

A study of the application of marketing practices in the provision of the information services based on 4Ps marketing mix model. Case study: academic libraries in North Khorasan Province

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Abstract. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the role of marketing practices in the provision of information services in academic libraries in North KHORASAN province using 4Ps marketing mix model in the academic year of 2014-2015. This study explores the relationship between the application of marketing practices and the provision of information services in the academic libraries in North KHORASAN province based on 4Ps marketing mix model. This is an applied research which uses a survey methodology for data collection. In this study, the full-time faculty members and students of the universities in North KHORASAN province were the statistical population out of which a sample of 157 subjects were selected using stratified-random sampling method.

The main data gathering instrument was a questionnaire, the validity and stability of which were evaluated by alpha factor using SPSS software. The results indicate the existence of a significant and direct relationship between the use of marketing practices and provision of information services. Also, the findings of independent t-test suggest the absence of any meaningful relationship between men and women in terms of their views about marketing practices. Further, the results of one-sided variance analysis revealed that six universities under study were not significantly different with respect to the five research variables.

Keywords: Marketing, Marketing in libraries, 4Ps mix marketing model

1. Introduction

As defined by dictionaries, marketing is “the provision of goods or services to meet the needs of customers”. In other words, marketing involves perceiving customer needs and adjusting products to meet those demands in a way that is profitable for an enterprise. Successful marketing requires presenting right product, at the right time and at the right place, ensuring that the customers are aware of the release of a new product and thereby preparing the grounds for

future orders (Westwood, 2010). Marketing is often described as a set of strategies and techniques, which are postulated to be outside the realm of Library and Information Science. However, all people, as information experts and consistent with their occupational position and the types of services they offer, are willingly or unwillingly involved in the marketing process. On the one side, there is the issue of information service and on the other side, there are users whose needs have to be determined and met. Therefore, the provision of services and information products in the absence of any efficient and effective marketing plan will be inadequate (Norouzi, 2007). Marketing means the selection of target markets, not a blind attempt to conquer a market and provide everyone with everything (Alizadeh, 2006). The general concept of marketing is an organized process of planning, implementation, pricing, promotion and dissemination of ideas, products and services for individual and organizational satisfaction. The information centers, obliged to organize information services to achieve their goals and deliver them to the actual users, should take advantage of marketing models and experiences. It should also be noted, nonetheless, that there is a disparity between the views of marketing information services and those of marketing sales. In fact, the main purpose of marketing information services is to meet the demands of users (customers), which are accomplished after the identification and understanding of customer needs. Therefore, it is necessary to take advantage of marketing experiences and accept its general framework with the aim of determining the main elements of marketing information services and developing the appropriate marketing plan and method of propagating services and products.

2. Theoretical foundations of the research

A variety of definitions have been proposed about the marketing concept, with some perceiving it as a set of related businesses, a commercial phenomenon, an economic process, an exchange or transfer of ownership of goods and a balance of supply and demand, among many other things. Each of these definitions portrays a part of the marketing activities (Rousta, Venus and Ebrahimi, 2010). Third generation Marketing (Marketing 3) seeks to address issues beyond human needs. This type of marketing, as KOTLER says, goes beyond the individuals and their needs. The main parameters of this kind of marketing is also dependent on customer awareness, where spiritual needs are given priority and the public opinions and views are more powerful than rules and regulations set by states (Rezaeian, 2011).

The concept of marketing management: the marketing management is the analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of programs to develop, deliver and maintain the process of a profitable transaction with purchasers in order to achieve organizational goals; therefore, the marketing management involves managing demands, which in turn entails the maintenance of an efficient relationship with customers (Arablou, 2010).

Marketing concepts in libraries: marketing is a management process including marketing planning, marketing research, market segmentation and marketing mix. In developing a marketing plan, a library should focus on objective analysis, resources, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation functions (Safavi and Moradi, 2012). Khosravi (2011) also considers marketing as a strategic program that draws on research to develop the facilities and capabilities of libraries with the aim of effective prediction and fulfillment of customer needs.

