



The Impact of Marketing Mix on Attracting Audiences to the Cinema

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Abstract

It is common knowledge that movie production and marketing feature, is a risky business. Extending our knowledge of factors affecting movie sales and attracting people to theaters can help reduce the risk of the film industry. In this paper, we tried to identify influential factors in attracting people to cinema from marketing mix (4P's) point of view and prioritize their indices from the perspective of movie goers in Tehran. The population of this study consists of Movie goers in Tehran, Iran. In this study, 455 questionnaires were distributed in five cinema of Tehran. In order to analysis data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Binomial or relative, t-student and Friedman tests has been used. The results revealed that all marketing mix variables except the "price" are influential in attracting audiences. Prioritizing these four variables shows that "place" has the highest priority. Also "film Genre" and "director" in product variable, "promotion" and "word of mouth" and "Movie review" in promotion variables, respectively were the most important indices.

Key words: Motion picture industry; Cinema marketing; Marketing mix

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INTRODUCTION

Iran is one of the few countries that have had a complete cycle of moviemaking activities, including film production, distribution and display, for a long time. Due to social and cultural role of movie and cinema, the importance of acquiring a place among film industry giants is not a secret to anyone. However, despite the very high number of Iranian films, the amount of theaters, audience and film sales are very low. A cinema without audience doesn't make sense and having audience is considered the requirement for prosperity and development of movie industry. Therefore by analyzing problems and finding their roots, identifying influential factors in movie sales and its marketing can enable us to attract audiences to cinema and improve the community's vision and culture. Being successful in attracting audiences, increases per capita of movie going which leads not only to reduce the risk of movie industry but also augmentation the profitability.

The main objective of this study is to discover the influential factors (the 4P's in marketing mix) in attracting audiences to cinema and prioritizing these factors.

Research hypotheses are as follows:

- The product factor is influential in attracting Iranian movie audiences to cinema.
- The price factor is influential in attracting Iranian movie audiences to cinema.
- The place factor is influential in attracting Iranian movie audiences to cinema.
- The promotion factor is influential in attracting Iranian movie audiences to cinema.

1. RESEARCH METHOD

The present research is considered applied research and its method is descriptive-survey. The population of this

study consists of Tehran citizens who went to Tehran's cinema and watched Iranian films during the course of this study. The sampling for achieving the research objectives was done through systematic random sampling. Since the population size was unlimited and data scales were qualitative, colorant formula was used for determining the sample size. The output of this formula was 385 and in order of achieving this sample size 500 questionnaires were distributed in five cinemas in Tehran (in different geographical regions (Central, North, South, East and West) which has been selected randomly) and 455 were returned for evaluation.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 21 questions and each of them was assessed on Likert's five score scale

(the scores ranging from very low to very high).

For ensuring of content validity in addition of reviewing relevant articles and questionnaires, consulting with supervisors and advisors and used experts' opinions were performed. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested by Cronbach alpha. The result was 0.894, indicating that the questionnaire has acceptable reliability.

2. LITERATURE AND RESEARCH MODEL

Based on the marketing mix model (4P's) and previous research done in the film industry, the following indices in figure 1 have been determined for each variable (product, price, place and promotion).

