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Evaluating the Components of Marketing Mix (7Ps) of Iran's Volleyball Super League

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to evaluate the sport marketing mix and its seven elements (product, price, promotion, place, public relations, people, and physical evidence) in Iran's volleyball super league from the viewpoint of ministry of sport and volleyball federation managers in two conditions, namely existing and optimal. For this purpose, 102 subjects, among them the official staffs in the ministry of youth and sport up to general managers and volleyball federation's officials up to the managers of the sub-divisions, filled in the researchers' constructed questionnaire with an appropriate validity and internal reliability of 91% (Cronbach alfa). Based on the findings taken from the viewpoints of the staffs in the ministry of youth and sport up to general managers, and volleyball federation's officials up to the managers of the divisions, CEOs, leaders, coaches and academics, it has been found that in the existing condition, the component of product enjoyed the highest mean. Other components including price, physical evidence, public relations, promotion, and distribution had lower means (in order mentioned). In the optimal condition, the public relations variable had the highest mean, and other components had lower means. However, there was a statistically significant difference between the two existing and mix optimal conditions and their 7 components such that according to the rank means, the existing condition had a lower score compared to the optimal one. This means that in the existing condition, less attention has been paid to the mix elements.

KEY WORDS: *Marketing Mix, 7Ps, Volleyball Super League.*

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is a social-managerial process with which people and groups can reach their needs through producing, generating, and exchanging products and values with others (1). Sport marketing is the application of marketing principles in relation to sport products and non-sport products through sponsoring in sport.

Influential elements of marketing are called marketing mix which are the available instruments to organizations through which they can provide their products (2). These components from one viewpoint include 4Ps including product, price, place or distribution and promotion. However, Lovelock and Wright

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(1999) believed that other elements besides these elements can be noticed. They proposed the 8Ps paradigm including 1) Product, 2) Place and time, 3) Process, 4) Productivity and quality, 5) People, 6) Promotion, encouragement, and education, 7) Physical elements, and 8) Price and other expenses of services (3). Another proposal was made by Botten and McManus (1999) which include 7 Ps which are 1) Producing products and goods (related to services), 2) Price, 3) Place, 4) promotion and encouragement, 5) Physical elements, 6) Partnership, and 7) Process (4). By marketing mix it is meant that there must be a kind of systematic and coordinated view between its components such that they can be influential in convincing the customers. In other words, a better product with better a price and applying better communication and advertising procedures get to the hand of customers (5). The number of components in marketing mix is not so important. The important issue is to have a paradigm to organize activities and strategies of marketing. In other words, marketing mix is considered as a box in which people put their instruments such that finding the right instrument is easy in the right time (6). The management of marketing mix includes decision-making and programming concerning the strategic structure of influential components of marketing mix in sport. The determination of the mix is very important because it specifies policy-making in the determined sport trade, and based on the sensitivity of it in marketing management, it causes that traders take a lot of time to analyze it (7).

The existence of people who are eager for sports, sport competitions, health fans who want variable, fast and unique services has caused sport takes the form of a rich and famous industry whose day-to-day growth can be felt in all realms including entertainment, markets, fitness, professional and academic sport and so forth. In fact it has been one of the most money-making industries in the world especially in developed countries such that it is estimated that in America it has been 6th among the best industries with an estimated 300 billion dollars of worth (2).

Volleyball is among attractive and famous sports, and based on research after football it is

the most important sport for sport specialists. The long history of this sport in Iran is obvious. In some parts of Iran like the western north, eastern north and the central parts of Iran, special attention is paid to this sport. In the last decades due to the encouragement of volleyball federation of Iran a number of triumphs have been achieved in adolescents and youth competitions in Asia and global competitions. However, the victories achieved were unstable and heterogeneous over the years.

What is the reason that volleyball enjoys different sources of money like advertisement, ticketing, TV rights, etc. in different European and Asian countries, but in Iran it lacks such sources?

What is the share of volleyball in Iranian sport sector? Is it consuming resources or producing them? Are volleyball clubs independent or dependent to the government for their expenses? If these clubs were independent, were this money paid to coaches and players? If such money is paid to players, is the management of volleyball players still the same as today? If Iranian volleyball clubs enhance their financial powers, does it volleyball progress?

The fact is answers to such questions will change based on the financial power of Iranian volleyball clubs. But what is the right strategy to reach this?

The Queensland volleyball association in Australia has tried to design a strategic program for the years 2005-2020. In this proposal they have worked on marketing, cooperating, financial, and official sectors in the structure of volleyball. Moreover, in England there has been development in sport whose aims were improvement in information technology, increasing the human workforce, developing clubs, and cooperation between clubs and schools (8).

