

e-bookstore, UT's Experiences in Distributing Learning Materials

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Acceptance Sub theme:

1. New trends of ODL studies and practices

In 2008 Universitas Terbuka (UT) started to implement the Online Bookstore to serve the need of learning materials for non basic education teacher students. Data in 2011 showed that only 30% of UT's students bought learning materials via online bookstore. This paper shows students' perception in the usage of Online Bookstore as the only one channel to get their learning materials which include the constraints and its solutions. Interesting aspects discussed in this paper are related with implementation of Online Bookstore such as the fact that only small percentage of students who bought the learning material online and constraints faced by student in getting their learning material through Online Bookstore. The data showed that accessibility to internet connection was one of the student's constraints to get the learning materials. Other constraints were due to the lack of knowledge in using the Online Bookstore, and un-availability of learning material needed. This paper also discusses some solution on how students with a limited internet access got their learning materials. The data showed that students with a limited access to internet got the learning materials by creating a study group so that they could buy the learning materials collectively. Other students copy or borrow the learning materials. This paper also presents the constraints that faced by the students who bought the learning material collectively, such as the time constraints as well as the price.

I. INTRODUCTION

Universitas Terbuka (UT) applies an open and distance education system, and it is unique compared to face to face university system. One of the uniqueness is the absence of lecturers who are being replaced by media such as learning materials (LM). The learning materials are developed according to the needs of students to study independently without being limited by space and time.

UT head quarter is located in Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia. Deals with the biggest archipelago country in the world, UT has 37 regional offices (RO's) to serve its students who are spread all over the country with more than 17,000 islands. UT students are classified into basic education teacher student or BETS (341,237 students) and non-basic education teacher student or non-BETS (91,446 students). The vast area of Indonesia affects the distribution of learning materials (LM) to the students. It is easy to distribute LM to BETS, because the students are managed in groups and the curriculum is organized in the form of package per semester. But non-BETS tend to learn individually and independently with wide variety of LM needed, depending on the study program, semester, and curriculum were chosen. The amount of non-BETS are less than 27 percents of all students, but their location spreads all around Indonesia so it requires more complex distribution system. One of the obstacles encountered in the distribution of LM is limitation in transport and delivery services that can reach all around the country, on time.

Before the existence of online bookstore, students buy LM at RO or directly order to the UT's bookstore. In the transaction of buying and selling LM in RO, there are a few things worth noted:

- a. RO should provide stock for entire LM titles.
- b. LM needed a large storage warehouse, in accordance to the number of students.
- c. Warehousing management expertise is necessary in order to manage the LM purchasing process.

The increasing number of student in every RO is causing expansion of warehouses for LM storage. UT offers approximately 1,000 titles of LM that are used by 432,683 students who enroll at second semester of 2011. UT students spread across Indonesia as seen in the table below:

Table 1. The Number of Students Registration in 2011

No	Regional Office	Basic Education Teacher Student (BETS)	Non-Basic Education Teacher Student (Non BETS)
1.	BANDA ACEH	6,692	2,406
2.	MEDAN	15,335	1,198
3.	BATAM	4,713	3,905
4.	PADANG	11,291	983
5.	PANGKAL PINANG	3,746	4,983
6.	PEKANBARU	11,908	2,871
7.	JAMBI	9,042	1,188
8.	PALEMBANG	19,222	2,155
9.	BENGKULU	4,640	1,854
10.	BANDAR LAMPUNG	13,652	2,274
11.	JAKARTA	5,111	5,392

No	Regional Office	Basic Education Teacher Student (BETS)	Non-Basic Education Teacher Student (Non BETS)
12.	SERANG	9,768	1,243
13.	BOGOR	9,882	1,596
14.	BANDUNG	18,634	6,046
15.	PURWOKERTO	18,596	8,483
16.	SEMARANG	25,652	7,635
17.	SURAKARTA	8,776	2,743
18.	YOGYAKARTA	9,793	1,726
19.	PONTIANAK	11,219	4,464
20.	PALANGKARAYA	4,070	1,749
21.	BANJARMASIN	7,782	747
22.	SAMARINDA	7,065	2,628
23.	SURABAYA	17,931	2,160
24.	MALANG	15,592	2,908
25.	JEMBER	4,794	187
26.	DENPASAR	3,196	749
27.	MATARAM	5,291	817
28.	KUPANG	16,759	3,650
29.	MAKASSAR	12,857	4,481
30.	MAJENE	2,033	686
31.	PALU	6,841	1,544
32.	KENDARI	9,685	1,372
33.	MANADO	1,769	1,011
34.	GORONTALO	2,874	667
35.	AMBON	2,417	1,247
36.	JAYAPURA	2,140	1,158
37.	TERNATE	469	540
	Total students	341,237	91,446

