



User Motivation and Barriers toward Library of Things at ITEBA

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Abstract

University libraries face significant challenges in engaging academic communities in the digital era. This pilot study investigates the motivations and barriers of the academic community at Institut Teknologi Batam (ITEBA) in utilizing library facilities, as an empirical foundation for Library of Things (LoT) implementation. A quantitative descriptive survey was administered to 51 respondents comprising students (74.5%), lecturers (13.7%), and non-academic staff (11.8%). Physical environment comfort (mean = 6.75/10) and conducive learning atmosphere (mean = 6.41/10) are the primary visit motivators, while the absence of engaging programs (43.1% agreement) and inflexible operating hours (37.3% agreement) are the main barriers. A total of 72.5% of respondents expressed strong interest in gamification-based reward programs. These findings provide a preliminary framework for designing a Library of Things platform at ITEBA that integrates non-book item lending with gamification mechanisms and user experience-centered digital service design.

Keywords: library motivation, Library of Things, gamification, academic library, ITEBA

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1. Introduction

University libraries are central to academic life, serving not merely as repositories for printed materials but as dynamic centers for learning, research, and intellectual development [1]. However, the widespread availability of digital information has fundamentally altered how academic community members seek and consume knowledge, resulting in measurably declining physical library visits in institutions across the developing world [2]. This creates an urgent imperative for library administrators to innovate service models that remain relevant and engaging in the digital era.

One emerging innovation gaining global traction is the Library of Things (LoT) model — an expanded library service framework that allows community members to borrow physical objects beyond books, including electronic devices, artistic tools, cameras, musical instruments, and scientific equipment [3]. Grounded in principles of the sharing economy and circular economy [4], [19], LoT programs aim to maximize resource utilization, reduce individual ownership costs, and foster a culture of communal sharing within institutional communities [4]. Pioneering implementations have demonstrated the viability of LoT as a transformative library service model, and

early adoptions are beginning to emerge in Asian universities [1].

Institut Teknologi Batam (ITEBA), a developing higher education institution in Batam, Kepulauan Riau Province, Indonesia, represents a contextually relevant site for exploring LoT implementation. Preliminary observation suggests a gap between the potential of the existing library infrastructure and the actual engagement levels of its academic community. This gap motivates systematic inquiry into the factors shaping library visitation behavior among ITEBA community members.

Prior research has consistently identified physical facility quality, collection relevance, operating hours, and programmatic offerings as key determinants of library use among university students [5], [6], [7]. In parallel, gamification — the application of game design elements in non-game contexts to enhance user motivation and engagement [8] — has emerged as a promising strategy for increasing library service uptake. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that well-designed gamification systems significantly increase user engagement when they align with users' intrinsic motivations [9], [24], and such programs in library contexts have been associated with meaningful increases in visit frequency [10].

The circular economy perspective [19], [20], [21] further reinforces the rationale for LoT: under a circular economy framework, resources are kept in use for as long as possible, extracting maximum value before recovery and regeneration. The sharing platform model [1], [22] operationalizes this principle within campus communities by enabling the communal use of underutilized objects rather than individual ownership — thereby reducing waste and fostering a culture of sharing [1], [4].

Despite the relevance of both LoT and gamification to the Indonesian higher education context, no formal study has yet examined library usage motivation or barriers in relation to LoT implementation feasibility at Indonesian universities. This pilot study addresses this gap by: (1) profiling library visit behavior among ITEBA academic community members; (2) identifying primary motivations for library use; (3) mapping perceived barriers to library engagement; and (4) gauging interest in gamification as a motivation-enhancement strategy. The findings are intended to provide an empirical foundation for the design of a user-centered Library of Things platform at ITEBA.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design with a cross-sectional survey approach. The study is classified as pilot research, intended to test the survey instrument and explore the phenomenon before a full-scale investigation [11]. The target population comprised the entire ITEBA academic community — including active students, full-time and part-time lecturers, and academic and non-academic staff. Participants were recruited via purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: (a) currently active status as an ITEBA community member, and (b) voluntary willingness to participate. A total of 51 respondents fully completed the survey instrument.

2.1 Survey Instrument

The instrument was developed as an online questionnaire via Microsoft Forms, structured into four parts: Part 1 collected demographic information (status, study program, gender). Part 2 assessed library visit profile (frequency over the preceding three months and types of activities performed). Part 3 measured motivation across seven statements using a 0–10 numerical scale. Part 4 assessed six perceived barrier items and four gamification interest items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument also included open-ended questions on preferred gamification challenge types and desired reward mechanisms.