The function of marketing in libraries involves an exchange process in which valuable features are exchanged between the producer (library) and customers. This process begins with the analysis of library community - to determine the customer demands—and ends with the relationship between community and library –which provides access to goods and fulfill respective needs. In this regard, it should be noted that there is no definite record on the exact time of incorporating marketing techniques in libraries. In fact, in the past librarians used to employ marketing techniques in their practice unconsciously so that many librarians made decisions regarding the physical location of libraries, opening hours, development of new services and facilities, provision of services based on individual clients or client groups and for-profit or non-profit nature of services on their own (Khosravi, 2014). According to the definition of marketing, i.e. a reciprocal exchange, it can be posited that such a concept is barely acceptable in the world of librarians because libraries are commonly regarded as non-profit institutions in which the money exchange, with some exceptions, is a peripheral issue. In this regard, two types of marketing can be envisioned. The first one is **hard-sale** marketing in which for-profit institutions convince their clients to use services and products that are unnecessary.

In contrast, the concept of **soft-sale** is based on an approach where customer expectations and satisfaction are at the center. It is well known to the librarians that their clients are not usually certain about what they want as they are often unable to fully express their information needs. This leads to an acknowledged fact, namely “the customer is always right”. Here, the word customer refers to consumers, clients and users (active and potential) in the library (Ziaee, 2007).

The place of marketing practices in libraries: marketing mix is a comprehensive package consisting of elements that shape the product –whether goods or services - and the market, and is designed and implemented to support the services of an organization and achieve their desirable goals and missions (De SAEZ, 2001). Describing the marketing mix, Kotler says “... it is a set of controllable variables through which a firm influences the target market.” To him, any variable that is under the control of the organization and affects the customer responses is seen as a marketing variable (Basirian, 2009).

Marketing mix is a key concept in libraries and information centers, but prior to the adoption of strategic decisions, it needs to be fully appreciated. Similar to all concepts and techniques of marketing mix, it is an integral part of the marketing plan that deals with issues such as environmental conditions, market research, identification of users and clients, and delivery of quality products and services

(De Saez, 2001). COPLEY (2004), following Kotler, defines the components of the marketing mix as product, price, place and promotion or what is known as 4Ps. Some scholars like De SAEZ & Booms & BITNER (2001) maintain that libraries and information centers, in addition to the above 4Ps, should take into account three other components, known as 3Ps, including participants, physical evidences and process.

Of course, libraries and information centers have not been successful in employing 7Ps, and there is still special emphasis on using 4Ps as the most practical marketing mix (Basirian, 2010).

4P marketing mix practices in libraries: the marketing mix includes products (books, periodicals, oral programs, bibliographies, annual reports, statistical surveys and electronic resources and services), price (in form of credits, discounts, cash, etc.), place (including coverage, distribution channels, inventories, locations and transport) and promotion (through advertising, personal sale and public relations) (Safavi and Moradi, 2012). Among various marketing mixes, 4P marketing mix is currently the most widely used practice in libraries around the world, a fact which is evidently seen in the review of literature (Basirian, 2009). The following section describes each of the four following elements of 4P marketing:

Product: The product of libraries and information centers is programs and services that best meet the needs of the target market (Alizadeh, 2006). "Kotler" (1984) defines a product as "anything that can be provided to absorb or provide access to the market use with the aim of meeting the needs or expectations of customers. The product consists of the goods and services, individuals, places, organizations and ideas" (quoted in De Saez, 2001). In 2000, he further adjusted this definition: "Product refers to anything which can be provided to fulfill market requirements or needs. Products encompass goods and the services, experiences, events, people, places, properties, information, and ideas."

