

## **The Effectsof The 7P Marketing Mix ComponentsOn Sporting Goods Customer Satisfaction**

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**Abstract:** *The current study aimed at evaluation of the effects of each of 7P marketing mix elements on the sporting goods costumers' satisfaction in Tehran City. The statistical population of the current study included the sporting goods costumers in Tehran City whose number is infinite. Regarding the infinity of the statistical population, the Cochran's sample size formula was used for determination of the sample size. According to this formula, the least acceptable sample size for this study was 380 samples. The current study is of applied type in terms of objective and it is of descriptive type from correlational branch (modelling the additional-structural equations) in terms of data collection procedures. The obtained data were analyzed through structural equation modelling, by the use of Smart Pls software for detailed investigation of the causal and effective relationships between the marketing mix elements and their effects of the customers. The results of the analyses showed that the marketing mix elements have a significant effect on the sporting goods customers' satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *Marketing mix, 7P, customer satisfaction, sporting goods.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The organizations have been established for meeting the environmental needs and the competition in the world of business has made the role of the customers a key one. The customer is one of the most important environmental factors. If the organizations provide, maintain, and increase the customers' satisfaction, they will be as successful. Hence, superior and pioneer organizations always seek to ensure the satisfaction of customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Most of the organizations look upon the angry and unsatisfied customers as an issue, while they are actually an opportunity. Most of organizations cannot exploit the customers in an effective way (Thomas, 2004). Today, regarding the increased of competitors, the companies are seeking to survive. About 70% of the projects lead to failure due to lack of a proper understanding of the customer relationship management (Besins, 2006). There is an uncertainty among the scholars in terms of the literature of satisfaction. Whether the satisfaction is an emotional structure? Or a cognitive structure including emotional components? (Varra, 2003). In fact, the scholars have stated that the satisfaction is the result of a cognitive component and an emotional component in evaluation of a consumptions process, and both of them are important in in modelling the consumer behavior for services designing (Wang, 2004). Meanwhile, in the sports industries also, the issue of the customer satisfaction is of a great importance. The customer satisfaction is among the important factors that leads to the customer conservation. Besides, focusing on this principle will minimize the spread of the negative message by the unsatisfied customers of the institute. Various studies have shown that the graph of buyer-oriented organizations is circular and buyers are at the center of it. The managers' task is to support the first-line employees for responding to the requests and expectations of the customers (Fester & Schweiger, 2007). The marketers study the customers from the three perspectives as satisfaction, time, and behavior (Jazaeri, 2002). Hence, in the sports industry also the customer satisfaction is an important issue. As Robinson (2006) has put it, the sports organizations have properties that distinguish them from other service organizations. First of all, the sporting services are somehow luxury and people are cautious with the costs involved. Secondly, customers usually go to sports organizations at leisure and rest time. And thirdly, it often involves affective investing in sporting activities, such as support for a sports team and a sense of belonging to the club. These factors probably raise much higher expectations from the sports organizations, compared to other service organizations. In this regard, if the organizations have an appropriate understanding of the factors effective on the customers' satisfaction, they will better benefit from the positive results of having a satisfied customers base, since meeting with the requirements and expectations of the customers lead to their higher satisfaction and makes them to stay loyal to the services, even offering them to other customers (Seyedjavadein et al, 2010).

