



2528-9705

Örgütsel Davranış Araştırmaları Dergisi
Journal Of Organizational Behavior Research
Cilt / Vol.: 5, Sayı / Is.: S2, Yıl/Year: 2020, Kod/ID: 71S2729



Designing A MODEL FOR AUDIENCE ATTRACTION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF TEHRAN 1ST REGION (A QUALITATIVE STUDY)

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ABSTRACT

Attracting audience to the public libraries of Iran has been one of the most important objectives of Iran's public libraries foundation. Accordingly, the aim of the current research is to design a model for audience attraction in public libraries of Tehran 1st region. This is a qualitative research conducted through the grounded theory approach. In this research, a total of 20 cases of the librarians and managers working in the public library in Tehran 1st region were interviewed through semi-structured interview. In order to analyze interviews, the three-step analysis of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding was used. During the axial coding, the main category was identified and after selective coding and determining relationships, the depicted model was represented. The obtained results showed that among public libraries foundation components to attract the audience, digitalization, library location, organizational entrepreneurship, library equipment, library's interior space design, need analysis, and the librarian's skill in attracting and persuading the audiences in public libraries of Tehran 1st region are very effective and of paramount importance.

Keywords: *Attraction, Audience, Library, Public, Model, Qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

As an organization affecting all aspects of life, public libraries have distinctive characteristics compared to other organizations. This is a non-profit, educational, research, cultural, transformational, learner/customer-centered, information and communications technology-based, knowledge-oriented, and knowledge creator organization affected by political factors of the ruling government that causes it to have its specific culture. The libraries environment is variable. The reason of this variability can be attributed to the need for information, rapid change in information technology and the growth of these technologies related costs. The change in libraries leads to the transformation of organizational culture rather than an increase in the new technologies (Varner, 1996).

Attracting audience to the public libraries is naturally among the main programs of Iran's public libraries foundation, and most organizational attention of public libraries foundation is paid to the attraction of audience. Having audience is the cultural goal in audience-centered organizations and determines the success rate of that organization (Esmaeili Givi, 2012) and is the differentiation of these organizations and the vital factor for their success in realization of user growth.

As mentioned in vision plan of 2025 of public libraries foundation, public libraries foundation is a cultural organization with Islamic-Iranian identity that affects the society and has

awareness, information, education, and guidance functions; it paves the way to improve useful study; it has committed, specialist, and trained human resources; it has kept the first position of Iran in the region and successfully made Iran one of the 15 top countries of the world in terms of space per capita, member, resources and library lending (public libraries foundation, 2011). As public libraries of Iran have an inappropriate status in attracting members or 2% membership of people compared to other countries (Gholamali et al., 2010), paying attention to strategies of audience attraction to public libraries as a cultural foundation is necessary because the organization failure to attract new audience or failure to keep the existing audience capture too much capital from the organization and cause damage to the society culture. However, the public libraries foundation of Iran does not have significant success with regard to member attraction so far and the taken measures had a temporary effect on member attraction. Currently, considering the documents and statistics, there are problems such as member reduction and lack of use of public libraries that require to be investigated and useful solutions should be presented to solve the problem. Additionally, according to the report on "Iranians do not study: social stratification of individuals who do not study" in 2011, about 17.02 % of literate individuals of the society do not study. Certainly, these persons have not used public libraries. Evidence indicates that there are barriers to the use of public libraries that prevent people from using public library. Therefore, in order to obtain the solution to present a model to attract audience, the opinions of public libraries employees of Tehran 1st region were used, which can present an important model to attract audience and make loyal the public libraries audience.

Research objective and main question

This research was conducted with the aim to design a model for audience attraction in public libraries. The main question posed in this research is as follows: what are the important and effective factors affecting audience attraction in public libraries from the perspective of managers and librarians working in public libraries of Tehran 1st region?

