CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

Introducing qualitative market research to **improve strategy and planning**

KS MARKETING

WHY IT HAPPENED

Lead generation, sales qualified leads, marketing sourced sales opportunities had plateaued. Marketing's contribution to pipeline was pretty static, and commercial contributions were barely improving.

I was taught early in my career about a mistake that a lot of marketing departments (and businesses as a whole) tend to make: they categorise "competitors" as companies that do something similar, when it's really anything that the customer could be spending their money on.

It seemed to me that the marketing was promoting products as if customers had an allocated budget specifically for the product we sold, when in reality we were competing with a much wider range of options.

It turned out that a lot was based on assumptions and anecdotal evidence, received wisdom that had been accepted over years but not really evolved. That posed a question I wanted to answer: **had any of it been objectively checked?**

WHAT I DID

Drawing on my postgraduate training, I created the survey. It included questions that would provide three things:

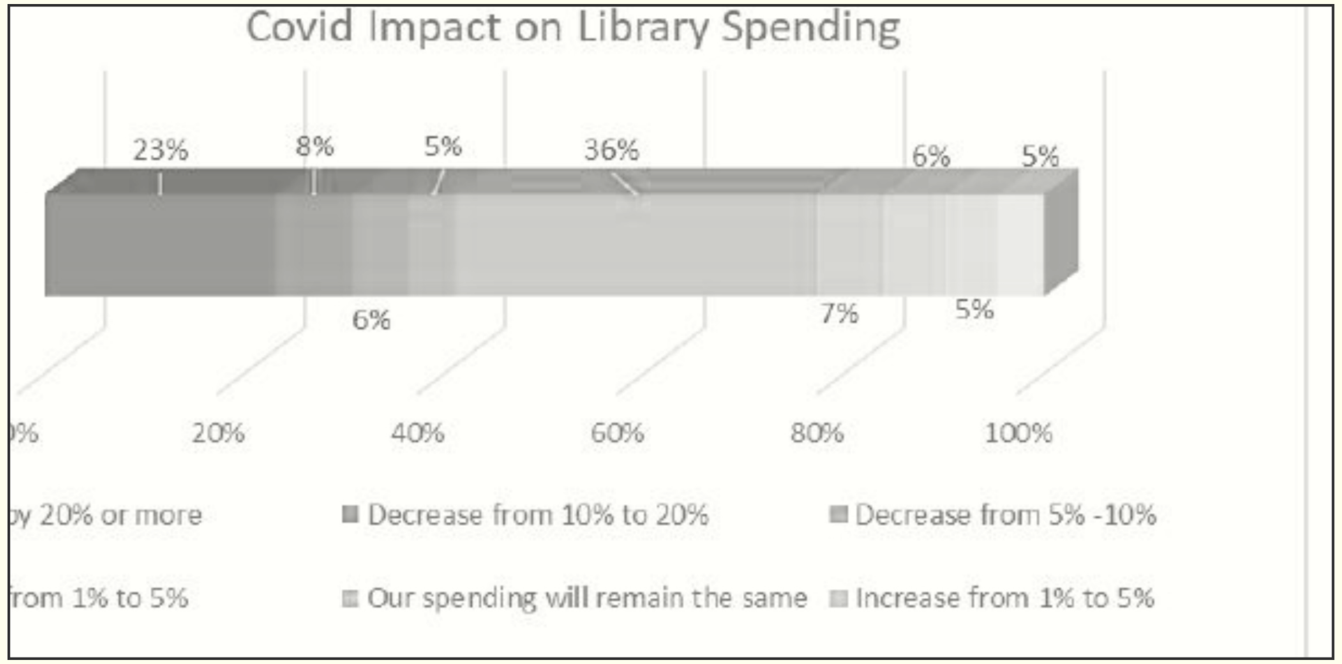
- the purchase decision drivers of different customer groups, allowing us to create personas
- the awareness, consideration, and intent to buy that would allow us to build accurate funnels
- and how they perceived us, allowing us to improve our positioning and offer