During the recent years, regarding the relative promotion of the position and role of sports among the society members, the evaluation of customers' satisfaction has become one of the main concerns of the sports managers. The managers of this section seek to know how they can measure the services quality and evaluate the customers' satisfaction in their organization, since they know the importance of this issue. The measurement and evaluation of the customers' satisfaction as well as the degree of their loyalty, besides identification of the weak points and strengths of the organization, are the first essential steps for promotion and development of the activities under their management. One of the factors that has always affected the customers' satisfaction is the marketing mix subject (Aghaei et al, 2014). By mix, blend, or combination, we mean that there should be systemic and coordinated approach in order to affect the customer (Lovelock & Wright, 2011). The term 'marketing mix' is described as the result of the innovative efforts and activities of the managers in mixing the pricing, promoting, and distribution of the ideas, goods, and services (Kotler, 2003). The use of marketing mix can be helpful in provision of new suggestion for the market or promotion of the current market strategy (Lovelock & Wright, 2011). The most common and stable framework of marketing mix is the same mix of "McCarthy" which summarizes the 12 elements of Burdon to the famous 4p<sub>s</sub>, which stands for the words "product", "price", "promotion" and "place". The notion of 4p<sub>s</sub> is accepted as a principle in different marketing texts (McCarthy, 1964, cited by Kotler, 2003). The marketing mix overcame the traditional methods and models of market management such as the Alderson's Dynamic Functional Technique, alongside with the other systemic and also the parameter theory developed by University of Copenhagen in Europe. New approaches, such as product perspective, task perspective, and geographic perspective, also faced such a fate. Only a few of these models have succeeded to survive against the 4p<sub>s</sub> (Gronroos, 2000). Another model was also suggested by Botten and Mc Manus (1999) which included seven elements (7P) of marketing mix as product and goods initiation (related to the services), price, place (location alongside with distribution), promotion and encouragement, physical factors, participation (the employees and customers), and process (procedure) (Kuzechian et al, 2009). Generally, by marketing mix it is meant that there should be a systemic and coordinated approach between its components in order to be effective on persuasion of the customers. In other words, the good product with a good price, and by the use of good communicative and advertising methods, is provided to the customer (Yusefi et al, 2007). The number of determinative factors of marketing mix, be it 4,7, or ..., does not matter. What is important is that there should be framework for organizing the marketing activities and strategies. To put it more simply, the marketers consider the mix as box in which they put their tools in order to find them, more easily (Shamabadi & Hoseini, 2007). Meanwhile, the marketing mix management includes planning and decision-making for strategic mixing of determinative factors of marketing mix in sports. The determination of the mix is so important since it determines the policies in sports trade and based on its significance in marketing management, makes the marketers spend a great portion of time analyzing it (Memari et al, 2008). Today, the sports industry, after going through numerous changes, has become a profitable business and has come up with other existing industries and professions. There have been studies on analysis of the marketing elements and its related issues, however there is few about the 7P marketing mix and its effects on the customers. Kushawa & Agrawal (2015) in their study, evaluated the 7P marketing mix elements on the bank customers in India in order to determine the proper marketing strategies for bank customers. They found, through the use of structural equations techniques and factor analysis, that management of the price, promotion, and product are less important compared to management of the place and interactive marketing, such as people, physical evidence, and process, for the bank customers. Kasumawati et al (2014), in their study on determination of 7P marketing mix effect on the customers' intention to buy music instrument, concluded that the price plays an important role in purchase of these products by the customers. Ostadi and Khalilpoor (2007), in a study evaluated the marketing mix elements in the tourism industry of Isfahan Province and investigated the factors effective on the development of this industry in the province through eight hypotheses based on the eight marketing mix elements of tourism called '8p<sub>s</sub>'. They reported that the goods and services provided by the tourism organizations in Isfahan Province are not in lines with the tourists' requirements and expectations, and other factors including pricing, incentive activities, planning, distribution channels, participatory marketing, and education and awareness are not at the appropriate and desirable level in order to create a positive attitude of employees and people towards tourists. Li et al (2011) concluded that the quality of the provided services affects the customers' satisfaction. Calabogue et al (2008) concluded in their study that the most effective factors on the customers' satisfaction are factors such as the employees, the convenience, and the managerial methods. Safari & Sharifi (2015), in their study titled "prioritization of the effective indices on adventurous tourism marketing in Rafting sport (97 mix model)", concluded that from the viewpoint of the participants and according to the mix elements priorities, the price, people, place, process, product, physical evidence, and promotion are important in attracting the customers, accordingly. Kuzechian et al (2015) in their study titled "evaluation of the 7P marketing mix components in Iranian Premiere League from the viewpoint of the managers of Physical Education Organization and Iranian Football Federation", concluded that in a normal and optimal state, none of the marketing mix components have priority over each other for the participants. Also, there were no significant

