

Using 4P Marketing Model in Academic Libraries: An Experience

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Abstract

The present study mainly aims to demonstrate the weaknesses and strengths of using marketing principles in academic libraries and finally presenting some important suggestions in order to improve their marketing. This study proceeds through expressing the current marketing situation of studied academic libraries from the view point of 4P model. In this regard, the current situation is analyzed using a researcher-made questionnaire, and then the problems and shortcomings are highlighted in the field of marketing in the view point of 4P model which in turn enables us to introduce suggestions to overcome them. This research indicates that marketing principles in the studied libraries are not in a good state. The situation of product dimension is a bit farther up middle state (3.23). Also, the Place dimension with total average of 2.97, Promotion dimension with total average of 2.63 and finally the Price dimension with total average of 1.59 are below the middle state. Therefore, trying to make a good plan in marketing in the four mentioned dimensions is essential for studied academic libraries. Improving academic libraries' statement needs identifying their current situation in the view point of marketing. Consequently, this research studied the current situation of Isfahan governmental academic libraries in order to identify their weaknesses and suggest sufficient suggestions to cover them.

Keywords: Marketing, University libraries, 4P Marketing model, Isfahan governmental university libraries

Introduction

In the new methods of management, marketing is currently one of the basic elements of organizations' business plans. Therefore, the variety of organizations could be specified by their use of marketing principles for achieving their goals. The main idea in using marketing principles in non-profit organizations could be followed up in essays of Katler and Levy, Katler and Zaltman, and Shapiro between 1969 till 1973. In fact, the core idea in these essays is based on the concept of marketing in a way that organizations could simply use it. Afterwards, the multiple articles were published in the field of using marketing techniques in non-profit organizations, such as libraries and the information harvesting institutes that sustained up to now (Singh, 2009). Some definitions about marketing concept presented in the mentioned essays. In fact a few of definitions in order to get common concepts in this research are described. Madhusudhan (2008) believes that Marketing aims to identify the client base, and to determine and fill its needs, wants, and demands by designing and delivering appropriate products and services. Association of Research Libraries (ARL) defines marketing as the process of planning, performance, pricing, promotion and publishing ideas, products and services in order to user satisfaction and achieving the objectives of the organizations (Welch, 2005). Also, Block (2002) believes that marketing in the library sector involves the performance of planning, organizing, dissemination and controlling information services on a proactive and user-oriented way that ensures user satisfaction while achieving the objectives of the parent organization.

With the intention of the mentioned marketing definitions, we can identify the marketing's importance and essential causes in libraries:

- The main object of marketing in libraries should be users' satisfaction.
- Libraries need marketing in order to make up their expenses;
- Libraries need to accompanied by the new technologies so as to satisfy their users;
- Libraries need to highlight their role in the community so as to keep their survival (Madhusudhan, 2008);
- Marketing helps librarians to improve the basic values and beliefs of their profession (Dhiman and Sharma, 2009);
- Products and service's marketing in libraries present the newest resources and services to their users;
- Marketing helps librarians to distinct their weaknesses and defects and also try to resolve them; and
- Marketing helps libraries to follow-up their organizational objects and helps them to be cost-benefit and cost-efficient (Norouzi, 2007).

Therefore, it can be concluded that marketing points out to the library managers to understand the current situation of their library services, their forward looking way, and their strategies.

In fact, in the field of distinctive methods and viewpoints, many of libraries understand

that main marketing elements which are used in business could be used in libraries (ibid.). These elements identified mixed marketing include Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, and celebrated with 4P model (Rowley, 2006).

Product is known as the first element of mixed marketing. There are diverse viewpoints about the kinds of library products. But many of specialists believe that library services are their products (Kazempour and Ashrafi-Rizi, 2007). In fact, presenting services such as reference services, translation, preparing copy, document delivery services, providing access to the Internet, preparing training courses, etc. are libraries products (Gohari, Rahmati-Tash, and Tajdaran 2009).