Theoretical framework

The concept of audience and its application in knowledge information science

By audience in libraries we aim the actual audience who always visit library and expect librarians to respond them, but there are also potential audiences in libraries that libraries should convert them to actual and permanent audiences by designing policies appropriate for them (Jalilpour and Baryaji, 2014). The publications audience is never an individual, but they are certain individuals and groups with common characteristics or needs, or publishing a work can create attention, interest, or new common need in them (Azarang, 2014).

However, in the area of information science and knowledge, the concept of audience is used with this word or other synonymous words such as user, client, consumer, and customer (Heydari and Cheraghi, 2015).

Audience attraction

The important criteria for evaluating each media success are the investigation the number of audience and the rate of the audience use of that media and the motivation or change made in the audience behavior. This is achieved when a media has distinct and different characteristics compared to other media. As a social media, public libraries provide service in different urban and rural regions of Iran. Some of these centers have a small number of audiences and in other



centers this small number of audience is also decreasing. Increasing audience attraction and using solutions to attract them is one of the competitive issues among different media- the audiences who are determined today with characteristics such as diversity, being active, and acting in a selective way compared to the past (Moradi and Yaghmour, 2016).

Though this right to choose has several advantages for the audience, but it makes more difficult the work of libraries and librarians and the libraries are required to move shoulder to shoulder with other media and even ahead of them so that they do not lag behind the process of audience attraction.

Generally, public libraries, as a social and public media, failed from the beginning in the category of the audience attraction and elimination and still most individuals visiting these libraries are students who use library to do their homework and get prepared to take universities entrance exam i.e., most public universities do not have actual users and have been detached from the real mission and purpose of a public library (Kokabi et al., 2015). Unfortunately, not long ago, public libraries gave importance to items such as technical services, shelves order, and even providing more resources, and the audience attraction received little or no attention (Prirokh, 2015), while one of the challenges ahead of public libraries as service and non-profit organizations all around the world is attracting and keeping the audience. In order to keep the audience, as well as to increase the power of libraries to compete with other media, the authorities must pay special attention to this issue.

Measures taken to attract the audience to libraries and related barriers

So far, many projects such as my book project, Rainbow phone library, social media, professional book readers, book reader meeting, and study station have been conducted in Iran by public libraries foundation (Sabouri and Pazuki, 2015), but unfortunately, despite taking all these arrangements, little success has been achieved and our libraries still suffer from the shortage of audience.

• *Factors that hinder the audience to visit library*

In a classification, the barriers to the audience attraction are divided into 4 groups (Vazirpour Keshmiri, 2015):

1. Organizational barriers, such as changing the library name, library working hours, management replacement.
2. Technical and financial barriers, such as vehicles for transportation and commuting, libraries entrance, access to technology tools and equipment, access to databases and information networks.
3. Cultural barriers, such as inappropriate notification, object-orientation, wrong communications, different languages.
4. Physical barriers, such as location, space, and transportation organization, access to technology, the complexity of continuous searching, and finally the difference in the level of access to resources and continuous sites, especially archive.

Motameni et al., (2012) conducted a research with the aim to identify and prioritize barriers to use public libraries by the youth of Semnan. Considering research objective, this is an applied study and regarding data collection method, it is a descriptive-survey one. Results of this study showed that 22 factors affect the lack of library use in young people. After prioritizing them, it



was found that the shortage of the required books for the youth, out of date library resources, lack of motivation and inadequate time to study, inappropriate physical conditions of library are among the most important factors.

Motion (2010) believes that currently, the main concern in most public libraries is losing the actual audience rather than attracting the potential audience. He divides the reasons of the lack of library use into three groups, including: 1. Audience, in this case, the audience goes toward easier options such as book stores and Internet. 2. Deterring factors: they can be a minor cause and the characteristics of unattractive services are presented. 3. Barriers: these factors are divided into personal and social barriers, such as lack of access to library or resources, or the fear of discrimination in the library environment. Additionally, he believes that a range of appropriate resources, aware and useful employees with a friendly manner, as well as the proximity of library to place of living are among factors affecting the rate of visiting library.