differences between the current state and optimal state of sports marketing mix and its components in Iranian Premier League. Aghaei et al (2014) dealt with the investigation of the relationship between the service marketing mix and the dimensions of specific value of the brand. The results of this study indicated that there is a strong, positive, and significant relationship between the dimensions of specific value of the brand and marketing mix in the chain stores. Rashidi&Ghaedi (2015) in their study titled “the evaluation of the effects of marketing mix on the customers’ satisfaction and brand personality”, reported that the marketing mix has a significant effect on the customers’ satisfaction and brand personality. In addition, ad regarding the limitation of resources and facilities of the companies providing sports services, besides the necessity for obtaining the customers loyalty in a competitive environment, and due to the importance and effectiveness of marketing mix components proven by great scholars such as Kotler, the effectiveness of each of these components on the organization should be investigated in order to take the necessary measures for attracting the customers satisfaction and maintaining it, based on the resources and facilities and in lines with the effective factors. It is obvious that the customers’ satisfaction and its maintenance is directly related to the return on investment, sales profits, growth in market share, and lowering costs. The effective components of services marketing on the customers’ satisfaction include product, place, process, people, promotion, physical evidence, and price. The variables of the current study are the same factors effective on services marketing, the use of which can be effective on maximizing the consumption, customer satisfaction, right to choose, and services quality. Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate whether each of 7P marketing mix components can affect the sporting goods customers’ satisfaction in Tehran City?

## II. Methodology

In terms of objective, the current study is of applied type since its results can be applicable in treating methods of the market. The statistical population of the current study are the sporting goods stores customers who refer to these stores, once per month on average, whose number is assumed to be infinite due to lack of access to all the customers and continuous change in their number. Regarding the infinity of the statistical population, the Cochran sample size formula was used and according to this formula, 380 persons were chosen as the population in simple random sampling. Regarding the model of the study which is retrieved from the Kushuwaha and Agrawal (2015) model, their questionnaire was also used for measurement of marketing mix variable and customer satisfaction. The detailed information on this questionnaire are provided in table 1. The reliability of the measurement instrument has been studied and confirmed in various studies, but for more reliability, it was calculated in a pilot study using Cronbach's alpha method and the values 0.73 and 0.82 were obtained, respectively. The data analysis was done by the use of structural equations model and Partial Least Squares (PLS). The PLS analytical procedure is a relatively new method of regression equations. This method is used for single variable and multi-variable regression. Generally, the current study seeks to, through the use of single-variable and multi-variable regression, reject or approve the hypothesis that P7 Marketing Mix is effective on sports goods customers satisfaction.

**Table 1:** the questionnaire information

Row	Variable	Dimensions	Question number	Reference
1	Marketing mix	Product	Questions 1 & 2	Kushawaha & Agrawal (2015)
2		Price	Questions 3 & 4	
3		Place	Question 5 & 6	
4		Promotion	Questions 7, 8, & 9	
5		People	Questions 10, 11, 12, & 13	
6		Physical evidence	Questions 14 & 15	
7		Process	Questions 16, 17, & 18	
8	Customers satisfaction	Customer	Questions 19 & 20	Deng et al (2010)

## III. Results

The results of the demographic data description are provided in table 2.

**Table 2:** demographic results of the study

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Variable	Frequency	Percentage		
Gender	Male	230	% 60/5	Marital status	Single	229	% 60/3
	Female	150	% 39/5		Married	151	% 39/7
Age	Less than 30	119	% 31/3	Education	Associate degree and lower	81	% 23/3
	From 31 to 40	166	% 43/7		Bachelor	150	% 39/5
	From 41 to 50	76	% 20		Master's degree	111	% 29/2

Above 50	19	% 0/5	Ph. D	38	% 10
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The structural equations model is a comprehensive approach for hypotheses testing about the relationships between the observed and latent variables (Hooman, 2008). In the current study, the structural equations model with PLS method and Pls Software were used for testing the hypotheses and verifying the model. PLS is a variance-based approach which needs less conditions, compared to other similar structural equations techniques such as Lisrel and Amos. The main advantage of Pls is that compared to the Lisrel, it requires less samples. In fact, Pls has no sample size limitation and the sample size can be  $\leq 30$ , and still the results will be valid (Grey, 2003). Another advantage of this technique is that it does not rely on the assumption of normality of the society, and stands as a strong method in conditions in which the number of samples measurement items is limited and variable distribution is uncertain (Haier et al, 1998). Pls modelling is done in two stages. In the first stage, the model of measurement should be evaluated by the reliability and validity analyses and confirmatory factor analysis. In the second stage, the structural model should be investigated by estimating the path between variables and determining the fitness indices of the model (Holland, 1999). In order to obtain convergent validity and correlation, composite reliability and mean variance tests were evaluated. A reliability greater than 0.8 with mean of variance of at least 0.5 are two prerequisites for convergent validity and correlation of a structure (Ching Lin & Chiehang, 2009). The factor loadings greater than 0.5 have a proper reliability (Formel and Larker, 1981). In a conservative approach, factor loadings greater than 0.7 are of prime reliability (Holland, 1999). The results of the validity and reliability analysis and the confirmatory factor analysis of the research model are shown in Figure 1.

