academic conventions, the work provides consistent citation, marks quotes, and uses a regular author and institution formatting style.

MacDonald's (2015) investigation aimed to determine the effectiveness of a dedicated business center in providing public library services to the entrepreneurial community as a key success factor. In their research, it was discovered that 57% of respondents expressed the view that a dedicated business center is essential to provide services to the entrepreneurial community. Frequently provided services include organizing workshops and seminars, classes, consultation meetings with collaborating agencies, and a series of research meetings with librarians. The majority of libraries, namely 80%, have collaborated with a social business institution [13].

In their 2007 study on the impact of business services in Japanese public libraries, Tamura et al. demonstrate the diverse range of services offered. The nature and type of services provided are found to be most significantly determined by reference service levels and communication with external bodies and organizations. The complex service provisions are influenced by numerous factors [14].

In conclusion, public libraries are uniquely positioned to support local businesses through their roles as community hubs, cultural centers, and educational resources. The literature reveals a strong foundation for understanding the importance of libraries in fostering economic vitality, but significant gaps remain in empirical research and collaboration strategies. By addressing these gaps, future research can enhance the effectiveness of library services for businesses, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and informed community.

2.1. Organizational innovation in business performance

Innovation is a crucial element in enhancing productivity, competition, corporate existence, progress, and job growth [15]. At present, it pertains to substantial modifications made in products, services, processes, marketing or organization, with the intention of enhancing performance. As organizational environments are becoming

increasingly complex and dynamic, it is anticipated that innovation will have a more significant role in achieving and sustaining a competitive advantage. In today's fast-paced business world, surviving requires paying attention to environmental changes, understanding various aspects of creating innovation in business, and fostering innovation [16]. Organizational innovation refers to an organization's overall capacity to introduce new products to the market or open up new markets, while effectively merging practical goals with innovative behavior and processes [17]. Innovation, on the other hand, involves the introduction of new or enhanced goods, services, processes, marketing strategies and organizational methods that aim to improve overall results and performance [18]. Organizational innovation enhances job satisfaction and work productivity while decreasing administrative and internal expenses for suppliers and customers. Examples of organizational innovation include enhancing knowledge management, restructuring the organization, revising relationships with suppliers and customers, as well as implementing systems for supply chain management, operations management, human resource management, and quality management [19].

In order to be innovative, public libraries must move step by step with the society and its changes and developments. In order to introduce businesses to society and create marketing, they should provide suitable facilities in these centers and be equipped with the most advanced technologies. It is also necessary to teach the librarians in these centers the principles of business so that they can guide and educate customers about business.

2.2. Marketing in the public library

Marketing is a methodical and well-informed process focused on the market and its planning. It involves market research to identify the driving force behind the process. The marketing process endeavors to uncover consumers' undisclosed interests and unfulfilled requirements. The fundamental maxim of modern marketing is to tailor, adjust, implement, and optimize services, amenities, and organizational resources in a manner that results in customer satisfaction. Libraries must re-evaluate their conventional approach to providing services and marketing their products to the community in order to remain competitive in the information market. The library is an organization that operates on a market-oriented basis. Here, the provision, processing, storage, and dissemination of information are geared toward meeting the user's needs. This approach not only focuses on fulfilling current requirements, but also on generating new ones. Marketing has become a crucial factor in the success of both profit and non-profit entities in recent years, making it a key concern for managers and librarians in public libraries. Therefore, providing marketing-based services and attention to public libraries is crucial [20]. The utilization of marketing concepts enhances information needs, fosters effective communication with external users, improves user satisfaction, and ultimately leads to greater efficiency in public libraries [21]. Given the nature of goals, activities, and interactive aspects of public library services, which require an awareness of users' needs, it should be emphasized that the marketing of information services in public libraries goes beyond the librarians' responsibilities, and librarians should consider it an important principle to note [22].

Marketing in libraries and information centers is a crucial process that enables managers and librarians to attain their objectives by catering to customers' needs, ensuring financial independence, and enhancing customer acquisition in today's increasingly competitive market. Furthermore, recovery is a customer-centric approach to attaining satisfaction. It is imperative that library staff do not depend only on visitors and limited services, but rather, develop proactive strategies to engage customers. It is essential to introduce library products and services while comprehending customers' information needs and providing appropriate services. By adopting a strategy of showcasing products to customers, they gain a better understanding of the library products, utilize them, and consequently raise their demands, which leads to improved library services.

The implementation of marketing principles and techniques, as stated by Spalding (2006), can aid in introducing products and services, as well as elevating customers' attitudes, demands, and expectations. Additionally, it can enhance the attitude of managers and librarians towards marketing principles in public libraries [23]. Therefore, marketing in public libraries offers librarians a chance to efficiently and effectively provide their services to users, making it a valuable asset.

2.3. The role of the public library in increasing social capital

Today, the notion of social capital has garnered significant interest. James Coleman, a social scientist, first introduced the term in the late 1980s to refer to the connections between individuals, groups, and communities that create trust and commitment. These types of relationships, which involve expectations, obligations, and mutual trust, act as a form of social currency, enabling people to operate more efficiently [24]. The definition of social capital, according to OECD, is: "Networks that share norms, values, and understandings facilitate cooperation within or between groups [25]. Therefore, social capital relates to extensive networks of social exchanges. The role of trust, cooperation, and interaction between individuals in social capital determines that the more they interact, the more information they gain about one another, and the more motivated they become to trust and participate in civic duties." Access to the physical space and infrastructure of a public library creates an environment that fosters interaction among citizens. Through this interaction, individuals begin to feel useful, ultimately leading to increased social confidence. It is not surprising that public libraries are acknowledged to be a catalyst for enhancing social capital. These libraries provide a communal space for various groups in a community, satisfy different needs, and foster social interaction and trust. In 2000, the New Site Wales Library in Australia conducted a study showing a correlation between library usage and trust levels. The study also demonstrated the library's reputation as a secure and dependable social institution [26].