Price: Marty (2000) believes that all libraries in the modern era face with the same scenario: "more works but fewer revenues. Norouzi (2007) prefers to use the term **Cost and profit** instead of the word *price*, which has not been integrated in the world of librarians. De SAEZ (2001) notes that price does not necessarily mean cash value; instead, marketing involves an exchange process in which the payment is made to compensate for time, energy or other opportunities and activities provided for the customers. On the other hand, some believe that since libraries are essentially non-profit organizations, they should not be concerned with the issue of pricing services; however, the issue of prices can be dealt with effectively through participation in how library budgets are spent so as to optimize the way resources are provided for user community;

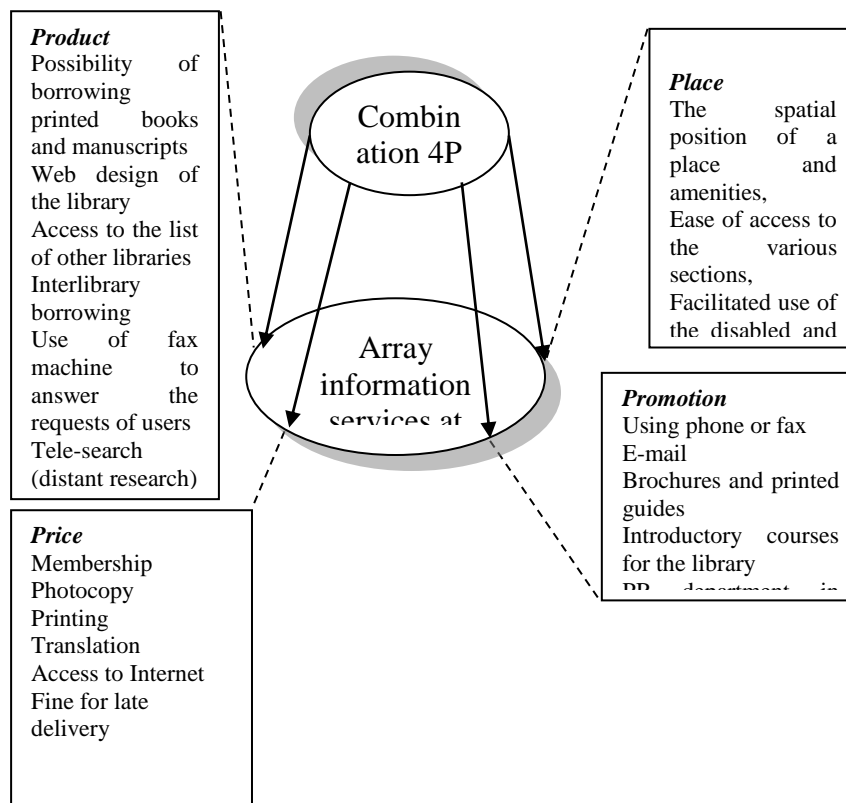
Place: place refers to the distribution venue of products and services of a library. In many libraries, the definition of place is restricted solely to the library building but at the modern time, the notion of place refers to computer databases or telephone communications serving as a center for the transfer of information to users. This definition overcomes many of the shortcomings imposed by the term *building* on the concept of *place* (Leisner, 1995). Leisner further stipulates

that perhaps the only downside of this definition for libraries is that it dramatically reduces their **exposure**.

Promotional activities: promotions used to refer to the availability of sufficient information to potential and actual users of services (Norouzi, 2007). Some are under the false impression that promotional activities is synonymous to public relations (Alizadeh, 2006), but the truth is that based on these components, customers become aware of the benefits of products and their applications. According to De Saez (2001) librarians and informationists are more comfortable with promotional activities compared to other fields of marketing (Basirian and Naderi, 2009).

According to the above points, in this research 4Ps marketing mix method has been used. In the following conceptual model, the relationship between marketing mix elements and information services has been presented.

Figure 1: The following conceptual model combines four elements (4P)



3. The combination of marketing mix elements. Provision of information services in the target market (libraries)

<i>Place</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Promotion</i>	<i>Price</i>
The spatial position of a place and amenities, Ease of access to the various sections, Facilitated use of the disabled and the blind, Sound-proof walls, Appropriate flooring, Existence of a suitable study hall and auditorium, Attractiveness of the library building	Possibility of borrowing printed books and manuscripts Web design of the library Access to the list of other libraries Interlibrary borrowing Use of fax machine to answer the requests of users Tele-search (distant research) Consulting services The access of users to computers and Internet Preparation of databases Subscriptions Translation services Access to photocopy and print services	Using phone or fax E-mail Brochures and printed guides Introductory courses for the library PR department in libraries	Membership Photocopy Printing Translation Access to Internet Fine for late delivery

4. Review of Literature

The origin of marketing research dates back to 1970s. In Iran, the concept of marketing in libraries was first introduced in 2006 and since then many scholars were studying this issue. Kauar (2009) investigated the marketing of 22 libraries in Malaysia (18 public libraries and 4 non-governmental libraries) through

Websites. The results showed that 20 university websites had a bilingual website, 12 libraries (45%) had links to other libraries, 12 websites (45%) had links to newspapers and 10 websites (45%) had link to the search engines.