- ***Facilitating factors in the audience visiting library***

Hayati et al., (2013) conducted a research with the aim of segmenting the individuals who visit public libraries based on their needs. This research was carried out using a combination of neural networks- based clustering methods, hierarchical analysis and Kano model. The statistical population of this research consisted of all audiences of public libraries of Fars province. Research data were collected using questionnaire. In this research a framework is proposed to segment the audience needs. These needs in order of priority are:

1. The clients need to building and appropriate equipment, such as the library location in terms of ease of access, library structure and arrangement, well being and cleaning facilities.
2. Guiding clients, the librarians speed and accuracy in performing their duties and the awareness and expert of librarians, etc.
3. Resources, such as diversity of resources collection, diversity of child collection, diversity of resources for clients under specific conditions, etc.
4. Need for proper conditions to use library services, such as the possibility to use interlibrary loan facilities, increasing resources lending duration, reducing delay cost, etc.
5. Ancillary services, such as holding conferences and sessions on book reviews, the possibility to use
6. Internet, etc.
7. Other services, such as complaints and critics handling unit, coordinating library hours with other departments, etc.

In the view of Khademizadeh (2015), the behavior of librarians, library location, direct access to the existing resources on the library shelves, librarians' knowledge and skills, given resources availability in the library, and interlibrary loan are among the most important factors that will attract more and more audiences to the library.

Accordingly, in the research conducted by Qazi Dezfuli and Beytaneh (2015) it was shown that factors affecting the audience attraction to libraries include the library location, library Internet, and study hall, respectively. Additionally, this research showed that the good temper, smiling face, and specialized knowledge of librarian in the first encounter with audience play a main role in attracting the audience.



Generally, the results of most research studies show the great influence of librarian and his/her way of interacting in the library. Accordingly, the librarians are required to become familiar with correct principles of audience creation.

By reviewing research studies conducted on the audience attraction by different researchers and making a comparison between them, the common affecting factors can be classified as follows: Limited opening hours for library, homework and the pressure of exams on students, Lack of interest, inappropriate transportation, access to or lack of access to the Internet, the behavior and professional role of librarians, etc.

RESEARCH METHOD

Considering search objective, this is an applied study conducted through qualitative approach using grounded theory. Grounded theory is a qualitative method developed using data obtained from the ground such that this theory explains a process, an action, or interaction at a broad level. The studied population consisted of librarians and managers of a public library in Tehran 1st region (Niavaran Cultural Center library). Considering research objective, purposeful sampling method was used to select sample. The main criteria to select the interview participants in this research include having working experience more than 3 years and academic degree in information science and knowledgeology. In qualitative research studies, sample size is determined during work and sampling continues until data are saturated and researcher concludes that the new data are the repetition of the previous ones such that they do not need any new code or developing the existing codes. By investigating data regularly and asking questions, finally, the researcher concludes that data have been saturated, and at this time, sampling ends. Research samples in this study consisted of 20 cases of managers and librarians of Niavaran Cultural Center public library, whose characteristics are presented in table 1. It is worth mentioning that last interviews added no new code to data and data were saturated.



Table 1- Personal information of research participants

participants	age X±SD	Gender		Work experiences X±SD	Academic degree		
		Female	Male		Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	PhD
Manager	±381/83	1	1	9/5±75/25	-	1	1
The librarian in charge	36/3±9/25	3	4	7/1±16/32	2	4	1
Librarian	5±38/45	6	5	12/5±33/89	7	4	-

The main method of data collection in this research was in person and telephone semi-structured interview. The interviews were recorded using recorder device and after performing each interview and listening several times to make sure about reliability, they were transcribed word by word. The interview duration was 30-75 minutes.