Therefore, relying on trust as one of the components of social capital, public libraries can create conditions so that collaborative groups in one organization can negotiate with another organization in a safe and reliable environment and obtain appropriate interactions. In this regard, libraries can choose three strategies to create social capital. First, build social capital by working with voluntary associations to find ways to facilitate participation in local community activities. Second, libraries can develop social capital by increasing their capacities as informal meeting places for people, and finally, libraries can create social capital with their role as service providers for people.

2.4. The role of public libraries in economic development

Economic growth and development is a crucial objective for economic planners and executive officials in all societies. Its benefits include enhancing the standard of living, reducing poverty and unemployment, and increasing general well-being. Therefore, achieving growth and development is vital for overall societal progress. In pursuit of economic development, the two main objectives are enhancing the welfare and wealth of society's individuals (thereby reducing poverty) and job creation. Public libraries can aid existing and potential businesses by offering resources [27]. Providing literacy services, job and employment resources, and small business resources contributes to long-term economic success and plays a vital role in economic development. Public libraries can draw in information customers and for-profit services by creating integrated databases that include business information and helpful guides on starting a business. This can be considered a form of economic development. Public libraries can provide a range of valuable resources to support economic development, including authentic business reports, job listings, market research reports, information services, customer research services, and trademark searches.

3. DISCUSSION

Today, due to the developments in the business world, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to offer products and services with the necessary quality and cost-effectiveness without correct management and strategic use of knowledge. In light of these circumstances, libraries are placing greater emphasis on developing business and marketing strategies. Establishing a business involves generating more revenue, boosting profits, expanding partnerships, cultivating a fresh market, and making informed strategic choices [28]. Among the most valuable resources for obtaining career, commercial, and business information are public libraries, which function as centers for learning. Public libraries can assist professionals and job seekers in improving their economic situations and finding jobs that align with their skills.

These institutions have contributed to the success of businesses and entrepreneurs by providing valuable services. To achieve these objectives, library innovation is necessary. Libraries should adopt innovative service methods to provide new technologies for marketing products and businesses. Marketing is a crucial principle that inspires

businesses. It is important for organizations to recognize that since libraries interact with the public, they are better positioned to introduce products to the market or provide informational guidance.

On the other hand, equipping libraries with the latest technologies is essential for providing optimal services. For instance, libraries can foster innovation and better serve their communities by offering catalogs, DVDs, brochures, 3D printers, internet access, meeting halls, and even hiring a marketing expert. Accomplishing this in public libraries necessitates prioritizing social capital, which promotes trust and security among groups. The public library facilitates interactions among people by virtue of serving the general public. It brings together individuals unfamiliar with one another and situates them in a common physical space, fostering socialization.

Such interactions culminate in familiarity and mutual understanding, strengthening trust within the wider community. In view of this, there exists a direct correlation between trust, as embodied by social capital, and library use. Interactions within a shared environment enable individuals to learn from one another and collaborate to foster creativity. Social capital, therefore, promotes creativity and enhances organizational efficiency. Librarians, managers, and officials can attain peak levels of creativity and organizational efficiency by reinforcing social capital among themselves. This can help establish a foundation for offering new and beneficial services to library patrons as a result of cultivating innovative and creative spirit among the librarians. In turn, it can improve library efficiency and lead to enhanced patron satisfaction.

Another topic that is important in the discussion of public library services in providing business services is attention to creativity and novelty in public libraries. If the discussion of creativity and innovation is considered comprehensively in public libraries, It will lead to the growth and flourishing of talents, success in business, quality of services, increase in motivation and production of new goods and will lead to economic prosperity in a nation.

4. SUGGESTIONS

Considering the role of public libraries in providing advanced equipment and tools, besides being able to provide services to organizations and identify talents that remain unknown due to the lack of access to facilities. Based on this, the provision of services to businesses by libraries relies on the categories of business, organizational innovation, marketing in the library, attention to social capital and creation of creativity and innovation, and attention to all these components together leads to economic progress. Therefore, in order to achieve such functions by public libraries, we offer the following suggestions:

Public libraries can promote their services by collaborating with organizations and receiving benefits in exchange. For instance, organizations may send their marketing materials to libraries and delegate promotional tasks to them, while offering discounts or amenities to the libraries. This mutually beneficial partnership allows libraries to showcase their capabilities while enhancing their offerings to the community. Libraries can offer electronic payment options on their website, allowing organizations to sell products to customers with discounts. Customers can easily purchase their desired products through the library's website. Many required resources for customers are often unavailable in libraries, and may be difficult to obtain in the market. Furthermore, given that most customers lack the expertise to prepare electronic books, public libraries can provide access to such books through careful planning. Signing contracts with startups, new businesses, setting up small businesses, and establishing public libraries in close proximity to large organizations can be beneficial.

Declaration

We acknowledge that we used ChatGPT to enhance the academic writing of our manuscript while ensuring the originality and integrity of our work.

Transparency Statement

The data supporting this study are available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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