Source: BAAPM, UT 2012

II. UT'S e-BOOKSTORE

Although non-BETS are not obligated to buy LM, UT still has to provide appropriate system to support students buying LM. In 2008, UT launched the use of e-bookstore especially for non-BETS. E-commerce as the base of e-bookstore is translated as the process of transferring information, goods and/or services, or payment through phone cable, computer network, or other similar channels (Kalakota and Whinston, 1996). An online shop, e-shop, e-store, Internet shop, web-shop, web-store, online store, or virtual store evokes the physical analogy of buying products or services at a bricks-and-mortar retailer or shopping center.

To conduct transactions through e-bookstore students must have access to the internet first. By using internet, students can get the information quickly and accurately, without spending much money and time to buy LM like it was. The transaction will be processed automatically

after its paid through the appointed bank, and LM will delivered to the students in few days (depends on distance and location).

The procedure and technical instruction to purchase LM in e-bookstore can be viewed and printed out from the website, so that students can learn first before buying it online. Notification and command in using e-bookstore had been given to students over and over before it is officially launched. RO even facilitate students with internet access for them who do not have one.

Based on student registration data, the numbers of non-BETS in second semester of 2011 are 91,446 students (BAAPM UT, 2012). But only a small numbers of non-BETS bought LM using e-bookstore. Daulay (2010) said that only 10.63 percents of non-BETS in RO Surabaya using it. This issue is the main topics of this paper. By analyzing questionnaires and feedback from students, this paper tries to answer the questions why not all of Non-BETS bought the LM via e-bookstore.

III. RESULTS

The answers for the main topic of this paper came from several questionnaires. One of them is questionnaires to students in RO Denpasar, Pekanbaru, and Bandung. In term of ownership and how student get LM the survey showed that 72.7 percents of students have LM by buying while the rest 27.3 percents are not buying. About 30.3 percents of students who buy LM are buying LM through e-bookstore, whereas 42.4 percents are purchased by arrangement through their study group, and 27.3 percents did not give any explanation. Some students did not buy LM because they had borrowed or copied it from other students.

Students who did not buy LM had many reasons for examples they have not internet access; difficult (or do not know how) to use e-bookstore; the price is too expensive and the LM required is not available (correspond to Daulay, 2010, who do the research in RO Surabaya). The solutions for students with lack of internet access to buy LM are by doing purchase arrangement in large group, copies, and/or borrow LM from friend. Purchasing in large group will bring other constraint i.e. ordering process will take time to key in every student names and ID's. To simplify the purchasing process, the group buyer usually uses one of student names and ID in buying registration. The consequence of using one name in buying registration is higher price charged, because on the second purchase to the same LM of one ID name will be charged with public/normal price.

Purchasing LM using e-bookstore system, student has to complete questionnaire about student's satisfaction which is enclosed on the e-bookstore website. The results of data collected in 3 months (January-March, 2012) are:

1. Easiness to understand e-bookstore information in the website

The survey shows 88 percent of students stated that information about the e-bookstore is easy to understand, and only a small proportion (12 percents) said it was not easy.

Comment and suggestions related to the e-bookstore information in website is students are still lacking in understand the procedures, for examples they do not know how to deliver their message, or how to cancel the order, because there's no explanation related on the site.

2. **Easiness to order LM through e-bookstore**

The survey shows majority (78 percents) of students stated ordering materials through e-bookstore is easy (Daulay, 2010) and the other 22 percents expressed not easy.

Students comments related to the easiness of ordering materials through e-bookstore are: a) difficult to see order number; b) student had to paid public price while actually may get student price. That is consequence of using one name for group buyers, according to the regulations for the second purchase of the same LM will be subjected to public price.

