A Study of the National Library of Thailand’s Users’ Demand for Information and Learning Media about the ASEAN Community

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to study the demand of National Library of Thailand’s users for information and learning media about the ASEAN community (AC). A survey was taken of a sample population of 400 people who came to use the services of the National Library of Thailand in December 2014. The data collection tool was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The data were statistically analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

The results showed that the majority of the samples were female (67.3%), aged 21-30 (51.5%), educated to the level of bachelor’s degree (54.0%) and were students (71.3%). Overall, the samples had a high demand for information about the AC. The topics that they had the greatest demand for information about were 1) the benefits that Thailand will get from being a member of the AC; 2) languages that are necessary and foreign language study for being part of the AC; and 3) how Thai people should prepare for the AC. Overall, the samples had high demand for learning media about the AC. The 3 types of learning media that they had the greatest demand for were Internet (such as the ASEAN Secretariat website or other websites with information about the AC) television programs; and online social media such as Facebook.

The administrators of the National Library of Thailand can use the findings of this research to set a policy for acquiring and managing information resources and learning media about the ASEAN Community (AC) that will accurately meet the needs of the library’s users. Other libraries may also use the conclusions from this research in planning their policies to obtain and organize information resources about the AC.
1. **Background and Significance of the Problem**

At present technology plays a significant role, both directly and indirectly, in everyone’s work and everyday life. The social and economic climate change very quickly and new events and advances happen all the time. Information is the key to the work of every organization. This has brought about a situation of competition to gain the quickest access to current, correct, credible and up-to-the-minute information. Each organization strives to utilize information technology for more efficient and effective management. In the field of education and study, access to information is obviously indispensable.

As Thailand moves forward as a part of the newly-formed AC, schools, universities and other agencies are all speeding to offer new courses and curricula to support this significant international development. Libraries are involved with the AC in many contexts, such as acting as an important mechanism to support and promote heightened relationships among the region’s writers, thinkers, and artists; as well as promoting knowledge and awareness of ASEAN member countries among the general population. Libraries’ primary role at the beginning of the AC may be providing basic information services for Thai people related to the ASEAN economic community and the ASEAN socio-cultural community. Libraries can take immediate action by setting up AC corners or ASEAN info websites.

The National Library has the duty of providing information resources and services in different forms to promote and build knowledge and wisdom for students at all levels and the general public. The National Library has prepared for the emergence of the AC by setting up an ASEAN-related book corner. Next, the National Library needs to continue the process of developing and acquiring more information resources to support the AC. In order to make the process of acquiring new ASEAN-related books and other informational media more complete, up-to-date, and effective, and to meet the needs of library users, the researcher undertook this survey research to assess the actual demand for ASEAN-related information and media among National Library users.

2. **Objectives**

1. To study National Library of Thailand’s users’ demand for information about the AC

2. To study National Library of Thailand’s users’ demand for learning media about the AC
3. Extent of the research

This was a survey of the demand for information and learning media about the AC among a sample population of 400 people who came to use the services of the National Library of Thailand in December 2014.

4. Definitions

Demand for information about the ASEAN Community means National Library users’ desires for receiving information about the ASEAN Community from the National Library.

Demand for learning media about the ASEAN Community means National Library users’ desires for using or accessing media about the ASEAN Community from the National Library.

5. Research Methods

5.1 Study population and selection of samples – The study population was people who use the services of the National Library of Thailand. In the 2014 budget year (October 2013-September 2014) a total of 318,112 fell into this group (data from the Information Resources Services Group, National Library of Thailand). The sample population size was determined using the Taro Yamane method, and the sample population was 400 library users.

5.2 Data collection tools – a 4-part questionnaire was developed by the researcher, consisting of:

1. Personal information about the survey respondents, consisting of demographical data on their sex, age, educational level, profession or status. There were 4 multiple choice questions.

2. Desire for information about the AC. The 20 questions were in the form of a rating scale with 5 levels: highest, high, medium, little and least.

3. Desire for learning media about the AC. The 15 questions were in the form of a rating scale with 5 levels: highest, high, medium, little and least.