Mu-Chen Wu (2008) did a study to determine the marketing indicators in academic libraries of Taiwan using the Delphi technique. In this study, he focused on three aspects: a) 4Ps in marketing b) 4Cs in marketing and c) 3Ps in the service industry characterized by the digital age features, indicating the weight of each of the above factors in a pattern. The results showed that in indicators under study, 4Ps marketing had the highest weight (41.3%), followed by Internet Marketing (32.7%), and service industry (26%), which had the least weight.

Ward et al (2007) investigated the presentation of monetary services in academic libraries based on the principle of cost-efficiency (cost-benefit). Their study on three universities of Colorado, Rice and Purdue showed that the application of business approaches in library services should be at different levels, including planning, staffing, and marketing of library products. They noted that if libraries failed to apply marketing strategies, they would miss specific opportunities of gaining wider audience.

Kim and Park (2006), in their study on marketing information resources and services in Korea, investigated 97 libraries including school, academic, public and specialized libraries in South Korea in terms of marketing mix. The results showed that almost all libraries under study applied principles of the marketing mix, though the extent of its application was wider in school libraries.

Shabani et al (2013) in a study on the situation of the marketing process in libraries of Isfahan explored the marketing process based on 7Ps model (product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence) in the academic libraries of Isfahan. In general, the results showed that components of the marketing process based on 7Ps model were higher than average in the academic libraries of Isfahan with the "price" factor having the optimum condition compared to other components.

Farkhari (2013) carried out a study on the application of marketing mix in libraries of Zabol University of Medical Sciences. The results showed that libraries of Zabol University of Medical Science had a superior performance compared to other libraries. According to the results, the highest average in marketing mix was below 3, indicating that the select libraries had a medium performance and their services were inadequate.

Ziaee and Nooshinfard (2011) in a study on the application of marketing mix in websites of central academic libraries of Iran, probed the marketing techniques used in these libraries. The results of this study revealed that the use of marketing techniques in the websites under study was not desirable. Meanwhile, the application of marketing techniques in public universities found to be better than private universities.

Tafreshi and Siddiqui (2011) in a study on the application of 4Ps marketing mix model in public, organizational and collaborative libraries in the city of Qom compared the performance of these libraries in terms of using 4Ps marketing mix. The results showed that the product, price, place and promotion of

organizational libraries with a mean value of (0.82), (0.72), (1.2) and (1.07) respectively were superior to the product, price, places and promotional activities of collaborative libraries with a mean value of (0.50), (0.46), (0.77) and (0.74) respectively.

Arablou (2010) investigated the application of marketing principles in the provision of information services at the libraries of Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch in Iran. The results showed that among the four components under study, the variables related to the variety of services and information resources, place (accessibility and amenities), the use of promotional programs and price (cost) were ranked first and fourth.

Ghorban Nejad (2010) dedicated his master's thesis to the analysis of views of managers and librarians working in public libraries of Gilan province about marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion) with the aim of increasing the services offered to the library's clients. The results of this study indicated that the highest and lowest means in terms of the consensus of directors and librarians belonged to price and product components respectively.

5. Research method

This is an applied research in terms of its objectives, which uses a survey method for data collection. This study was carried out in the second semester of academic year 2014-2015 in the universities of North Khorasan province. In this paper, the main goal was to evaluate the effect of marketing practices in provision of information services. As such, variables related to marketing practices, or 4Ps (products and services, prices, place and distribution platforms and promotional activities) and provision of information services were adopted. Here, marketing practices, or the marketing mix (products and services, price, place and promotion) were the independent variable and information services were considered as the dependent variable.

