Perceived outcomes of public libraries and service design

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The main entrance of Tampere city library
A wood grouse in mating display
Participants

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• Sei-Ching Sin
  – Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (The US data)
• Nahyun Kwon
  – Myongji University, Seoul, South Korea
The outline of talk

• Introduction
• Research methods
• Basic library statistics in the 5 countries
• The structure of perceived benefits
• Models explaining the perceived benefits in Finland
• Discussion from the angle of service design
Introduction

- *Outputs* are the products delivered by a system, whereas *outcomes* are the benefits the system produces to its users (Rossi & al. 2004)
- In evaluating systems or services it has been typical to count the # of outputs
  - # of book loans, # of relevant documents retrieved
- Increase in one’s knowledge or recovery from daily responsibilities are examples of benefits (outcomes) produced by the (outputs of) libraries
Research questions

• How frequently do people benefit from public library services in various areas of life in the countries compared?
• Does the structure of benefits vary between these countries?
Data

• A random sample of population aged 15(18)-80 years in each country
• *Finland*: Postal survey 5-6/2010 (N=1000)
• *Norway*: Web panel 9/2011 (N=1001)
• *The Netherlands*: Web panel 9/2012 (N=1502)
• *The US*: Web panel 12/2012 (N=1010)
• *South Korea*: Web panel 2013 (N=1000)
• For the analysis *18-80 years old library users were included*
Measurement

• Major areas of life: 1) education, 2) work and business, 3) everyday activities, and 4) leisure time were differentiated into 19 sub-fields in total based on earlier studies.

• The respondents were asked how frequently they have benefited from public library services in the 19 segments of life listed — Scale: often - sometimes - seldom - never - cannot say.
Areas of life 1-2

• Work and business
  – Finding jobs
  – Executing specific work tasks
  – Developing job skills

• Education
  – Finding educational opportunities
  – Completing formal education (obtaining a degree)
  – Work related educational development
  – Self-education during leisure time
Areas of life 3-4

- Everyday activities
  - Household
  - Childcare and schooling
  - Housing including home repairs
  - Consumer issues
  - Health
  - Travel and vacation
  - Social relations

- Cultural activities
  - Reading fiction
  - Reading non-fiction
  - Cultural activities (e.g. going to theatre or a concert)
  - Creative activities (e.g. playing an instrument or singing)
  - Outdoor activities, exercise, sports
  - Interest in nature (e.g. picking mushrooms or bird watching)
  - Interest in history or society
  - Participating in and following current events
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>The Neth’lands</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>The US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5 347 269</td>
<td>4 920 305</td>
<td>16 655 799</td>
<td>50 734 284</td>
<td>311 591 917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita €¹</td>
<td>28900</td>
<td>47500</td>
<td>32900</td>
<td>22666</td>
<td>36486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3141 Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main libraries</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>9050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch libraries</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>7654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries in total</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>16704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book mobiles (stops)</td>
<td>153 (12378)</td>
<td>29 (1272)</td>
<td>3- (927)</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>696 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening hours</td>
<td>1 399 355</td>
<td>805000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 050 268</td>
<td>36 399 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower years</td>
<td>4756</td>
<td>1 783</td>
<td>5030</td>
<td>7369</td>
<td>137 364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation costs per cap. €</td>
<td>58.03</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>33.90</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>25.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection items⁴ per cap.</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection books per capita</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans per capita</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% borrowers in population</td>
<td>39.2⁵</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>24.1²</td>
<td>35.3²</td>
<td>55 ⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits per capita (physical)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Differences in library statistics

• Library resources and supply per capita largest in Finland and smallest in South Korea
  – # of mobile libraries per capita in South Korea is large, while small in Norway and the Netherlands
  – The US has relative good manpower supply per capita

• % of borrowers in population large in the US in particular, and in Finland and South Korea

• # of loans and visits per capita largest in Finland
  – Loans per capita largish in the US and smallest in South Korea

• The larger the proportion of active users, the greater likely the benefits derived from library use
The proportion of users who have benefited from the public library at least sometimes in various areas of life (%)
The five most popular benefits in the countries compared (% benefited at least sometimes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>The US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
<td>Fun in reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(74)</td>
<td>(44)</td>
<td>(68)</td>
<td>(65)</td>
<td>(74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>Travel &amp; vacation</td>
<td>Educational opportunities</td>
<td>Self education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; vacation</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>Self education</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(61)</td>
<td>(61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural activities</td>
<td>Cultural activities</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Travel &amp; vacation</td>
<td>Educational opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
<td>History &amp; society</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A path model for benefits in everyday activities in Finland (n=856)
A path model for benefits in cultural activities in Finland (n=856)
A path model for benefits in career in Finland (n=837)
Discussion

• The level of perceived benefits across all areas of life is notably higher in the US, Finland and South Korea compared to Norway and the Netherlands.

• In Norway and the Netherlands, benefits are perceived most in culture and then in education, while in the other countries education comes before culture.
  – The role of the public library differs somewhat between these countries.
  – In the former ones, more emphasis on cultural benefits, while in the latter one more on educational benefits.

• The proportion of (active) users in the population an essential predictor of the level in perceived benefits.
  – Differences in library resources and supply, and cultural differences contribute also to benefits.
Discussion

• In all countries users derived most benefits from the public library in reading, self-education, and in the interest in history & society
  – These are the classical and established outcomes of the public library

• In service design emphasis on the services contributing to these benefits
  – Systems and services supporting fiction reading
    • E.g. recommender systems, browsing and serendipity
  – Large and versatile collections a basis for self-education in leisure time
  – Combine encounters and collaboration in libraries with people’s wish to develop themselves by self-education
Discussion

• The mechanisms producing benefits from library use vary by socio-economic groups
  – Older and less educated groups benefit in everyday activities
  – Younger and higher educated groups benefit in career and cultural activities
  – The versatility of library use the major predictor for the level of benefits

• Diversify services accordingly
Thank you!