Price is highly important as one of the marketing elements. Price can be include the value of information services such as subscription, participation in a workshops, and so on. Moreover, price could create balance between supply and demand (Madhusudhan, 2008). However, request for price for presenting services can improve the librariе's financial strength, and also can reduce the idle uses of library facilities and resources. Decisions in the field of price showed the manager's insight, experience, and their analysing ability. In fact, pricing could not be identified in vacuum, but is a dynamic and polyhedron process. Items that is better to pay attention in pricing are include the rate of expense in producing services and products, the effective factors in computing expenses, identifying consumers, and finally identifying suitable criteria in pricing (Fong, 1997).

Place, another element in information marketing, includes chain of distribution that libraries use it in making accessible their services to users. Dhiman and Sharma (2009) believe that place in libraries depends on time, place and also the way of distributing information services. In other words, place in the field of information services needs the place of offering services and its transferring foundation. Therefore, whether we try more in this field and use suitable environment and effective connectivity channels, we receive more satisfaction in using services (Norouzi, 2007).

Promotion, as the last element in information marketing, includes using connectivity facilities in promoting users to use library services. The promotion activities in libraries are different because of their objects (Dhiman and Sharma, 2009). Rowley (2006) emphasizes that promotion include advertizing, public relationship and selling. He believes that service promotion is problematic because of its tangibility. He also states that designing intangible items in advertizing is challenging. Libraries could use diverse facilities, such as web site, e-mail, mass media, print media, exhibition, special seminar and other facilities, in order to introduce their services.

Academic libraries are the main information resources for faculty members, students and university staffs for gaining access to information. Therefore, collecting suitable information and making them accessible are the main objectives of libraries. In fact, academic libraries need to use marketing principles in order to fulfill these objectives. In such cases, they could

better match their services to the future needs. Demonstrating the new feature of libraries, in the current era, requires revolutionary acts by libraries. In fact, they need to use marketing principles. Therefore, this research tries to examine the rate of using marketing principles by Isfahan governmental academic libraries based on 4P model. The main objective of this research is demonstrating the weakness and strength points of using marketing principles in academic libraries and finally presenting some important suggestions in order to improve the weakness points.

Literature review

Studies on using marketing in libraries and other information centers demonstrate that investigating this field goes back to about 1969. Therefore, we limited the search by date and also by the kind of papers (research papers), because of the plenty of retrieved items in general search, and afterward start the search process again. Primary study in the retrieved items directs us to 18 research papers that discussed about marketing in libraries and other information centers. The retrieved research papers showed that their time scope is about 1992 till 2010 (18 years).

The studied papers demonstrate that there are four main categories in the field of marketing in non-profit organizations. The first category is related to surveying viewpoints of professionals (Basirian Jahromy, 2008; Kaur and Rani, 2008; Nkanga, 2002; Rowley, 2003; Singh, 1999) and in some cases users (Adeyoyin, 2005). Many of them factually showed that librarians have positive attitudes about executing marketing in their libraries and information centers and are familiar with the marketing necessities and principles (Adeyoyin, 2005; Basirian Jahromy, 2008; Kaur and Rani, 2008; Singh, 1999). Moreover, some of the researches in this category revealed that the libraries and information centers emphasis more on promotion (Basirian Jahromy, 2008; Kaur and Rani, 2008; Nkanga, 2002; Singh, 1999).

The second category that is more emphasized by researches is related to the library survey studies. They studied libraries and information centers to discover the amount of using marketing in these organisations (Block, 2002; Muema Kavulya, 2004; Noel and Waugh, 2002; Ondieki Makori, 2010; Singh, 2009; Wenhong, 2006). In fact, just one of them compared the situation of two main centers in India (Noel and Waugh, 2002). They believe that libraries should be carefull about their services and put emphasis on user-oriented services in contrast to service-oriented services. Also, they believe that libraries are far away from the sufficient state of using marketing principles.