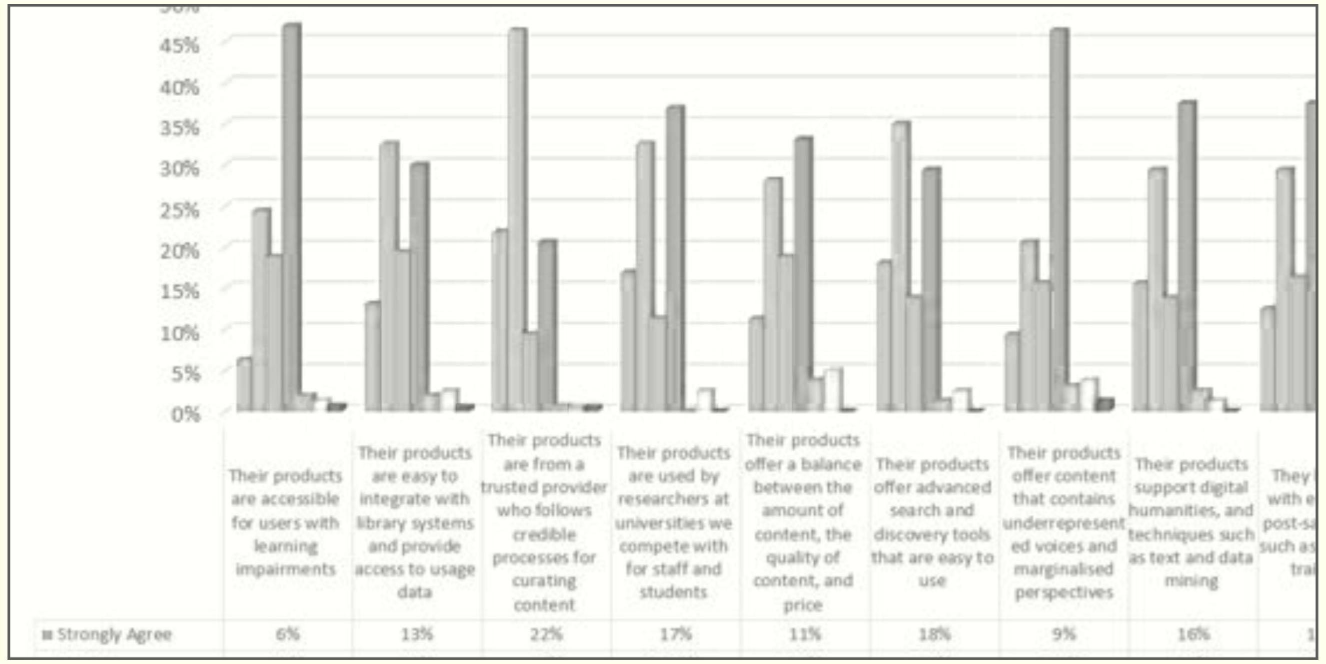
QUESTION	FORMAT	QUESTION & RESPONSES
1	OPEN TEXT	**What country are you based in?**
2	PICKLIST	**What is your job role? (Please select the closest description)**
		Acquisitions Librarian
		Digital Resources Librarian
		General Librarian
		Senior Management/Leadership
		Subject Librarian
3	PICKLIST	**What role do you have in acquiring digital resources for your library?**
		I make the final decision on which products we purchase
		I am part of a group that decides on product purchases
		I assess and recommend products for purchase
4	PICKLIST	**What is the FTE (student and staff) of your institution?**
		0 - 3,500
		3,500 - 7,500
		7,500 - 15,000
		15,000 +
5	PICKLIST	**Which type of digital resource is the priority for your library in the next year?**
		eBooks
		Journal and periodical databases
		Archival material (digitised primary sources)
6	LIKERT (1-7)	**How important are the following factors in selecting a digital product? (1=not important, 7= very importan**
		Accessibility support for users with impairments or other difficulties
		The product is accessible 24/7
		The content includes underrepresented voices and marginalised perspectives
		The product is easy to integrate with library systems, with a low level of technical set-up
		The product is owned and used by researchers at top ranked universities
		The product is used by researchers at universities we compete with for staff and students
		The product offers opportunities that support digital humanities, such as text and data mining

WHAT I DID

That's not all: the questions and structure were designed to get the same information for competitors, allowing us to create funnels for them and see where we were comparatively weak and strong compared to them.

The survey came in at a maximum of 26 questions depending on the answers given to certain questions. For comparison, the North America office's survey was over 90 questions, and still didn't provide all the things that mine did!





WHAT I DID

I then sourced a market research agency to manage the distribution and deliver a preliminary summary of the results. There were a few reasons I made this decision, as there were a lot of things they could do that we couldn't, all of which would hugely improve the outputs of the project.

One, they were able to build the survey with reactive questions, so that previous responses could factored into subsequent ones, which would make the eventual funnels more accurate.

Two, it would keep us anonymous: if we had sent it ourselves, it would have skewed responses given it included aided and unaided awareness questions, and likely biased responses around the strengths and weaknesses of the companies.

Three, they would translate the survey and responses to and from regional languages, increasing the responses to make it more likely we would hit a representative sample.

Finally, they would deliver the survey by telephone in regions where online responses are typically low, further improving the representativeness.

WITH THAT SORTED, THE SURVEY WAS PUT OUT INTO THE MARKET.

IT RAN FOR FOUR MONTHS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE VARYING HOLIDAY SEASONS IN DIFFERENT REGIONS.

ACHIEVED 90% CI AND 10% CL

IMPROVED STRATEGY AND PLANNING

BETTER PERSONAS AND FUNNELS

KS MARKETING

Its practical value was huge, and it allowed us to change a lot of things for the better.

We were able to build funnels which identified areas for improvement, allowing us to set better objectives and fill gaps in problem areas with initiatives like the **Archives Explored** content platform. It provided better customer personas that allowed us to position ourselves against their priorities, which was pivotal to the success of business-critical initiatives like **Gale Accelerate.**

Most importantly, it corrected some misconceptions: it turned out that one of our main competitors was a company that we didn't even consider a competitor(!); and one of the things we heavily positioned on was very low down the customer's priorities when evaluating potential purchases.

ULTIMATELY IT ALLOWED US TO BE MUCH MORE CUSTOMER-ORIENTED, WHICH IMPROVED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT, TACTICAL PLANNING, AND CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT.

AFTER THIS BECAME A YEARLY PRACTICE, THERE WAS CONSISTENT YEAR-ON-YEAR IMPROVEMENT IN BOTH COMMERCIAL AND CHANNEL METRICS.