The study population consisted of full-time faculty members and graduate students at the universities of North Khorasan province ($n= 3211$). Due to the characteristics of the study population, the stratified sampling method was selected. To this end, the samples were chosen from the population of graduate students and faculty members of universities in North Khorasan using stratified-random sampling method. As a result, the researchers were able to obtain the objectives of the study through a sample of at least 157 participants determined by stratified method. However, considering that some subjects might refuse to respond to the questionnaire, a total number of 165 questionnaires were distributed in libraries in a stratified and random manner.

To evaluate the effect of marketing practices in the provision of information services, a questionnaire consisting of four sections dedicated to information products and services, prices, place and distribution venues and promotional activities were used as the main data gathering instrument. It consisted of 26 items on products and services, 8 items on price, 15 items on place and distribution platforms and 11 items on promotional activities.

The questions were divided into two parts, with the first part consisting of two-option nominal variables (possess/lack) and the second part containing ranking

variables (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always). To assess the validity of the questionnaire, the views of professors and managers of the library were sought, and Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability. The results of the test indicated the desirable reliability of the questionnaire ($r= 0.89$). In this study, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used for data analysis. In descriptive statistics, frequency and percentage tables, means and standard deviation and in inferential statistics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (determine the normality of variables), ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient (to respond to hypotheses) were used. Moreover, the calculations were made by SPSS software

6. Data analysis:

Results of study: The answers to the first and the second questions (“What services are offered in academic libraries in North Khorasan province?” and “How are the provision of such services and activities?” are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The extent of using information products and services in the academic libraries of North Khorasan province

Mean (Azad, Esfarāy en)	Mean (Azad, Shirvan)	Mean (public , Bojnord)	Mean (Medica l Science)	Mean (PNY, Bojnord)	Mean (Azad, Bojnord)	Informa tion services and product s
4.00	3.97	3.93	3.80	4.00	3.88	Continu ity of services and activitie s
4.00	3.72	3.60	3.70	3.63	3.87	Services of borrowi ng printed sources
4.00	3.19	3.13	3.30	3.00	3.47	Services of borrowi ng manuscr ipts

4.00	3.84	3.80	3.60	3.88	3.86	Referen ce guide services
3.00	4.31	4.27	4.20	4.38	4.39	Informa tion services
3.00	2.59	2.47	2.30	2.50	2.88	Services to visually impaire d, hearing impaire d and disabled clients
4.00	4.09	4.00	3.80	4.13	4.13	Access to academi c theses
4.00	3.72	3.67	3.50	3.75	3.66	Subscri ption of importa nt journals
4.00	2.81	2.87	3.00	2.62	2.93	Developi ng online and offline databas es
4.00	3.75	3.73	3.60	3.75	3.74	List of library resource s
3.00	3.28	3.27	3.20	3.25	3.32	Providin g the resource s needed and requeste d by users
2.00	3.16	3.07	3.10	3.13	3.20	Using fax to

						reply to the requests of users
2.00	2.72	2.60	2.30	2.75	2.67	Non-face reference services
3.46	3.47	3.41	3.33	3.44	3.53	Average means

The above questions were graded on a 5-point Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often and always). As shown in Table 1, the mean information services and products in Islamic Azad University, Bojnord Branch with an average of 3.53 was at the desirable level compared to library services and products of other university libraries.

The answers to the third and the fourth questions (“For which services and activities are you charged?” and “How much are you charged for services and activities?”) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The costs of services provided by academic libraries in North Khorasan Province

Mean (Azad, Esfarāye n)	Mean (Azad, Shirva n)	Mean, (public , Bojnord)	Mean (Medic al Science)	Mean (PNY, Bojnord)	Mean (Azad, Bojnord)	Service charges
4.00	2.78	2.73	2.60	2.88	2.66	Circulation and reference services
4.00	2.78	2.73	2.60	2.88	2.66	Selecting Information Services
4.00	1.78	1.87	2.10	1.63	1.81	Photocopy, print and translation services
4.00	2.00	2.07	2.30	1.88	2.13	Access to internet services, downloading contents and

						searching databases
4.00	2.33	2.35	2.40	2.31	2.31	Average means

This table compares the mean services charges in the academic libraries in North Khorasan Province. In general, most libraries were lower than average. The answers to the fifth and the sixth questions (“How is the place or venue of delivering services in academic libraries in North Khorasan Province?” and “To what extent the place or delivery venue is used to enhance user access to information services?”) are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The extent of using place and distribution venue in academic libraries in North Khorasan province