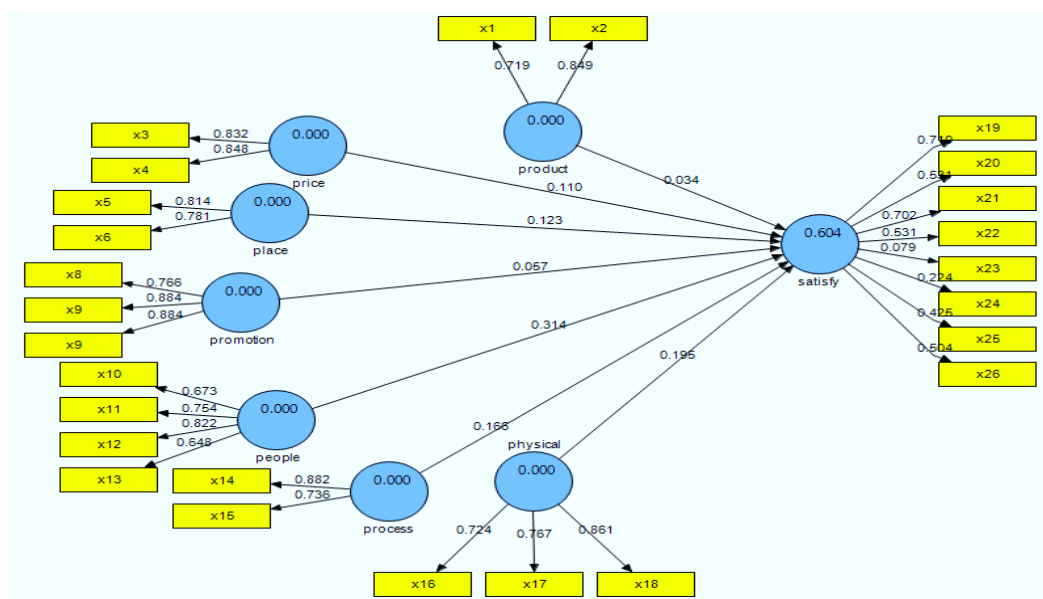


Figure 1: factor loadings of research model in PLS software

In the PLS approach, the quality and fitness of the model is measured by the use of two indices as CV-Redundancy and CV-Communality. The positive numbers are indicative of proper quality of the model. The values obtained for the mentioned indices are represented in table 3 and figure 2.

Table 3: the values of CV-Red and CV-Com indices

Variable	CV-Red	CV-Com	Variable	CV-Red	CV-Com
Product	0/018	0/018	People	0/231	0/231
Price	0/150	0/150	Process	0/076	0/076
Place	0/017	0/017	Physical evidence	0/245	0/245
Promotion	0/411	0/411	Customer	0/117	0/070

Based on the information in the above table, the values obtained for CV-Red and CV-Com indices almost are all positive which indicates the quality of the tested model. The AVE benchmark represents average variance shared between each construct and its indices. In other words, AVE shows the correlation between each construct and its indices. The higher this correlation, the higher the fitness will be.