In grounded theory method, data collection and analysis are conducted simultaneously. Therefore, by collecting data, their analysis was started at the same time. In order to analyze data, Strauss and Corbin's (2008) analytical approach was used, which includes three coding stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the open coding stage, the interviews were analyzed and the initial and secondary codes and concepts were extracted. At this stage, two coding methods i.e., language use and words used by the interviewer, and semantic codes

based on the concepts existing in data were used. In the axial coding method, data were abstracted and after determining secondary classes, the main indices were extracted in the form of selective codes and the given model was obtained.

In order to validate data in this research, validity, credibility, reliability, and transferability criteria were used. To validate the research, the researcher was engaged with data and participants in a continuous long-term way and used participants review technique in which the researcher provided participants with a summary of the interview transcript with initial codes and asked them about the validity of the researcher's interpretation. Researcher tried to be completely engaged with the research process, establish a correct and appropriate relationship with participants and welcome deep concepts that appear in the process of study. To give credibility to research, the colleagues review technique was used in a way that after initial coding and forming classes, the researcher provided the colleagues with initial analyses and collected data to be evaluated and corrected. For reliability, the researcher kept raw data, codes, and classes to be audited, and for quotes, the exact words by participants were used. For generalization, sampling with maximum diversity was used.

Findings

Considering the qualitative study and using grounded theory approach, data collection was begun in a real and natural arena by interviewing participants in the work environment. Data analysis was done at the same time with data collection in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Table 2 shows part of the coded text.

Table 2-An example of coded text in the open encoding stage

Interview text	Conceptualization	Categories
Public libraries should provide people with facilities so that they can study, and in fact, keep their knowledge up to date; and lifelong learning and supporting this lifelong learning and education should be one of the key roles of libraries in attracting the audience.	Supporting lifelong learning	Education and optimization of leisure time
People date in public libraries, and beside this, public libraries can inform and make people aware about political issues.	Role of political awareness	Political awareness
One of the main roles of public libraries as a social organization is to provide a social place where people can meet each other, and form local conversations, discuss about the policies and social issues of the day.	Create a place for social meeting	Social awareness

In the axial coding stage, the obtained categories in the open coding stage are related to each other to present a more accurate and complete explanation of the phenomenon. In this stage, one of the categories of open or conceptual coding that may not be among the categories but is central to the relationship between other categories is determined as the axial phenomenon and other categories, including strategies and causal conditions, underlying and interfering conditions were related to it using the model (Table 3). In this research, the necessity to explain values tailored to the goals and roles was selected as the axial phenomenon. In the selective coding stage, first, the main themes were formed by integrating subcategories, and then, the

relationship between the extracted categories was expressed using a systematic design and the research model was depicted as figure 1.

Table 3-Axial coding

Examples of open codes	Categories	
Reduction of the religious groups audience, incomplete realization of library roles, pale social roles, inadequate attention to technology	- tendency to virtual space -reduction of audience	Causal conditions
Making attempts to realize library goals, making attempts to more attract users to the library, making attempts to increase the level of study in the society;	-The necessity to pay attention to increasing motivation level in library - The necessity to pay attention to increasing the realization level of library goals	Axial category
Happiness creation, building and equipment proportionality with role, education and leisure time optimization, facilitating physical access to library, facilitating access to information resources, promoting reading, decentralized and localized collection making, respecting user and interactivity, user counseling and guiding	- Happiness creation, -standardization -Technology use -Access -User-centeredness -Promoting study culture	Strategies
Being non-profit, diversity of the audience needs, establishing relationship with all sectors of the society, age diversity, the audience education	- Public services -Diversity of audience -Being non-profit	Conditions affecting the strategies codification
Improving the society culture, having aware citizens in the society, reducing social problems of the society, more audience attraction due to having high public relations, visiting library more	-Audience attraction	Consequences:



Designed model

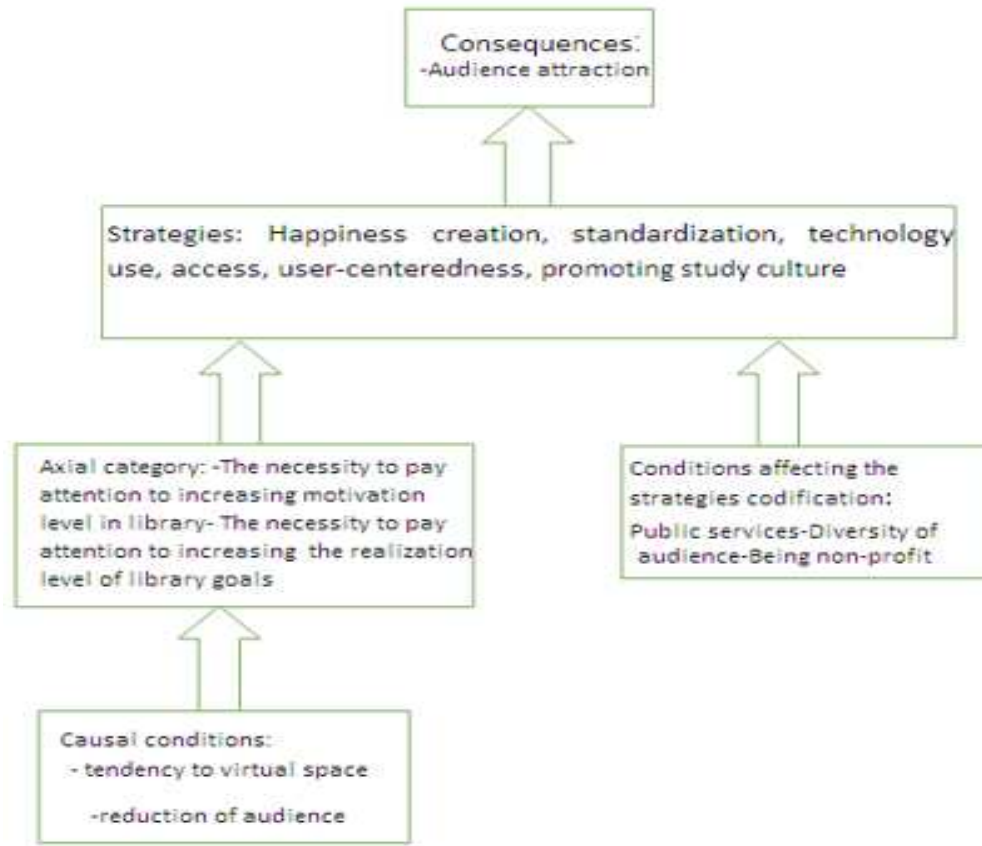


Figure 1. Designed research model

Effect of each of the categories on audience attraction in public libraries Services

The more desirable the quality of services and the shorter time the services are presented, the more satisfied and loyal the users are. Additionally, the quicker the services are provided, the higher rate of the audience attraction. Overall, it should be noted that by improving the quality of services (improving the facilities granted to users, facilitating the possibility to lend resources, strengthening value creating services, improving high quality-cultural products), and diversifying presented services (providing reproduction services in library, creating library-friendly groups, film screening, book and film review sessions, founding scientific and cultural associations) we can witness the audience attraction to public libraries in a short period of time.

Availability

The main aim of the library is to provide services to clients. Users are the main beneficiaries of the information flow. Libraries should understand the dynamicity of service delivery to users and work deeply to provide quick access to print and electronic resources. The library is responsible to facilitate gaining access to knowledge resources and human intellectual activities. There should also be access to a variety of resources (print and electronic) in the library.

Need analysis

The public libraries foundation of Iran is a mission-oriented organization whose aim is meeting the citizens' needs. Therefore, establishing effective relationship with citizens, detecting their

needs, and providing them with appropriate services in a way that satisfy them and lead to audience attraction are among the objectives of the foundation. Considering the severe competition in cultural areas, paying attention to the audience attitudes and wants seems necessary.