Mean (Azad, Esfarāyeh)	Mean (Azad, Shirvan)	Mean, (public, Bojnord)	Mean (Medical Science)	Mean (PNY, Bojnord)	Mean (Azad, Bojnord)	Place and distribution venues
4.00	3.16	3.20	3.10	3.25	3.05	Ease of access to the library building
4.00	4.44	4.40	4.20	4.50	4.44	Ease of access to different parts of the library
4.00	4.00	3.93	3.80	4.00	4.08	Compatibility of opening hours and workdays of library with the needs of users
3.00	2.44	2.33	2.20	2.38	2.69	Facilitated use of the disabled and the visually

						impaired users
4.00	3.78	3.73	3.50	3.87	3.68	In-person search stations
3.00	4.03	3.93	3.60	4.13	4.01	Computer search stations
3.66	3.64	3.58	3.40	3.68	3.65	Average means

This table compares the means related to the place and distribution venues in academic libraries of North Khorasan Province. As can be seen, the place and distribution venue of PNU Bojnord Branch (mean= 3.68) is more desirable than other universities. It should also be noted that the average place and distribution venue in all academic libraries in North Khorasan province are above average. The answers to seventh and eighth questions (“What methods are used by academic libraries in North Khorasan to advertise or promote services, encourage users to seek library services and receive feedback from users?” and “How are the promotional activities in academic libraries in North Khorasan Province?”) are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The extent of using promotional and advertising activities in academic libraries in North Khorasan Province

Mean (Azad, Esfarāye n)	Mean (Azad, Shirva n)	Mean, (public , Bojnord)	Mean (Medic al Science)	Mean (PNY, Bojnord)	Mean (Azad, Bojnord)	Promotiona l and advertising activities
3.00	3.72	3.73	3.80	3.63	3.74	<i>The role of public relations</i>
3.00	2.94	2.93	2.90	2.88	2.96	<i>The extent of utilizing different media</i>
3.00	2.66	2.67	2.70	2.62	2.75	<i>Publishing a newsletter, brochure, poster, etc.</i>

3.00	2.66	2.67	2.70	2.62	2.72	<i>Notifications about new library services in various ways</i>
5.00	2.41	2.47	2.50	2.25	2.46	<i>Using a proper blog to inform and communicate with users</i>
3.00	2.38	2.33	2.30	2.38	2.38	<i>Receiving feedbacks from users</i>
3.33	2.79	2.80	2.81	2.29	2.83	<i>Average means</i>

This table also compares the mean promotional and advertising activities in academic libraries in North Khorasan province. The promotional and advertising activities in the library of Islamic Azad University Esfarāyen Branch (mean= 3.33) were more desirable than other universities.

7. Testing research hypotheses

H1: There is a relationship between information services and products and the provision of information services in academic libraries in North Khorasan.

Table 5. Correlation test of the first secondary hypothesis

Level of significance(sig)	Pearson correlation(r)	No	variable
0.000	0.335	151	Information service
			Information products

According to the results of the correlation test, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.335 between information products and services and the provision of information services at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.01.

Thus, the correlation between the level of information services and products and the provision of information services in public libraries is approved at 99% confidence level. Moreover, given that $r=0.335$ and $0 < r < 1$, it can be concluded that there is a direct correlation between the above variables, meaning that with

improved information services and products, the provision of information services can be enhanced as well.

H2: There is a relationship between service charges and provision of information services in academic libraries in North Khorasan province.

Table 6: Correlation test of the second secondary hypothesis

Level of significance(sig)	Pearson correlation(r)	No	Variables
0.000	0.373	151	Information service
			Service charges

According to the results of the correlation, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.373 between service charges and provision of information services at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.01. Thus, the correlation between the services charges and the provision of information services in public libraries is approved at 99% confidence level. Moreover, given that $r=0.373$ and $0 < r < 1$, it can be concluded that there is a direct correlation between the above variables, meaning that by moderating the services costs, the provision of information services can be improved as well.