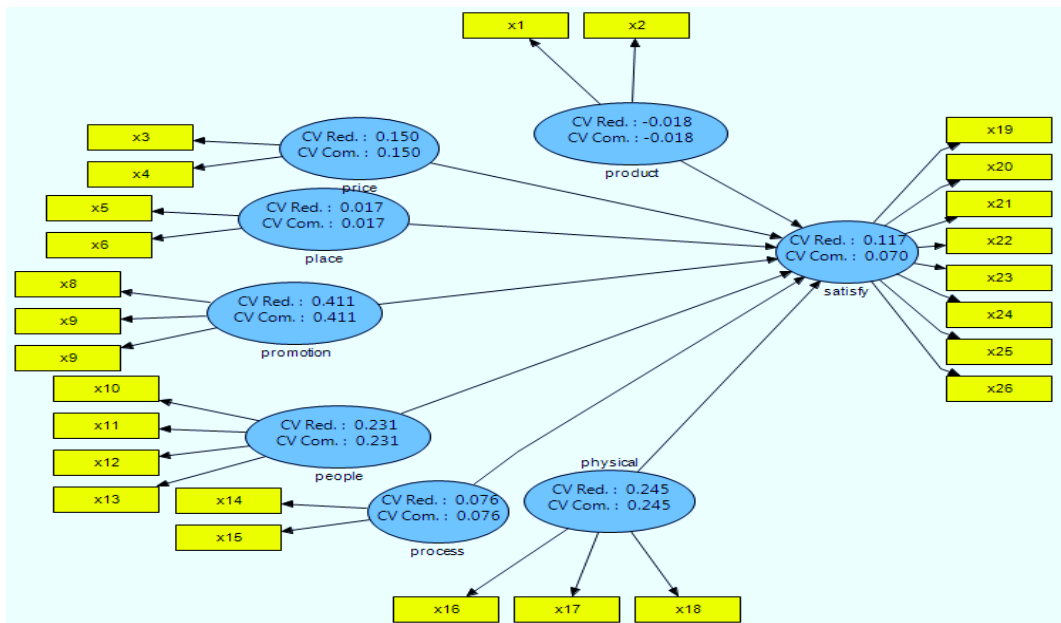


Figure 2: the research tested in PLS software (validity check)

Forner and Larker introduced the AVE benchmark for measurement of convergent validity and stated that for AVE, the critical value is 0.5, i.e. the AVE value greater than 0.5 is indicative of acceptable convergent validity. The results of AVE benchmark calculation are presented in table 4.

Table 4: the values of AVE benchmark for the research variables

Variable	AVE	Variable	AVE
Product	0/618	People	0/529
Price	0/705	Process	0/659
Place	0/636	Physical evidence	0/563
Promotion	0/716	Customer	0/556

The results of AVE calculation showed that all the research variables have an acceptable convergent validity. The GoF benchmark is related to the general chapter of the structural equations. i.e. by the use of this benchmark, the researcher can control the overall fitness, after investigation of measurement chapter and structural chapter fitness of his overall research model. The GoF benchmark was developed by Tenenhaus et al. (2004) and is calculated according to the following formula:

$$GoF = \sqrt{Communalities * \bar{R}^2}$$

As *Communalities* indicates the average shared value of each construct and  $\bar{R}^2$  is the average value of *RSquares* of the model's intrinsic constructs that are represented inside the circles in the output form of the PLS software.

$$GoF = \sqrt{Communalities * \bar{R}^2} = \sqrt{0.509 * 0.604} = 0.307$$

Vossels et al (2009) have introduced 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 as the weak, moderate, and strong values for GoF. The fitness value of the current research was calculated as 0.307 which indicates a moderate to strong overall fitness of the model. The results of the model test in the form of path coefficients along with t statistics are shown in the hypotheses related to the model paths in Table 5.

Table 5: the values of path coefficient and t-statistic for the hypotheses related to the research model paths

Path	Relation	Path coefficient	t statistic	Result
1	Product ← Satisfaction	0/034	2/288	Confirmed
2	Price ← Satisfaction	0/110	2/011	Confirmed
3	Place ← Satisfaction	0/123	3/264	Confirmed
4	Promotion ← Satisfaction	0/057	5/495	Confirmed
5	People ← Satisfaction	0/314	2/224	Confirmed