The third category is related to planning to start using marketing principles in the studied centers (Chris Neuhaus, 2003; Martey, 2007; Mu, 2007; Spalding and Wang, 2006; Srinath, 1992). They commonly emphasize paying attention to users needs and different aspects of marketing and also using new technologies. Also, one of them proposed that libraries need to establish marketing committee in the library (Chris Neuhaus, 2003).

Finally, the fourth category is related to using 4P model in libraries and information centers (Gohari et al., 2009; Kaur and Rani, 2008; Madhusudhan, 2008) including the present study. In fact, the researches showed that their research groups are in the different rate of using marketing principles according to the 4P model.

At all, the previous studies indicated that 4P model is a standard model for studying the rate of using marketing principles in organizations. As a matter of fact, there are a few studies in this case, especially in Iran and in the field of academic libraries. Studying the situation of non-profit organizations in using marketing principles pointed out that in what aspects they are in good condition or vice versa. Consequently, we could sufficiently plan to promote our situation in applying marketing principles. Therefore, this research addressed using 4P model in non-profit organizations (Isfahan governmental academic libraries). The results could help us and other non-profit organizations to plan sufficiently and promote the marketing situation in terms of to their users' needs.

Methodology

The population for this research included all managers of governmental academic libraries in Isfahan. They included all the libraries of Isfahan Medical University, Isfahan University of Technology, and Isfahan University that were 29 libraries working in central and academic libraries.

This study was conducted by questionnaire survey. The main questions that were base of questionnaire in this research were:

1. What kinds of services are offered by Isfahan governmental academic libraries?
2. Which rate of academic library services and products are used by users?
3. How the Isfahan governmental academic library buildings match the users' needs?
4. Which ways are used by Isfahan governmental academic libraries in order to promote and introduce services?
5. In which ways the Isfahan governmental academic libraries receive money inverse of their services?

The mentioned main questions converted to questionnaire queries. Converting process was done by the aid of previous studies and the mentioned four basic questions. The questionnaire included 4 main parts and 44 questions in general. The first section, that included the questions 1-20, was related to product dimension. The second section, that included the questions 21-31, was related to Place dimension. The third section, that included the questions 32-43, was related to Promotion dimension. Finally, the last section, that included just one question, was related to Price dimension. The validity of the research tool was confirmed by library experts and also its reliability was tested by Cronbach's Alpha test. The reliability for the questionnaire was 0.92 that showed a fairly acceptable reliability.

In order to collect information, researchers referred to the libraries and filled the

questionnaires. Also, researchers used descriptive statistics and SPSS software to analyze the gathered information.

Findings

The results for the first main question which is demonstrated in the table 1 showed that loan service of printed materials in the academic libraries of Isfahan University (IU) with average of 4.56 and translating service with average of 1.33 were the highest and the lowest rate of presented services. While in the libraries of Isfahan University of Medical Science (IUMS), Internet services with average of 4.67 and translating service with average of 1.89 were the highest and lowest presented services. Also, in the libraries of Isfahan University of Technology (IUT), same to IUMS Internet service with average of 4.5 and translating service with average of 1 were among the highest and lowest services.

Table 1

The rate of presented services and the rate of their usages in governmental university libraries in Isfahan