H3: There is a relationship between the extent of using distribution place and venues and the provision of information services in academic libraries in North Khorasan province

Table 7. Correlation test of the third secondary hypothesis

Level of significance (sig)	Pearson correlation (r)	No	Variables
0.001	0.269	151	Information service
			Distribution place and venues

According to the results of the correlation test, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.269 between the distribution place and venues and provision of information services at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.01. Therefore, the correlation between the extent of using distribution place and venues and the provision of information services in public libraries is approved at 99% confidence level. Moreover, since $r=0.269$ and $0 < r < 1$, it can be concluded that there is a direct correlation between the above variables, so that by improving the extent of using distribution place and venues, the provision of information services can be improved as well.

H4: There is a relationship between the use of promotional and advertising activities and the provision of information services in academic libraries in North Khorasan province.

Table 8. Correlation test of the fourth secondary hypothesis

Level of significance (sig)	Pearson correlation (r)	No	Variables
0.001	0.276	151	Information services promotional and advertising activities

According to the results of the correlation test, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.276 between the use of promotional and advertising activities and provision of information services at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.01. Therefore, the correlation between the extent of using promotional and advertising activities and the provision of information services in public libraries is approved at 99% confidence level. Moreover, since $r=0.276$ and $0 < r < 1$, it can be concluded that there is a direct correlation between the above variables, so that by enhancing the extent of using promotional and advertising activities, the provision of information services can be enriched as well.

H5: There is a relationship between the implementation of marketing practices and the provision of information services in academic libraries in North Khorasan province.

Table 9. Correlation test of the main research hypotheses

Level of significance (sig)	Pearson correlation (r)	No	Variables
0.002	0.251	151	Marketing practices Information services

According to the results of the correlation test, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.251 between marketing practices and provision of information services at a significance level of 0.002, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the correlation between marketing practices and the provision of information services in public libraries is approved at 95% confidence level. Moreover, since $r=0.251$ and $0 < r < 1$, it can be concluded that there is a direct correlation between the above variables, so that by enhancing the marketing practices, the provision of information services can be improved as well.

Furthermore, the universities under study were compared in terms of five main variables using analysis of variance. The results are as follow:

Table 10: One-way analysis of variance for marketing practices in universities under study

Sig	Fratio	Mean Square	df	sum of squares	Marketing practices
0.966	0.189	0.145	5	0.724	Inter-group variance
		0.765	145	110.939	Intra-group variance
			150	111.663	Total

Considering the value of *f* (0.189) and the (sig = 0.966 <0.05), it can be concluded that there is not any significance difference between universities under study with respect to the marketing practices at 95% confidence level.

Table 11. One-way analysis of variance for the information products and services in universities under study

Sig	f	Mean Square	df	Sum of squares	Information products and services
0.932	0.263	0.212	5	1.060	Inter-group variance
		0.805	145	116.767	Intra-group variance
			150	117.827	Total

Given that the value of F-ratio (0.263) and the significance level (sig = 0.932<0.05), it can be concluded that there is not any significance difference between universities under study with respect to information products and services at 95% confidence level.

Table 12. Variance analysis of the service charges in universities under study

Sig	f	Mean Square	df	Sum of squares	Service charges
0.645	0.672	0.571	5	2.854	Inter-group variance
		0.850	145	123.189	Intra-group variance
			150	126.043	Total

Since the value of F-ratio (0.672) and the significance level (sig = 0.645<0.05), it can be concluded that there is not any significance difference between universities under study in terms of services charges at 95% confidence level.

Table 13. *Variance analysis of distribution place and venues for universities under study*

Sig	f	Mean Square	df	Sum of squares	Distribution place and venues
0.944	0.240	0.184	5	0.920	Inter-group variance
		0.765	145	110.904	Intra-group variance
			150	111.824	Total

Considering the value of F-ratio (0.240) and the significance level ($\text{sig} = 0.944 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that there is not any significance difference between universities under study in terms of distribution place and venues at 95% confidence level.