High amount of turnover of such competitions was due to the presence of rich sponsors, experienced people, and educated ones in the realm of sport and marketing who guide such trends. The volleyball sport sector also needs educated and professional people in marketing trends to control part of the complexities due to such transactions and turnovers. If clubs and their managers can earn

money sources independent of government involvements, they can pay to players and coaches based on their skills and abilities; such an affair will certainly encourage players and coaches to enhance their abilities.

One of the most important strategies in this sense is having a strategic marketing program and then operationalizing it. If sport managers follow a strategic marketing program, they can control the complex environment of sport and gain high financial benefits.

Today volleyball too has passed the transformation stage from a simple sport to a trade sector. In foreign studies, researchers have focused on influential factors in marketing (9-12) as a determinant industry in economy, politics, culture, society, etc. Wilson (1997) in an article titled "Does sport sponsorship have a direct effect on product sales?" emphasizes that sport marketing has a direct impact on products selling (13).

Hudson (2003) in his article titled "marketing in American football league, a strategic analysis" mentions that football is one of the most viewed sports in all countries except America. In this article he tries to identify all elements whether short or long term in the success of American football championship league (14).

Ross, James, and Vargas (2006) identified elements like employees, teams' success, team's background, stadium's atmosphere, etc. for success of clubs and brands (15). Westerbeek and Shilbury (2003) showed that the more promotional activities and marketing activities, the more increase we will see in fans' interest in competitions (16).

Ross, James, and Vargas (2006) in relation to marketing mix of goods referred to the product component (15). Recently we have seen a number of researches working on marketing mix in Iran. These studies all refer to the importance of studying this issue, but until now there has not been special attention to the marketing components especially the mix element as one of the influential elements in sport marketing.

Kouzechian *et al.* (2010) in a study deals with the sport marketing mix in the realm of soccer premier league and considered its seven elements (product, price, promotion, place, public relations, people, and physical evidence) from the viewpoint of physical education

organization managers and Iran's soccer federation and found that in optimal and existent circumstances these components do not have any priority in relation to each other. Moreover, in the premier league he didn't find any statistically significant differences between the components in the optimal and existent circumstances (17).

Memari *et al.* (2008) tried to determine the elements of marketing mix in the sport industry in Iran and modeling it. The statistical samples of this study were teams of 9 different leagues (not including soccer). She reported 8 components four of them as independent variable including financial support, management, allocation, pricing management and governing powers, and four others as the dependent variable including public relations management, process management, place management, and brand management (7). Moreover, they determined the elements of marketing mix in Iran's volleyball super league (7).

However, so far there has been few research concerning marketing mix (5-7, 18) and marketing mix in Iran's super league (18). Moreover, volleyball competitions in a professional format started since 2001, and since then the league organization has the control over holding the competitions. Due to this, the league organization deals with one of the most important aspects of such competitions that are financial issues. Iran's league organization contrary to most professional league organizations is still dependent on government's financial helps. Based on FIBA's emphasis on having the minimums in clubs and Iran's government's efforts to privatization in the fourth and fifth developmental program, clubs have to make money to survive. Based on these issues, the current research, tries to determine the marketing mix and its components in two optimal and existent circumstances and comparing them in the volleyball super league.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research based on the subject and aims is of the survey one which has been done in the form of descriptive- analytical method and field type. This research was of applied-developmental ones whose required data are

gathered through library studies and the researchers' constructed questionnaire.

Participants. The sample for this study included the officials in the ministry of sport and youths taking the CEOs, the officials in the volleyball federation taking the managers of units, CEOs, leaders, and coaches who have expertise in sport strategic programming and sport marketing, altogether 102 people.

Instrumentation. The instrument for this study was the researchers' constructed marketing management questionnaire distributed among the subjects. The research tool for this paper was a questionnaire consisting of 47, 5-option questions in the likert form including 8 questions for the product component, 7 questions for the price component, 14 questions for the promotion component, 5 for the place and distribution component, 6 for public relations, 4 for people and finally 3 for physical evidence. The validity for this questionnaire was considered appropriate. Internal reliability of the questionnaire was 92%.

Data Analysis. The data gathered through the questionnaire has been classified in the form of tables and graphs with the use of descriptive

statistics including frequencies, percentage, mean and SD. Then based on mean each item has been prioritized. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been used to compare the type of the distribution with the normal one. The essence of this test is based on comparing the cumulative frequencies observed with the expected one in the normal curve. Kendal non-parametric and spearman non-parametric correlation methods have been used to study the relationship between the variables. In order to test the hypotheses Lisrel and SPSS have been used.

RESULTS

The description of the demographic features of the study is seen in table 1. After studying the variables of the study from data analysis the following results have been obtained.