	Services and their usage	Average of IU	Average of IUMS	Average of IUT	Standard deviation of IU	Standard deviation of IUMS	Standard deviation of IUT
The rate of presenting services	Workshops for users	2.39	2.89	3	1.19	1.16	1.41
	Printed materials' loan	4.56	4.33	4	0.51	1.32	1.41
	Non-printed materials' loan	2.44	3.33	2	1.09	1	1.41
	Inter-library loan	3.56	3.89	4	0.98	0.78	1.41
	Reference services	3.89	4.44	3.5	0.96	0.52	0.7
	Awareness services	3.22	4.44	4	1.16	0.72	1.41
	Internet services	2.67	4.67	4.5	1.28	0.5	0.7
	Copy and print services	2.28	3	3.5	1.17	1.8	2.12
	Translating services	1.33	1.89	1	0.68	1.36	0
	Document delivery services	3.44	3.89	2	1.46	0.92	1.41
The rate of using services	Participating in workshops	2.56	3	2.5	0.85	1	2.12
	Using printed materials	4.33	4.22	4	0.9	1.3	1.41
	Using non-printed materials	2.78	3.56	2	1.06	1.23	1.41
	Using inter-library loan services	3.33	2.89	3.5	0.68	1.05	0.7
	Using reference services	3.72	3.67	3.5	0.75	0.7	0.7
	Using awareness services	3.22	3.78	4	0.94	0.83	1.41

	Services and their usage	Average of IU	Average of IUMS	Average of IUT	Standard deviation of IU	Standard deviation of IUMS	Standard deviation of IUT
	Using Internet services	2.44	4.44	5	1.19	1.01	0
	Using copy and print services	2.72	2.67	3.5	0.82	0.86	0.7
	Using translating services	1.78	1.67	1.5	1	1	0.7
	Using document delivery services	3.39	3.56	4	1.03	1.01	1.41
	Averages of averages	3	3.52	3.17	Total average: 3.23		

According to the second main question, the rate of using services, which is presented in the table 1, findings showed that users of IU academic libraries highly used printed materials with average of 4.33, while translating service were used slightly with average of 1.78. Also, findings on IUMS and IUT academic libraries showed that using Internet services with average of 4.44 and 5 highly used inverse of translating service with 1.67 and 1.5.

In fact, table 1 is totally related to product dimension. The high mean of averages sequentially were related to IUMS libraries, with 3.52, IUT libraries with 3.17, and IU libraries with 3. Generally, the product dimension in the mentioned libraries is in the middle rate of Likert scale.

Table 2

Proportion of governmental Isfahan university buildings to users' needs

Items	Average of IU	Average of IUMS	Average of IUT	Standard deviation of IU	Standard deviation of IUMS	Standard deviation of IUT
Simple access to library	4.17	3.89	4	0.85	0.78	0
Simple access to library sections	4.17	4.33	3	0.85	1.32	0
Beauty of the façade of building	2.72	3.11	3.5	1.32	0.92	2.12
Beauty of internal spaces	3.11	3.67	3.5	1.36	1.11	0.7
Existence of safety aspects	3.56	3.44	3	1.19	1.13	1.41
Sufficient space to study	2.94	3	3	1.25	1.65	0
Facilities to disabled	2.5	3.22	2.5	1.42	1.56	2.12
Acoustic walls	1.78	2.44	1.5	1.06	1.01	0.7
Acoustic floor	2.17	2.89	3.5	1.04	0.92	0.7
Control of light, temper, humidity, etc.	2.5	3.22	3.5	1.33	1.09	0.7

Items	Average of IU	Average of IUMS	Average of IUT	Standard deviation of IU	Standard deviation of IUMS	Standard deviation of IUT
Modularity	1.89	2.44	1	0.9	1.42	0
Averages of averages	2.77	3.24	2.9	Total average: 2.97		

Findings on the match between Isfahan governmental academic libraries' buildings with users' needs, which is showed in table 2, demonstrated that simple access to library building and different sections of library in IU jointly with an average of 4.17 and ability to change and modularity with an average of 1.89 were among the highest and lowest level to users' needs. In IUMS and IUT, library section's accessibility for users with average of 4.33 and 4, and also facilities like being noiseless, light, air-condition, and humidity control jointly with average of 2.44 and 1.5 were the highest and lowest level in order to fit the users' needs.

Data collected about the Place dimension, which are presented in table 2, showed that the highest mean of averages are sequentially belonging to IUMS libraries (3.24), IUT libraries (2.90) and IU libraries (2.77). Regarding the total average, that was 2.97 according to Likert scale, we could find that IUT University and IU academic libraries are below the average level in the place dimension. Hence, we could claim that the mentioned libraries are not in good situation regarding the place dimension.