Digitalization and creation of technology infrastructure

In the public libraries foundation of Iran, keeping up with changes of the day in digitalization of the content of products and facilitation of librarianship services provision and notification through development of information technology infrastructures (software and hardware) can increase members and grow the volume of the proposed services.

Library location

One of the most important factors affecting service provision of public library is its suitable location. Features of the place where the library is located are very important (Dehdari Rad and Didgah, 2008). One of the most important external aspects affecting the increased level of visiting and using public libraries is how these types of libraries are deployed and geographically distributed in the context of cities, especially large cities. If it does not take place based on the standards principles, the reluctance and amotivation of people to visit and use library will ensue. The people quick and easy access to the library is more important than a distinct function radius that the library adopts.

Collectivization

Collectivization determines the efficiency in library more than any other function. Public libraries should provide equal access to resources that meet the library users' needs to make progress in education, information acquisition, entertainment and leisure time and personal development, and progress. Additionally, the library users who for any reason cannot use the common library services should be provided with specific services and materials. All age groups must find resources tailored to their needs in the public library. The library materials should reflect the current trend and evolution of the society.

CONCLUSION

Public library is regarded as one of the main tools of cultural development in societies and is capable of playing a fundamental role in the excellence of human capital and social interactions network of any country. Public library can put in practice this important role when the individuals consider public library to be a suitable place to meet their information needs and are willing to use the library. Unfortunately, the existence of various challenges in public libraries of Iran, such as the physical space of the library building, the collectivization policy, and access to resources are among the factors that cause public libraries to fail to fulfill their mission of attracting audiences.

Perhaps the consequence of people withdrawal from visiting library and their intellectual growth and prosperity may not spark to the eye in short term, but people continuous and pervasive refuse to visit public libraries may have disadvantages for people and society in long term. Misunderstanding, returning to illiteracy, cultural death, social isolation, incapability of irenicly coexisting, and class divide are among the bitter consequences of the long-term marginalization of public libraries by the public. Pervasiveness of this issue will prevent the



society from development and endanger the life and survival of the society members. Therefore, the required measures to attract audience to public libraries should be taken so that we can everyday witness the greater use of this cultural foundation. By taking a series of measures we can help increase the library members. The use of information technology in libraries is one of the necessary measures to be taken. Information technology-based library provides a more appropriate ground to present advanced information services. Using technology in public libraries will lead to access to the library collection, the increased number of users of public libraries services and saving in time and cost. Choosing the appropriate place to establish public libraries will also guarantee the access of a large number of clients because the library location affects the rate of services use. The proximity of the public library is associated with relevant applications people visit them on a daily basis. Educational centers and offices, schools, universities, and higher education centers and public transport stations are among the applications related to the increased number of clients visiting public libraries. Improving, and if needed, amending the bylaws and guidelines of Iran's public libraries foundation, as well as training librarians with regard to interacting with user lead to increased user loyalty to public libraries and repeated use of library in a certain time period.

By improving the quality of services, respecting the user, and creating a sense of trust in user to library and its services, libraries should make attempts to gain users' trust. Considering the abundance of information available via Internet, which has been accompanied by the increasing complexity of libraries users' information seeking behavior, the future role of librarians in presenting value added services is highlighted. The periodical need analysis done by public libraries foundation will lead to collectivization based on the real needs of the members in a dynamic and accurate way because the individuals' needs undergo change over time and with the quick progress in new technologies. Paying attention to providing proper services in public libraries to accurately identify the actual and potential users of library and meeting their current and future needs will lead to better service provision as much as possible.

Overall, it can be said that librarians can have a significant effect on increasing members by changing the current process of libraries administration. Providing new services and changing the form of services provision, periodical need analysis of users, increasing skills and taking part in interacting with users courses and gaining access to information resources will lead to greater use of resources. The public libraries foundation of Iran can also take a step toward attracting the audience to libraries by constructing new libraries, and commanding to clean and ventilate the library space, and codifying the instruction with the knowledge on weaknesses and shortcomings of the existing instructions.

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