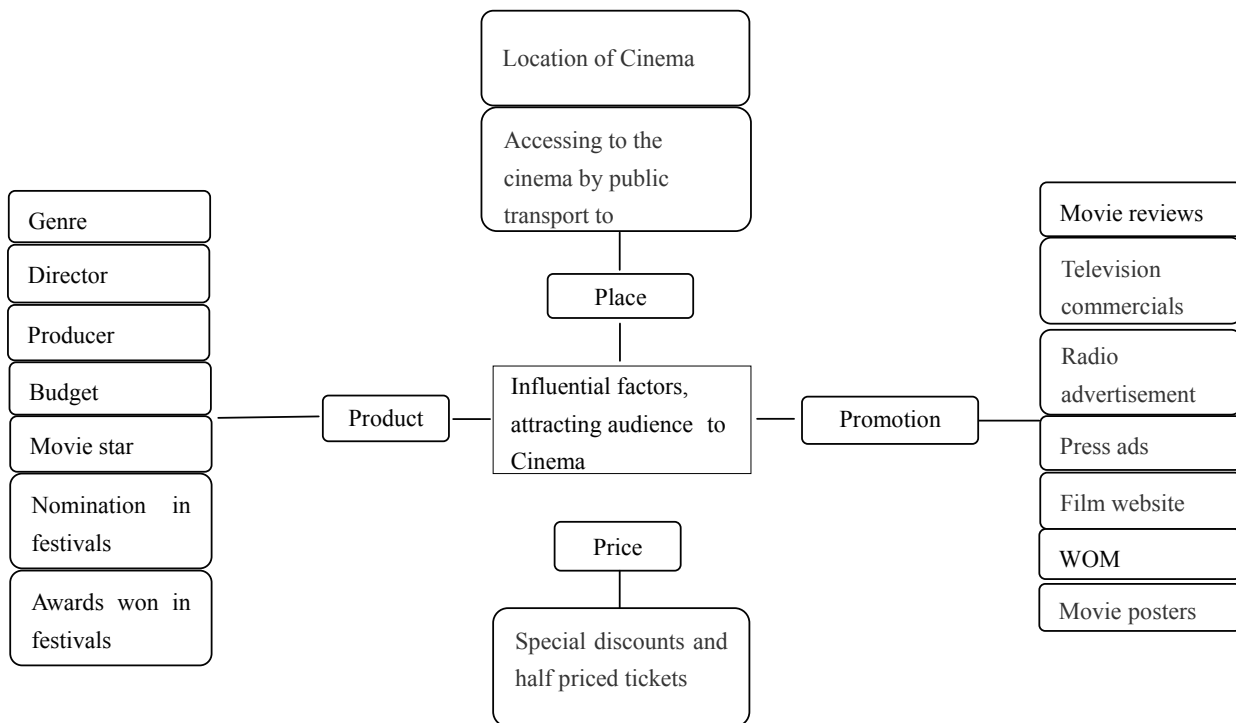


Figure 1
Conceptual Model

2.1 Product

A product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need (Lilien, Kotler & Sridhar, 1992, p.218). Products include more than just tangible goods. Broadly defined, products include physical objects, services, events, persons, places, organizations, ideas, or mixes of these entities (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008, p.218). The product offered in cinema is a movie. Movies are intangible objects consumed for pleasure rather than for the maximization of an economic benefit (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997, p.69). Hence, the primary reason for movie consumer is to experience it, rather than expecting to fulfill their physiological need. In other words, hedonic value (e.g., pleasure, thrill) is the main motive for

experiential consumption, while utilitarian motives play an ancillary role (Hennig Thureau, Houston & Walsh, 2007, p.66). As with all experience goods, there is an inherent difficulty in assessing the quality of a motion picture prior to viewing (Suarez Vazquez, 2011, p.119; Elliott & Simmons, 2008, p.93).

In product variable of a movie the production team (including a director, film star, producer), film budgets, genre, music and nomination and awards won in film festivals should be considered as the parameters influencing movie choice by the audience.

- **Director:** The director is a film's artistic maître d'oeuvre. They are in charge of its artistic completion, and have significant influence over the selection of its key creative and technical contributors (Hadida, 2009, p.299). For the

- audience, the director's performance is much more difficult to evaluate than that of the actors because the director's work is 'invisible'. The director's performance can be inferred from the movie's quality (Hennig thurau, Walsh & wruck, 2001). Directors have a more indirect effect on consumers: good directors make good movies, good movies have positive word of mouth, positive word of mouth delays peak sales (Ainslie, Drèze & zufryden, 2005, p.515).
- Producer: the producer is a film's business project leader. The producer is then contractually responsible for the completion of the movie within set financial, location and time constraints and for estimating its commercial Success (Hadida, 2009, p.299). Producers finance a movie's production and because of this great financial responsibility, they tend to have far-reaching control over production-related aspects (Hennig thurau, Walsh & wruck, 2001).
 - Film star: films have very few tangible attributes. One of the tangible hallmarks of quality in which this blurring effect is particularly evident is the cast and the presence of big stars, which are an indication of quality on a number of levels (Suarez Vazquez, 2011, p.120). Ravid's (1999) measures are directly related to the two types of reputations that, in general, can be the source of stars' power: an economic reputation, derived from their box office success, and an artistic reputation, derived from the recognition of critics or peers. A star's artistic reputation, which in the motion picture industry is primarily revealed through awards or nominations, is a sign of quality for audiences, executives, the media, and other constituencies (Elberse, 2007, pp.103-104). Researches generally have had mixed results over the impact of film stars on the success of the film. For example, Sochay (1994), and Neelamegham and Chintagunta (1999), Sawhney and Eliashberg (1996) and Ainslie, Drèze, and Zufryden found that there is a positive relationship between the presence of a famous star in the film and its sales. In contrast Ravid (1999), De Vany and Walls. (1999) and Litman (1983) didn't find any significant relationship between these two.
 - Film budget: Another attribute of a film is the size of budget. A large production budget could be taken as a signal of higher quality. (Elliott & Simmons, 2008, p.94) and greater box office popularity (Basuroy, Chatterjee & Ravid, 2003, p.106). Litman concluded film budget has a positive impact on its sales (Litman, 1983, p.170)
 - Genre: During the last thirty years genre has occupied an important place in film studies and typically it includes examples such as Western movies, musical, horror, melodrama, comedy and so on. The relative popularity of genres shifts,

over time, and we do not have any particular hypothesis about which genres will be associated with success in our sample (Prag & Casavant, 1994, p.219). *hazf beshe aya?* Marketers must constantly consider the audience's the genre preferences.

- Nomination or award winning in festivals: The majority of studies conducted on award nomination or award winning concentrated on the impact of winning an Academy Award on film sales. Litman (1983) and Sochay (1994) concluded in their research that nominating or winning an Academy Award can have a positive impact on film sales. In this study nomination or winning an award by Iranian film in domestic and foreign countries were intended. Dodds and Holbrook (1988) evaluate the impact of the Academy Awards on film revenues and find significant effects of best picture, best actor, and best actress awards on post-award revenues (Eliashberg & shugan, 1997, p.69).