Table 14. *Variance analysis of promotional and advertising activities in universities under study*

Sig	f	Mean Square	df	sum of squares	Promotional and advertising activities
0.999	0.038	0.027	5	0.135	Inter-group variance
		0.705	145	102.233	Intra-group variance
			150	102.368	Total

Given that the value of F-ratio (0.038) and the significance level ($\text{sig} = 0.999 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that there is not any significance difference between universities under study in terms of promotional and advertising activities at 95% confidence level.

8. Conclusion

In light of the results derived from the review of literature and theoretical principles, it can be concluded that library marketing have gained significance in recent years. Increased competition, raising expectations of library users and the hugewalth of information are the main reasons of such increased importance. Marketing in libraries may provide deeper insight about the users and understanding of their needs. Moreover, the proper implementation and successful marketing can have a positive impact on the attitudes of users towards a library. Finally, each library can use these marketing practices to

achieve its desired goals and objectives. Marketing practices allow library and information professionals to take a critical look at the strengths and weaknesses of library services as a matter of paramount importance. It seems that the concept of marketing is especially valuable when products and services are consistent with the needs and objectives of users. Services and products should be convincing enough for marketers and users. Further, it requires sensible investment for the provision of attractive and valuable services (products) to the users. Library staff should be trained about the objectives and effectiveness of marketing practices. In this regard, hiring a full-time expert in the field of library marketing is recommended. Besides, high-ranking officials of the organization should have a transparent idea of the concept of marketing. The strong support of high-ranking officials is a prerequisite of achieving significant progress. In academic libraries, faculty members play a crucial role in formulating the library policies. Their views on the key policies required for the development and survival of libraries is necessary. University officials along with faculty members must feel committed to implementing marketing practices, for this commitment leads to the strengthening of library's marketing plans. With the demands growing increasingly complex, there seems to be a consensus on the marketing practices that generate revenue and ultimately contribute to the survival of libraries. The results of this research are consistent with the study of Kavulya(2004), Hood (2005), Sophia Ken (2006), Spaulding and Wang (2006), Ward et al (2007), Farkhari (2013), Shabani et al. (2013), Ziaee and Nooshinfard (2011), Arablou (2012), Mashhadi (2010), Ghorban Nejad (2012), Basirian (2008) and Shapuri (2007).

Given the importance of marketing in libraries, the following recommendations are presented in accordance with the results testing research hypotheses and literature review:

- i. the allocation of more funds to purchase equipment and hire professional librarians,
- ii. participating in training courses related to marketing in libraries,
- iii. Studying pamphlets and guidebooks in the field of marketing for librarians,
- iv. Organizing educational classes,
- v. increasing the number of staff and organizing visiting tours from libraries with successful experience of applying marketing mix

Also, for the increased application of marketing principles in libraries, it is suggested to dedicate a separate unit to marketing in libraries so that marketing expert can meticulously monitor the complex processes and thus identify and eliminate any weaknesses. Furthermore, the following suggestions can be made for future researches: studies on the extent of incorporating each element of marketing mix such as product, place, price and promotion to further enrich such research. In this study, considering the time limitations, the nature of relationship between the application of marketing practices and information provision has not been explored, and only the existence of such a relationship

has been confirmed. Accordingly, it is recommended that future studies pay greater attention to the nature of relationship between marketing practices and provision of information services, conduct a comparative analysis of marketing practices in different academic libraries in Iran and finally compare marketing practices in Iranian libraries and other countries.

Naturally, this study also faced a number of limitations that affected the results. Some limitations of this study are as follows: limitations in preparing a standard instrument of data gathering.

Given the lack of a standard instrument of collecting data, and the fact that the marketing in libraries was a relatively new subject of multivariate nature, preparing a standardized tool was difficult and time-consuming. Moreover, some respondents had a positive or negative attitude towards the subject and others were inaccurate in their response for a variety of reasons.

A major issue afflicting this study and other research projects in Iran is the prevalence of a culture of cynicism and the lack of research spirit among people. For this reason, in many cases individuals refuse to provide the necessary or adequate information. As such, the researchers did not have complete transparency in their access to information.

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