3. **Availability of LM status information** (stock availability, successful payments, finalized processing, and delivery process)

The survey shows only 58 percents of students expressed that the status of ordered LM is good while the rest 42 percents is not good. This means that e-bookstore website still lack of information about the status of ordered LM.

Student comments related to the availability of this information are: a) Some LM titles are offered in e-bookstore but in fact not available in stock and this condition is not informed to student (Daulay, 2010); b) e- bookstore still offer old edition (different edition with LM in catalogues); c) LM that had been ordered is not delivered to student even after it was paid. According to interviews with e-bookstore manager, the transactions are delayed because of unclear payment status and the overdue of payment, which both causing automatic cancellation of order. The different edition occurs because of LM display on e-bookstore has not been updated yet. Officers find difficulties to inform to students because students didn't put phone or mobile number in their purchase order, or there is phone number but could not be reached. Actually the pending transaction can be completed but it takes a relatively long time.

4. **Easiness in communication with e-bookstore officers**

The survey shows that 54 percents communication with officers runs well while 46 percents of the students declares not well. This condition shows that the easiness in communication with the e-bookstore officers still needs to be improved.

Student comments and suggestions about the easiness in communication with e-bookstore officers are: a) there should be some special phone line to handle the e-bookstore matters; b) the officers gave no responses to student complaint; c) officers must be friendly.

Regarding to the e-bookstore manager, these may occur because of limited time availability of e-bookstore officers while communication through the phone sometimes very time-consuming. To improve it service, e-bookstore management adding a phone line and increase the number of friendlier staff serving in the e-bookstore.

5. **Speed in responding to customer questions, complaints, and problems** (via fax, email, telephone, mobile phone, and letters)

The survey shows that only 51 percents of students stated that the speed of responding to customer questions, complaints, and problems is well, while the rest 49 percents is not well.

These data indicate that e-bookstore officers still need to increase speed in responding customer complaints.

Student suggestions and comments are: a) no respond given to the complaints; b) officers should do daily checking in email-box for complaint in e-bookstore and right away respond it before student asking confirmation by telephone.

6. Timeliness accuracy according to the received of LM

The survey about timeliness of LM received shows only 58 percents of students expressed on time while the rest 42 percents expressed delay. This means that student acceptance of LM is rarely on time. According to the e-bookstore manager, the delay is likely occurs because the unclear of student address.

Another monitoring system is done by using short message services (SMS) which is done on 14 -18 February 2012. The results are: a) in term of monitoring of timeliness LM acceptance in a week after student's purchasing order, showed that a) 65.5 percents of students stated that they received LM on time and in good condition, b) 2.4 percents said that not all of LM ordered/only partial that received, c) 21.4 percents said that LM ordered have not been received, d) 10.7 percents students explain about nothing related to delivery problems. Relatively high numbers (21.4 percents) of students who have not received their LM shows that UT's delivery system still need to be improved. Manager of e-bookstore said that the delaying of receiving LM is still within the tolerances as mentioned in procedure. Customer should fly complaints if LM did not receive after passing 15 days.

7. Conformity of LM delivered to LM ordered

The survey shows that most students (80 percents) expressed that LM sent from e-bookstore is conform to its ordered, and 20 percents is not conform. The results of this survey indicate that most respondents accept their LM in accordance to their order.

Comments from respondents who said that it was not conform are not found so the incompatibility is not known. Basically if the students receive their LM inappropriately or in poor condition, e-bookstore manager will replace it as long as it is informed to the manager.

CONCLUSION

The e-bookstore is very helpful for UT students in buying LM, but not all students use it. The reasons why not all student buy their LM via e-bookstore are because of no internet access and they can borrow or copy it instead of buying one. Another solution taken by students to have LM is by doing collective purchase.

Constraints during implementation of e-bookstore system are:

- a. No internet access and do not know how to order in e-bookstore;
- b. Availability of LM in e-bookstore
- c. Communicating and responding to student complaints due to problem in order LM

Improvement should be done by UT are

- a. Improve the e-bookstore application more friendly
- b. Suggest to students to access the e-bookstore in internet cafes nearby

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