2.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Open-ended responses were analyzed through thematic categorization. Data were processed using Microsoft Excel and reported in tabular form.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Respondent Demographic Profile

A total of 51 respondents participated in this study, representing three distinct groups within the ITEBA academic community, as shown in Table 1. The sample was dominated by students (74.5%), reflecting the primary user population of the ITEBA library. The high proportion of Visual Communication Design students (70.6%) is attributable to the study's departmental focus and is particularly relevant for LoT implementation considerations, given that DKV students have demonstrated needs for specialized equipment — cameras, drawing tools, and digital devices — that align well with the LoT service model [1].

Table 1. Respondent demographic characteristics (N = 51)

Category	Classification	n (%)
Status	Students	38 (74.5%)
	Lecturers	7 (13.7%)
	Non-academic Staff	6 (11.8%)
Gender	Female	27 (52.9%)
	Male	23 (45.1%)
Program	Visual Comm. Design	36 (70.6%)
	Other Programs	15 (29.4%)

3.2 Library Visit Profile

Table 2. Library visit frequency distribution (last 3 months)

Visit Frequency (Last 3 Months)	n	%
Never	10	19.6
1–2 times	17	33.3
3–5 times	14	27.5
6–10 times	3	5.9
More than 10 times	7	13.7
Total	51	100

3.3 Library Visit Profile

Table 3 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for seven motivational statements rated on a 0–10 scale. Physical comfort ($M = 6.75$, $SD = 2.58$) and conducive learning atmosphere ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 2.67$) ranked as the highest motivators, confirming that the library's spatial and environmental qualities are the principal drivers of visitation. This finding aligns with the "library as place" concept [12], wherein the physical setting serves as a critical component of perceived service value. The relatively high standard

deviations across all items (range: 2.45–2.84) indicate considerable individual variation in motivation. Notably, the lowest-rated item concerned borrowing books due to limited digital access ($M = 4.53$), suggesting that digital resource availability is not a primary constraint — a factor that should inform LoT collection strategy.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for library motivation items ($N = 51$)

Motivation Statement (Scale 0–10)	Mean	SD
I feel comfortable studying in the library	6.75	2.58
The atmosphere supports focused learning	6.41	2.67
I feel more motivated after visiting	5.61	2.80
I am more productive in the library	5.57	2.74
Library provides relevant references	5.57	2.45
Book collection matches study needs	5.08	2.84
I borrow because digital access is limited	4.53	2.60

3.4 Barriers to Library Engagement

Table 4 displays response distributions for the six barrier items (SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree). The most widely endorsed barrier was the absence of engaging information or events ($A+SA = 43.1\%$), followed by location accessibility concerns ($A+SA = 39.2\%$) and inflexible operating hours ($A+SA = 37.3\%$). Notably, physical facility inadequacy received comparatively lower endorsement. This indicates that ITEBA's library barriers are primarily programmatic and temporal, rather than infrastructural — meaning programmatic improvements such as LoT services and gamification programs can be implemented at relatively low cost [7]. This is consistent with circular economy principles emphasizing value creation through service innovation rather than resource acquisition [20], [21].

Table 4. Barrier item response distribution ($N = 51$)

Barrier	SD	D	N	A	SA
No engaging info/events	4	8	17	13	9
Inflexible operating hours	4	8	20	13	6
Location too far	3	12	16	11	9
Difficult to find needed books	2	6	26	13	4
Study space uncomfortable	10	11	17	7	6
Facilities inadequate (AC, Wi-Fi)	10	17	11	10	3

3.5 Interest in Gamification

Table 5 presents the distribution of responses to gamification interest statements. The finding that 72.5% of respondents expressed positive interest in a reward-based program — with zero strongly

disagreeing — represents the most strategically significant result of this study. Analysis of open-ended responses revealed that the most preferred challenge formats were semester-long reading goals (e.g., reading five books per semester), daily check-in systems, and book-based quizzes. Preferred reward types included canteen vouchers, tuition fee discounts, and free books. This interest pattern aligns with what Hamari et al. [9] describe as "motivational affordance" — the potential of gamification elements to simultaneously address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations [24].