In the case of respecting to Promotion dimension by Isfahan governmental academic libraries, findings, presented in the table 3, indicated that using face to face conversation with an average of 3.44 and annotation with an average of 1.44 were sequentially the highly and lowly used items in IU academic libraries. Also, using face to face conversations and library websites for introducing with an average of 3.89 and Mass Medias with an average of 1.33 were sequentially the highly and lowly used items in IUMS academic libraries. Afterwards, IUT academic libraries use e-mail and also website to introduce their products and services with an average of 4 and holding review sessions, using Mass Medias and annotation jointly with an average of 1.5 were sequentially the highly and lowly used items.

The following table (table 3), which is related to promotion dimension, showed that the top to bottom mean of averages is sequentially related to IUMS (2.89), IUT (2.66), and IU (2.25) academic libraries. Also, the results demonstrated that the total average is lower than the middle state of Likert spectrum. As a result, it could be said that the studied libraries were in unsuitable situation in terms of promotion dimension.

Table 3

The rate of using studied libraries from the diverse methods of introducing and promoting products and services

Items	Average of IU	Average of IUMS	Average of IUT	Standard deviation of IU	Standard deviation of IUMS	Standard deviation of IUT
Using library website	2.17	3.89	4	1.04	1.05	1.41
Holding review sessions	1.83	2.33	1.5	0.85	1.22	0.7
Using brochure, poster, and newsletter	3	3.33	2.5	1.18	1	0.7
Using Mass Medias	1.5	1.33	1.5	0.78	0.7	0.7
Using e-mail	1.94	3.67	4	1.21	1.11	1.41
Using other websites	1.83	2.89	2	0.98	1.53	1.41
Publishing current content	2.44	2.89	3	1.19	1.16	0
Holding exhibitions	2.5	3.78	3	1.54	1.2	0
Publishing annotations	1.44	2.56	1.5	0.78	1.59	0.7
Making presentations	1.94	1.89	2	1.21	1.05	0
Using Bulletin Board	3.06	3.33	3.5	1.25	1.11	0.7
Using face to face conversation	3.44	3.89	3.5	1.42	1.05	0.7
Averages of averages	2.25	2.98	2.66	Total average: 2.63		

Furthermore, in the case of Price dimension, the total average (1.59) showed that the studied libraries were in the bad situation. In fact, findings revealed that IUMS academic libraries with an average of 1.67 and IU academic libraries with an average of 1.61 offer most of their services free of charge and do not have any costs for the users. Also, IUT academic libraries with an average of 1.5 get charge for half of their library services and products. As it is presented in table 4, the studied libraries mostly get money for copy service with 36.8 percent (7 libraries), special services for non-subscribed users with 31.6 percent (6 libraries), print service with 15.8 percent (3 libraries), yearly subscription with 10.5 percent (2 libraries), and using audio-visual materials with 5.3 percent (1 library).

Table 4

Frequency and percentage of offering services in lieu of getting price

Services	Frequency	Percent
Yearly subscription	2	10.5
Copy service	7	36.8
Print service	3	15.8
Translation service	0	0
Connecting to Internet	0	0
Services to non-subscribed	6	31.6
Using audio-visual materials	1	5.3
Total	19	100

This research presented that the situation of governmental academic libraries in Isfahan city in using marketing principles according to 4P model is upper than middle with total average of 3.23 just in Product dimension, but other dimensions such as Place with the total average of 2.97, Promotion with the total average of 2.63 and Price dimension with the total average of 1.59 were lower than middle state of Likert spectrum. Consequently, it could be claimed that the studied libraries are not in a good situation with regard to the 4P marketing model.