4. Recommendations. The question was an open-ended write
in question.

The draft questionnaire was tested for reliability on a sample of 30 people similar to the study population. The Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient for reliability of Part 2 came out to 0.9747 and for Part 3 came out to 0.9605.

5.3 Data collection methods - The researcher coordinated with librarians by explaining to them the objectives of the study and the data collection method, and asked the librarians to hand out the questionnaires to library users and ask them to fill them out and return them.

5.4 Data analysis - Descriptive statistics consisting of frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation were calculated.

6. Results

6.1 Demographics of the sample population

Sex – the majority of sample National Library of Thailand users in this study was female (67.3%) and the remainder was male (32.7%).

Age – the greatest number of samples was in the 21-30 age group (51.5%), while 31.3% was in the under 20 age group and 7.2% was in the 31 – 40 age group.

Educational level - the largest number of samples had completed a bachelor’s degree as the highest educational level attained (54.0%), followed by secondary school or vocational school (31.5%) and higher than bachelor’s degree (10.5%).

Profession/situation – Most of the samples were university or college students (71.3%), followed by civil servants (10.8%) and primary, middle or secondary school students (6.5%)

6.2 Demand for information about the AC

Overall, most National Library of Thailand users had a high level of demand for information about the ASEAN community ($\bar{x} = 3.93$). Divided by topic, the 3 topics that they had the greatest desire for information about were “Benefits Thailand will get from the AC” ($\bar{x} = 4.13$), “Necessary languages and language study to adapt to the AC” ($\bar{x} = 4.11$), and “How Thai people need to prepare for the AC” ($\bar{x} = 4.06$).
6.3 Demand for learning media about the AC

Overall, the sample population had a high level of demand for learning media about the AC ($\bar{x} = 3.88$). Divided by type of media, the 3 types of media that National Library of Thailand users had the greatest demand for were Internet, such as the ASEAN Secretariat website or other websites with information about the AC ($\bar{x} = 4.22$), TV programs ($\bar{x} = 4.17$), and online social media such as Facebook ($\bar{x} = 4.12$).

7. Summary of conclusions

The objectives of this research were to study the demands of National Library of Thailand users for information and learning media about the AC. It was a survey research based on a sample population of 400 users out of a total study population of 318,112 users of the National Library of Thailand in 2014. The sample population size was determined using the Taro Yamane method. Data were collected using a 4-part questionnaire, consisting of Part 1 about demographic data of the samples, Part 2 about their desire for information about the AC (based on a Rankin scale of 1-5), Part 3 about their desire for learning media about the AC (based on a Rankin scale of 1-5), and Part 4, an open-ended question about their recommendations. The draft questionnaire was tested for reliability on a sample of 30 people similar to the study population. The Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient for reliability of Part 2 came out to 0.9747 and for Part 3 came out to 0.9605. The researcher coordinated with librarians by explaining to them the objectives of the study and the data collection method, and asked the librarians to hand out the questionnaires and ask library users to fill them out and return them. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics consisting of frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings were as follows:

7.1 Demographic data of the samples – The majority (67.3%) of samples were female, in the 21-30 age group (51.5%), educated to bachelor’s degree level (54.0%), and currently attending university or college (71.3%).

7.2 Samples’ demand for information about the AC - Overall, most National Library of Thailand users had a high level of demand for information about the ASEAN community. The 3 topics that they had the greatest desire for information about were “Benefits Thailand will get from the AC,” “Necessary languages and language study to adapt to the AC,” and “How Thai people need to prepare for the AC,” in that order.
7.3 Demand for learning media about the AC - Overall, the sample population had a high level of demand for educational media about the AC. Divided by type of media, the 3 types of media that National Library users had the greatest demand for were Internet, such as the ASEAN Secretariat website or other websites with information about the AC, TV programs, and online social media such as Facebook, in that order.