Table 5. Gamification interest response distribution ($N = 51$)

Gamification Statement	SD	D	N	A+S A
Interested in reward program (points/badges/voucher)	0	1	13	37 (72.5%)
Game/challenge approach increases visits	0	3	21	27 (52.9%)
Want recognition/prize for activity	3	5	18	25 (49.0%)
Interested in reading challenge (5 books/semester)	1	6	20	24 (47.1%)

3.6 Implications for Library of Things Design

Synthesizing these findings through a design thinking and service design lens, several implications emerge for LoT implementation at ITEBA. First, given that physical environment quality is the primary motivational factor, any LoT platform must enhance — rather than disrupt — the library's existing spatial character. Second, the high interest in gamification suggests that integrating reward mechanics into the LoT borrowing system (e.g., awarding points for borrowing items, completing challenges, or returning items on time) would be a high-leverage engagement strategy. Third, the programmatic nature of identified barriers indicates that LoT's additional service offerings — workshops, equipment demonstrations, and creative challenges — could directly address the "no engaging events" barrier identified by 43.1% of respondents. Fourth, the finding that DKV students form the largest user group creates a natural first-cohort opportunity: photographic equipment, drawing tablets, and design tools represent logical first-wave LoT collection items [1]. Furthermore, from a product-service system and circular economy perspective [23], LoT operationalizes the shift from product ownership to service access, extending the useful life of equipment and reducing acquisition waste within the campus ecosystem [19], [22].

The platform design should also draw on emerging library platform digitalization frameworks [25], [26] to

ensure that the LoT system's digital layer — including real-time availability displays, booking systems, and gamification dashboards — is intuitive and accessible. Community engagement strategies developed in cultural heritage contexts [17], [18] offer transferable insights for building participatory ownership of the LoT program among ITEBA's academic community.

From a Visual Communication Design (DKV) perspective, the barrier findings provide concrete directions for design-based intervention in the LoT platform development. The finding that 43.1% of respondents identified the absence of engaging programs and events as the primary barrier highlights the need for a well-developed visual communication strategy for the LoT program. A consistent visual identity system for LoT ITEBA, covering promotional materials, wayfinding signage within the library space, and digital interface elements, can communicate the program concept clearly and attractively to ITEBA community members. It can't be argued that the visual representation of a program significantly influences its perceived accessibility and appeal among potential users. For the digital platform layer, DKV principles applied to the LoT website or application should prioritize intuitive information hierarchy, clear item category iconography, and a visually engaging gamification interface with point displays, badge systems, and reward redemption dashboards. Those visual elements serve a dual function: addressing the barrier of low program awareness while simultaneously reinforcing platform usability for first-time users. To address the location accessibility barrier (endorsed by 39.2% of respondents), strategically placed directional materials and visual cues at key campus touchpoints are recommended to reduce the perceived distance to the library and encourage more frequent visits among ITEBA students.

3.7 Limitations and Future Work

This study has several limitations. The sample size ($n = 51$) and the dominance of DKV respondents (70.6%) limit the generalizability of findings to the broader ITEBA community. As pilot research, the instrument has not undergone comprehensive psychometric validation, and the cross-sectional design captures motivations at a single point in time. Future research should expand the sample to achieve proportional representation across all ITEBA study programs, apply structural equation modeling to identify causal relationships among motivation, barrier, and visit frequency variables, and conduct an experimental evaluation of a gamification-integrated LoT prototype to measure actual behavioral outcomes.

4. Conclusions

This pilot study has successfully mapped the motivational landscape and principal barriers shaping

library engagement among the academic community of Institut Teknologi Batam (ITEBA), establishing an empirical foundation for the design of a Library of Things platform. Physical environment comfort emerged as the dominant motivator ($M = 6.75/10$), while the absence of engaging programs and inflexible operating hours were identified as the primary barriers — both programmatic in nature and addressable without major infrastructure investment. The finding that 72.5% of respondents expressed strong interest in gamification-based reward programs is particularly consequential: ITEBA's academic community is both receptive to and motivated by innovative engagement mechanisms. These converging findings support a design approach for ITEBA's Library of Things system that centers on: (1) preserving and enhancing the physical comfort that motivates current visitors; (2) diversifying the borrowable collection to include items relevant to Visual Communication Design and other program needs; (3) integrating a gamification layer — including point systems, challenges, and reward redemption — into the digital LoT platform to sustain user engagement; and (4) extending operating hours to accommodate evening students. Rooted in sharing economy and circular economy principles [19], [20], [22], the proposed LoT model positions ITEBA's library as a resource-efficient, community-oriented hub that maximizes the value of existing assets while fostering a culture of sharing [1], [4]. This study contributes to the nascent body of literature on LoT implementation in Indonesian higher education and offers a replicable pilot methodology for other institutions considering similar service innovations.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	S	V	F	I	R	D	W
Tommy Andrea Gunawan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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C: Conceptualization | M: Methodology | So: Software | Va: Validation | Fo: Formal Analysis | I: Investigation | R: Resources | D: Data Curation | W: Writing – Review & Editing

Conflict of Interest Statement

Authors state no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, T.A.G., upon reasonable request.

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