

Marketing Public Libraries: How Irish public library staff perceive national advertising campaigns

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Results

Most respondents agreed that national advertising is an effective way to market public libraries. They also indicated that national advertising is more effective than local promotion, and that it is the most effective promotional tool. Most also agreed that national advertising can help achieve the objectives of the Our Public Libraries 2022 strategy.

Perceptions of the two national advertising campaigns, 'Your Library – Take a Closer Look' and 'Ireland Reads' were mostly positive. Most agreed that the aims of the campaigns were achieved, although less were sure that the campaigns led to an increase in BorrowBox downloads, increase in visits to/requests from the library and an increase in new members.

There was an overall positive perception of the 'Libraries Ireland' brand, both in terms of its look and contribution to promotional activities.

Correlations were found between perceptions and the variables of library experience, current role and location. There were no/negligible associations between perceptions and attendance of a course in marketing as part of library education or as part of a workshop in the last five years.

A strong positive correlation between perceptions of the two campaigns and branding was found, but perceptions of advertising had no or a weak correlation with the other three subjects.

Discussion

Strengths: Design of survey, use of pilot group

Weaknesses: Lack of previous research, response rate.

Limitations: Research design, survey usage, time restrictions, research material access.

Future research: Could be used as a starting point for future research in this area, including replication or adaptation to expand definitions and sample.

Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of using advertising to promote public libraries among Irish public library staff. It also examines the perceptions of two national advertising campaigns and the 'Libraries Ireland' brand. A cross sectional survey design was employed, and a web questionnaire was used for data collection. A simple random sample of 15 was taken from the 30 local authorities in Ireland. The results find that most respondents perceive national advertising as an effective promotional tool. Most also had a positive perception of the two advertising campaigns and the 'Libraries Ireland' brand. Correlations were found with perceptions and the years of library experience, current role and location of a respondent. While perceptions of the two campaigns and branding were correlated, perceptions of advertising were not correlated with the others. The research provides an overview of perceptions of Irish library staff and could be a starting point for further investigation.

Method

Participants: Simple random sample of 15 taken from 30 local authorities to reach public library staff.

Design: see the Research Onion diagram, adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 174).

Materials: Self-administered web questionnaire. Contained 39 questions, included use of 4-point Likert-style scales to indicate perceptions.

Procedure: Email sent to each local authority in the sample with a link to the survey and the information sheet.

References

Enache, I. (2008) 'The Theoretical Fundamentals of Library Marketing', *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, 13, pp. 477–490. Academic Search Complete EBSCOhost [Online]. Available at: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib,cookie,url&db=a9h&AN=36364722&site=ehost-live> (Accessed 22 July 2021).

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research Methods for Business Students*. Harlow: Pearson Education. ProQuest EBook Central [Online]. Available at: <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dbsie/detail.action?docID=5774742> (Accessed: 1 April 2021).

Introduction

Libraries and the services they provide are rapidly changing, making marketing and promotion more vital to enable future growth and to meet strategic goals. Library staff buy-in is central to the success of these activities. They are the most important resource in marketing as their attitudes and commitment are essential factors of success (Enache, 2008). The dissertation adds to the limited literature in this field as there are few studies on how public library staff perceive marketing, promotional tools and/or advertising. There is also little evidence that the perceptions of Irish library staff have been researched to any great degree.

The dissertation is focused on the following research question and sub-questions:

How do Irish public library staff perceive the effectiveness of national advertising campaigns?

- **How do Irish public library staff perceive the LGMA national advertising campaigns, "Your Library – Take a Closer Look" and "Ireland Reads"?**
- **How do Irish public library staff perceive the use of Libraries Ireland branding in advertising campaigns?**
- **How do certain variables influence the perceptions of Irish public library staff?**