8. Discussion

Overall, most National Library of Thailand users had a high level of demand for information about the ASEAN community. The 3 topics that they had the greatest desire for information about were “Benefits Thailand will get from the AC,” “Necessary languages and language study to adapt to the AC,” and “How Thai people need to prepare for the AC,” in that order. This indicates that most Thai citizens tend to think that Thailand will gain benefits from being a part of the AC, which is consistent with the findings of Sakkrin Niyomsin (2012), who found in a survey of the opinions of university students from 10 countries that the majority of them (88.5%) thought that their home country would benefit from being a member of the AC. The library users in our study also expressed a desire to learn languages, especially the universal language of English, as the best way to improve communications among the 10 ASEAN nations. Similar data was revealed in a study by Panjira Jantakorn et al (2012), who studied the behavior of secondary school students in Udorn Thani Municipality in being exposed to news and information about ASEAN through social media, and found that the skill they most desired to acquire to prepare for the AC was language communication skills (73.25%), as well as a report by Kandawan Kaewpahp (2015), who surveyed accounting students at Bangkok University about their preparedness for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and found that lack of English skills was their main obstacle. Because Thailand’s students are not well prepared in terms of English skills, they should try to develop their skills in English as well as other languages used in the AC. Kaewpahp suggested that there should be a national-level public education campaign to make Thai citizens more aware of the positive and negative impacts of being a member of the AEC.

As for demand for learning media about the AC, overall, the sample population had a high level of demand for learning media about the AC. Divided by type of media, the 3 types of media that National Library users had the greatest demand for were Internet, such as the ASEAN Secretariat website.
or other websites with information about the AC, TV programs, and online social media such as Facebook. This is consistent with the findings of Hataichanok Boonbluk (2012), who did a study of the preparedness of employees of Thai Toray Textiles Mills Public Company Limited to be a part of the AEC and found that they got most of their information about the AEC from public and private sector organizations through the media of Internet and TV. In a study of the media exposure, knowledge, attitudes and behavior trends towards ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) among working people in the greater Bangkok metropolis, Kanokwan Somrak (2012) reported that they were mainly exposed to information about the AEC from television, followed by newspapers and websites. At present, online social media is very prevalent, as indicated by the data reported by Wanwisa Jaroenan (2012), who found in a survey of social media use behavior of residents of Bangkok that 90.0% of the samples surveyed had used social media in the past 30 days and 98.6% used Facebook the most of any online social media. In a study on awareness and attitudes that affected the preparedness of master’s degree students of Srinakharinwirot University to enter the AC labor market, Chidchanok Tongthai (2013) recommended that a webpage should be created specifically to provide basic information about the AC. Therefore, the National Library of Thailand should consider providing more information about the AC through the media of Internet, TV and online social media to meet the needs of its users.

The administrators or other responsible parties at the National Library of Thailand can use the findings of this research as guidelines for the important and challenging task of selecting, acquiring and managing information resources and learning media about the ASEAN Community (AC) that will accurately meet the needs of the library’s users. Assistant Professor Dr. Pimrumpai Premsmit (2012) wrote that a major challenge facing librarians is the task of acquiring information resources that are complete enough to meet the needs of every group of library users. In their role of building up and transmitting information, the library personnel should know what information about the AC is available and where to find it. They should select information resources in accordance with the preferences of the library users and their needs for accessing, utilizing and disseminating the information. For example, many modern day users find it most convenient to access information through social networks on their smart phones.

9. Recommendations

9.1 National Library of Thailand administrators should set a clear policy
for acquiring information resources about the AC in preparation for changes that will come with the advent of the AC. The findings of this study showed that National Library of Thailand users had a high level of demand for information and learning media about the AC.

9.2 The main topics that National Library of Thailand users expressed a desire to learn more about were the benefits Thailand will get from the AC, the necessary languages and language study to adapt to the AC, and how Thai people need to prepare for the AC, so the library should put a priority on obtaining more information resources about those subjects.

9.3 In order to match the types of learning media to best meet the needs of its users, the National Library of Thailand should focus on providing learning media about the AC in the form of informative websites about the AC, television programs, and online social media. A specific web page could be created.

9.4 The research findings can also be of use in providing guidelines for other libraries and similar institutions in their plans to acquire information resources.
References


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