Information needs and information channels at a kibbutz: a case study / Gitit Ben-Lulu Hatamoff

ABSTRACT

Information needs are growing rapidly in this generation of information society, and are becoming more significant and crucial. As technology advances more sources of information are available, via the internet and other channels, and the need for information for daily problem solving is growing. Our systems have become more complex and alienated and there is a growing need for tools to help us find our way whenever dealing with the local and federal authorities and with the business world (Stanton-Jones, 1978).

There is therefore a great importance to identify the information needs of the community in order to come up with ways to provide those needs.
Research has been conducted in Israel regarding information needs of urban community. Varda Shemesh, for example, researched the information needs of the people who live in the city of Hertzelia (shemesh, 2002).

The uniqueness of this research is the fact that it is dealing with information needs of a kibbutz, which represents a unique type of collective settlement that have unique characteristics and needs in comparison to urban society.

The information needs of the kibbutz in the 21st century are different from those of the previous century. The kibbutz has undergone a process of privatization and capitalization, which placed great importance on gaining professional information and knowledge faster in order to successfully make it to the era of the information society. The kibbutz started understanding that basing the livelihood solely on agriculture is no longer possible (rosener and getz, 1996). There is a need for a modern industry, and to run the kibbutz like any other business enterprise. Therefore there is a need for available information as a necessary ingredient for survival.

The objective of this research is understanding the information needs and analyzing the existing information channels of the kibbutz, and accordingly giving recommendation on the optimal channels, and transforming the analogous information into a digital form. This has been obtained by a partly predefined interview by which questions were asked of members of the kibbutz, and by getting to know many of the members of the kibbutz and their unique information needs. According to the theory introduced by Shifra Baruchson Arbiv, Understanding the information needs is the basis for planning and forming information services in the digital form that can meet those needs. This theory explains the importance of using technology to meet human needs in order to improve the quality of life of the community and the individual (Baruchson-Arbib, 2000; Baruehson-Arbib, 1996). The population interviewed included 14 members who were interviewed, while one member

brings the other. The second part of the interview was aimed at collecting demographic and socioeconomics data.

The definition of kibbutz is collective settlement of people who live communally on the basis of collective ownership over assets, equality in consumption and education (Chaim Gabaty, 1987). This definition corresponds to that of King's (1971) who defines community as *a* unit which includes people who cooperate in all material aspects of life in order to exist economically, socially, and culturally.

The main findings: This research reveals information needs of the kibbutz members while the majority of those needs could be defined as basic ones for daily life. The more basic the needs were the more members raised them.
The most important information needs were relating to the medical center, culture, home maintenance, hours of reception of the public at the main office, and hours of the grocery store. All the interviewees raised the need for information regarding these issues, and expressed their opinion regarding the supreme importance of making the information highly available.

Other information needs there were mentioned with high importance were related to transportation, medical equipment, and communication. Next priority was needs such as the kibbutz' committees, financial issues, school, education, and consumer's rights. The last priority included issues such as babysitting an hours in which the hairstylist is available.

The purpose of the information channels is basically to provide the kibbutz members with information needed. There are more effective and efficient channels and there are less ones. But the existing channels at the kibbutz are not necessarily in accordance with the existing needs. Additionally, there are needs that no existing channels provide.

The prevalent information channels in the kibbutz are an internal TV channel which provides information regarding various services that the kibbutz offers to its members. The main problem in this channel is the fact that it is not updated frequently enough. There is bulletin board which is located in the cafeteria. The main problem with that is accessibility, updatability, and waste of paper. There are human information channels such as the person in charge of cars and the secretary of the kibbutz.

The kibbutz issues booklets which include information regarding various issues. The main problem with that is accessibility, waste of paper, and the fact that they are limited only a few issues.

Additional channel is the fliers which are delivered to the post box of each kibbutz home, and they include information regarding various issues. The main problem with that is accessibility, waste of paper, and the fact that they are limited only a few issues.

This research focused on two major questions: 1. What are the main information needs of the kibbutz members, which channels are applied and why? 2. Does the library serve as center of information source, and is there a preference that it would?

These two questions touched various aspects of information needs and channels, and they were based on qualitative research method, and were analyzed in the research.

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