Discussion and Conclusion

In order to be active in information competitive marketing, libraries need to review their traditional methods of presenting products and services. Formerly, libraries and their managers were not concerned about introducing their products and services due to lack of competitors. But they are currently under pressure to justify their existence and improve their quality services. In fact, libraries are not currently the only place to access information. Therefore, the mentioned fact reduces their role in information accessing.

Studies in the field of marketing in libraries such as Spalding and Wang (2006), Singh (2009), Gohari and her colleagues (2009), Kinnell and MacDougall (1994), Kunneke (2001), Shontz, Parker and Parker (2004) mostly focused on view points of librarians and library managers in using marketing principles. In fact, just attending to the viewpoints could not improve our current situation. Therefore, this research concentrated on using marketing principles based on 4P model. Examining factually the current situation helps us to identify our weakness and prepare a suitable plan to improve the situation. Findings of this research,

which are abstractly presented below, demonstrated the current situation of marketing principles based on 4P model in Isfahan governmental academic libraries:

- Product dimension. Findings showed that the highly mean of averages are sequentially related to IUMS, IUT and IU academic libraries. At all, the situation of product dimension is slightly more than the middle state. It seems that the diversity of services is enough, but informing users and encouraging them could improve using library services. Findings obtained by Madhusudhan (2008) showed that using library services and products in Goa University like this research is in good style. But findings of Gohari and her colleagues (2009) as well as Kaur and Rani (2008) showed that the studied libraries do not attend to product dimension in their marketing plans.

- Place dimension. Findings demonstrated that suitability of library building to users' needs is just slightly more than middle state in IUMS academic libraries, while at the IUT and IU academic libraries the rate is lower than middle state. The same findings were reported by Gohari and her colleagues (2009) for Tehran public libraries and Kaur and Rani (2008) for Punjab and Chandigarh academic libraries in India. But findings of Madhusudhan (2008) in Goa University showed that Goa academic library managers mostly underline place dimension in information retrieval.

- Promotion dimension. Findings revealed that the mean of averages in studied libraries is lower than the middle state. Therefore, it indicates that they do not take suitable actions to promote their products and services. Also, Gohari and her colleagues (2009) obtained the same findings in Tehran public libraries. But Madhusudhan (2008) and Kaur and Rani (2008) showed that their studied libraries take suitable care about the promotion dimension.

- Price dimension. Findings showed that all of the libraries under study were in bad condition and there is no incoming plan. In fact, being governmental and having income from government direct them to not having price plan. Findings of Gohari and her colleagues (2009) for Tehran public libraries indicated the same results, but Madhusudhan (2008) pointed out that having income plan is ordinary in Goa University.

This research indicates that the studied libraries are not in a good position at marketing principles according to the 4P model. Therefore, trying to make a good plan in the four dimensions, Product, Place, Promotion, and Price, is essential for the studied academic libraries and also for other academic libraries that are in the same condition. It is worth mentioning that having marketing plan does not mean merely mean charging the users. In fact, it inherently causes library's improvement directly.

Suggestions

Regarding the findings of this research, the four suggestions related to each one of dimensions are proposed:

1. Isfahan governmental academic libraries should vary their products and services and

try to cover new information resources and services in new foundations. It is important to establish new services by new technological tools such as weblogs, etc. and also present their basic services in new environment by using new technological instruments including electronic reference services. Also, it is important to use new technologies for the information materials such as e-books and e-journals.

2. Library buildings should satisfy their users' needs. In fact, it is too extended. They should take care of beauty, user-oriented equipments and welfare facilities. It is of high importance to be careful about these items in virtual environment at the library portals.

3. One of the most important items in marketing is promotion. Libraries should efficiently manage of their public relations in libraries and hold workshops, review sessions and so on in order to introduce their products and services and encourage the users to use their facilities more often. Also, attending to the virtual environment tools in this field is very critical important.

4. Charging the users for the services helps libraries to improve their income and also reduce users' aimless uses.

Note

1. The concept of Internet service is related to providing access to connect to the web and using Internet services in the academic libraries.

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