6	Process	←	Satisfaction	0/166	3/672	Confirmed
7	Physical evidence	←	Satisfaction	0/195	5/399	Confirmed

#### IV. Discussion And Conclusion

With the advent of technology (technology) and the ever-increasing pace of change, many service areas are changing. These changes themselves create new services whose management requires capable managers who can work in all areas including the sports marketing management. In the past, due to the lack of governmental and non-governmental structures, the equivalence of services (traditional and elementary services) and the lack of customers' demand for supplying these services, it was not a necessary for the companies and organizations to pay attention to the concepts of marketing and customer-oriented activities. People also, due to the lack of dynamic and modern services and the lack of attention to their desires and expectations, and the provision of the same traditional services, did not have much interest in increasing the level and depth of their relationship with the organizations. However today, with the arrival of non-governmental organizations and companies, the development and dynamism of sports clubs, and identifying the needs and desires of customers and understanding their expectations, the strategies for achieving sustainable resources in order to gain and create the potential role for playing in the field of economics and marketing has become one of the most important concerns of marketing managers. Hence, in this study, the effect of marketing mix elements on customer satisfaction of sport products was studied. According to the results obtained from the structural equations of research, it can be said that the product marketing mix has a significant effect on satisfaction of sporting goods customers. Since by product marketing mix variable, the ideas such as innovative services and added value services in a firm (sporting goods store) are meant, it can be concluded that innovation in services and added value of the services are factors affecting the customers' satisfaction. Anderson & Naros (2004) believe that the conservation of the customers for the organization is a much more convenient strategy than the effort for finding new customers in order to replace the lost ones (Gay et al, 2008). Generally, it can be concluded that the marketing managers, through investing in service innovation and added value, can be more successful in attracting the customers. The results of this hypothesis testing are in line with those of Kushawa and Agrawal (2015). According to the results obtained from the current study, the price marketing mix has a significant effect on customer satisfaction. Since the price marketing mix variable includes cases such as the relatively low service costs and relatively high profit from the investment in a firm (sporting goods store), it can be concluded that perceived economic benefits lead to customer satisfaction. Also, the customer satisfaction is one of the most important consequences related to different types of business organizations, which has been confirmed by customer-centric philosophy and main concepts of continuous improvement (Garson, 1993), since the matter of goods and product (pertaining to the marketing mix) and the customer satisfaction has the greatest effect on the organization success and development (Ye et al, 2013). The managers of an organization can reduce the costs of service and increase the customers' benefits, by provision of some arrangements. The goods and service providers should pay attention to this subject and invest greatly in order to remove its obstacles. The results of this hypothesis is in lines with those of Kasumawati et al (2014), Aghaei et al (2014), and Rashidi & Ghaedi Heidari (2015). The results showed that place marketing mix has a significant effect on customers' satisfaction. The place marketing mix variable includes cases such as ease of access to the place, it can be concluded that the greater the level of access to goods and services in general, the more the customer satisfaction will be. Managers should facilitate customer access by properly locating the place of the service or product. The manager must pay attention to this issue and invest a little bit to bridge the barriers. The results of this hypothesis are in lines with those of Kushawaha and Agrawal (2015), Ostadi and Khalilpoor (2007), and Safari & Sharifi (2015). The promotion marketing mix has a significant effect on the customers' satisfaction. Since the promotion marketing mix variable includes cases such as proper advertisement, appropriate cultural and social events, and optimal influence of promotion strategies, it can be concluded that the higher the level of the company's activities in promoting its employees and their products, the more customer satisfaction. Managers should provide customer satisfaction with appropriate promotion activities. The results of the current study showed that people marketing mix has a significant effect on customers' satisfaction. Since the people marketing mix variable includes cases such as appropriate attention to personnel, appropriate policies (strategies), a high willingness to help in the company, and rapid response, it can be concluded that the more attention paid to domestic and foreign customers, the higher the customer satisfaction will be. Managers must, through creating good incentive benefits, encourage their staff to provide quick and accurate services for the customers and thereby provide customers with a sense of satisfaction. The results of the current study are in lines with those of Kushawaha Agrawal (2015). The results of the current study indicated that the process marketing mix has a significant effect on customers' satisfaction. Since the process marketing mix includes cases such as easy and convenient processes, online services, and ..., it can be concluded that the higher the speed and accuracy of customer service delivery, the more customer satisfaction. The results of the current study are not in lines with those of Kasumawati et al (2014) and Kushawaha & Agrawal (2015). Finally, the results indicated that physical evidence marketing mix has a significant effect on the customers' satisfaction. Since the physical evidence

marketing mix variable includes cases such as modern infrastructure and provision of advanced services and technology, it can be concluded that the type of the technology used for provision of services to the customer, positively affects their satisfaction. Managers should provide customers with high-speed and high-quality services by the use of modern technology and appropriate infrastructure, in order to provide customers with a sense of satisfaction.

Since by the physical evidence Marketing Mix variable, items such as modern infrastructure of service provision and its advanced technology are meant, it can be concluded that the type of the technology used for service provision to the customers has a positive effect on their satisfaction. The managers should, by the use of modern technology and proper infrastructure, provide the customers with high-speed and high-quality services, and through this, pave the way for enhancing the customers' satisfaction. Based on the results obtained, it can be inferred that the effects of each of the Marketing Mix factors is on the customer' satisfaction are not the same and they are different. However, by selection of an appropriate Marketing Mix strategy as an interrelated collection, it can be arranged that by creation of higher customer' satisfaction, increase their intention for purchasing the related companies products, since focusing on a Marketing Mix factor independently of other factors, even if being effective on the purchase intention, it would be temporary and does not affect some customers.

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