From the viewpoint of the officials in the existing circumstances the component of product had the highest mean and other components had lower means. In the optimal situation, the public relations component had the highest mean and other components had lower means (see tables 2 & 3).

Table 1. the demographic characteristics of subjects

Variable	Range	Frequency (n)	Frequency (%)
Age	31 to 40 years	22	21.6
	41 to 50 years	58	56.9
	51 to 60 years	22	21.6
Gender	female	6	5.9
	male	96	94.1
Education level	Associate Degree	7	6.9
	Bachelor Degree	27	26.5
	Master Degree	35	34.3
	Ph.d	33	32.4
Field of study	Physical Education	69	67.6
	Non-physical education	33	32.4
Job experience	1 to 5 years	15	14.7
	6 to 10 years	22	21.6
	11 to 15 years	25	24.5
	16 to 20 years	16	15.7
	Over 20 years	24	23.5
position	University Lecturer	28	27.5
	Federation Executive committee	20	19.6
	Club CEO	18	17.6
	Head and club coach	36	35.3

Table 2. ranking the existing status of elements in marketing mix of Iranian volleyball super league

	status	number	mean	SD	skewness	kurtosis	min	max
Mix	existing	102	2.45	.71	0.77	0.10	1.47	4.44
Product	existing	102	2.56	0.68	0.27	-0.37	1.25	4.50
Price	existing	102	2.53	0.77	1.19	1.60	1.29	5.00
Physical evidence	existing	102	2.50	0.81	0.99	1.00	1.00	5.00
Public relations	existing	102	2.41	1.13	0.76	-0.24	1.00	5.00
Promotion	existing	102	2.39	0.78	0.46	-0.41	1.14	4.43
Distribution	existing	102	2.34	0.93	0.97	0.42	1.00	5.00

Table 3. ranking the optimal status of elements in marketing mix of Iranian volleyball super league

	status	number	mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	min	max
Mix	optimal	102	2.45	0.71	0.77	0.10	1.47	4.44
Public relations	optimal	102	2.56	0.68	0.27	-0.37	1.25	4.50
Product	optimal	102	2.53	0.77	1.19	1.60	1.29	5.00
Promotion	optimal	102	2.50	0.81	0.99	1.00	1.00	5.00
Distribution	optimal	102	2.41	1.13	0.76	-0.24	1.00	5.00
Physical evidence	optimal	102	2.39	0.78	0.46	-0.41	1.14	4.43
Price	optimal	102	2.34	0.93	0.97	0.42	1.00	5.00

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As noticed the current paper has studied the sport marketing mix and its seven components in Iran's volleyball super league based on the viewpoint of officials enumerated above in the existing and expected circumstances and it has been found that in the existing circumstances the element of product had the highest mean and other elements had lower means. In the optimal situation, the public relations element had the highest mean and other elements had lower means.

As has been stated before there has been few studies with regard to sport marketing before (5-7, 18, 19). Yousefi, Taheri, and Shojaei (2007) tried to study the impact of internet on 4 elements of marketing mix in the existing and optimal situations based on the viewpoints of experts and marketing specialists (5). They found a statistically significant relationship between the two situations such that the existing condition was not in an appropriate status. Finally they concluded that the highest impact of internet on marketing mix will be on the element of price (5). Moadi *et al.* (2008) studied the elements of the marketing mix in the volleyball super league based on the views of experts and managers and found that in the

existing situation the elements provision, place, and product were in the middle point and price was lower than this even (19). Kazemi *et al.* (2008) comparing the elements of marketing mix with countries like Japan and South Korea found that the existing situation in terms of the quality and quantity of the product in Iran's football league is lower than those counties (18).

In the existing circumstances the element product has a higher priority compared to other elements.

Keeler *et al.* (1989) mentioned that it is needed to keep the equivalence between the elements product and the increase in spectators (20). Ross (2006) referred to the element product when they talked about marketing mix (21). Ghasemi (2004) stated in his article that the more the federation allocates its products and services in a more scientific way, the more it will have customers and their satisfaction (22).

Finally, based on the meaningful difference between the existing and optimal conditions in terms of marketing mix and the importance of such elements in Iran's volleyball super league, it is recommended that enough attention be paid to them.

APPLICABLE REMARKS

- It is suggested that the volleyball federation and provincial committees establish a powerful database in marketing and accurate markets distributions.
- The volleyball federation and provincial committees should also enhance the effective presence of this sport in markets through providing the required strategies.
- In order to bridge the gap between the optimal and existing conditions with influence on marketing, it officials at the ministry of sport, the volleyball federation, and league organization should cooperate more.
- Use of coaches and holding competitions on different levels, that is the number and variety of the product, was the most influential factor; therefore, officials at the national volleyball league should focus on these elements more.

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