2.2 Place of Distribution

The location of the cinema besides pedestrian access must be easily accessible by different vehicles as well (Management and Planning Organization of the country, 2002, p.67) An audience, who can reach the cinema with minimal cost and minimal waste of his time, is more willing to go to movies than an audience who is far away from the cinema. The accessibility of the cinema can be one of the influential factors in attracting the audience. Therefore the cinema must be scattered across the city so the audience can easily reach them (Alamdari, 2000, p.60). In case of place two indices were considered: the location of the cinema and the possibility of using public transport to reach it.

2.3 Promotion

Promotion includes: "Direct and indirect communications with individuals, groups and organizations in order of informing and motivation them toward buying the company's products or services." (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 1998, p.460).

Indicators considered in this section include word of mouth, movie reviews, movie posters, and television, radio, press and Internet commercials.

- Word of mouth: In general, word-of-mouth involves informal, non-commercial communication between consumers concerning positive or negative consumption experiences with regard to goods or services, including movies (Hennig thurau & Walsh, 2001). WOM is usually perceived as more credible and trustworthy for consumers (LIU, 2006, p.74). The two measures of WOM, volume and valence, influence moviegoers through different cognition-behavior routes. the volume of WOM mainly has an informative role to enhance consumer awareness. Not surprisingly, greater

awareness tends to generate greater sales (LIU, 2006, p.77). Conversely, the role of WOM valence, because of its positive/negative nature, is more of a persuasive one that influences consumer attitude (LIU, 2006, p.78).

- Movie reviews: Critics play a significant role in consumers' decisions in many industries (Basuroy, Chatterjee & Ravid, 2003, p.103, p.115; Boatwright, Basuroy & Kamakura, 2007, p.401). According to the industry jargon, the term critics refers to "persons usually employed by newspapers, television stations or other media who screen newly released movies and provide their subjective views and comments on the movie for the public's information (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997, p.70). West and Broniarczyk (1998) argued that the influence of critics on consumer judgments is substantial because critics' access to product previews typically makes them one of the first links in the diffusion of information about new products, and their professional status lends them credibility (Desai & Basuroy, 2005, p.208; Basuroy, Chatterjee & Ravid, 2003, p.104). Sawhney and Eliashberg (1996) found a positive relationship between the movie reviews and its sales.
- Movie poster: Movie poster is the first tool in its sales and activities related to its design usually starts from early stages of film production (Pauli, 2002, p.93). A poster represents an extract of the movie and its main attraction, which includes visual information about its plot, stars and titles of its main stakeholders (Mehrabi, 2011, p.124). Movie posters can be one of the factors that will attract people to the cinemas.
- Television, radio, press advertising and movie website: TV ads for films are usually 10 to 20 seconds. Longer advertisements are also possible but they will certainly cost more to get airplay. Movie ads on TV are usually featured 5 to 10 days before the movie release (Pauli, 2002, p.93). At least 40% of advertising budgets is spent on television, with a special focus on the 2, 3 days prior to opening (King, 2007, p.174).
- Television is the most influential tool for reaching the audience; however it is the most expensive one. The broadcasters depending on their film sometimes use radio for advertisement (Johnson, 2002, p.103). Radio advertising is one of the fastest, easiest and the cheapest method of advertising (Arens, Weigold & Arens, 2009, p.407).
- Advertising campaign for the film, in the print media, usually start two weeks before the movie release and the ads can be published on daily or weekly basis (Jafari Nejad, 2007, p.125).

- The creation of a website potentially serves as a source of information about the film (e.g., plot, stars, trailers, etc.). In addition, it may serve to induce awareness of a new film, to enhance the site visitors' intentions to see a film, and consequently increases the likelihood of ticket purchase upon opening (Zufryden, 2000, p.55).

2.4 Price

Price is the only element in the marketing mix that produces revenue; all other elements represent costs. Price is also one of the most flexible elements of the marketing mix. Price can be change quickly (Armstrong & Kotler, 2000, 290). The art of successful pricing is to establish a price level which is sufficiently low that an exchange represents good value to buyers, yet is high enough to allow a service provider to achieve its financial objectives (Palmer, 2005, p.344).

In Iranian movie industry there is no direct relationship between a movie's cost and its revenue. In fact there is no direct connection between a movie's cost and its ticket prices, because the price of most of the movie tickets is fixed (Dadgu, 1991, pp.55-56). In terms of ticket prices we can refer to special discounts. These special discounts can be given in specific days in every year (such as National Day holidays or National cinema day). Discounts can also include a special class of people (e.g., Festival ticket prices are discounted for students). Moreover, ticket price can be cut in to half for everyone, once a week.

3. FINDINGS

Results from the demographic data showed that 55.6% of respondents were female; most of them (40.2%) were in 26 to 30 years age group. The majority of them (55.4%) went to movies 1 to 4 times per year and 85.1% of respondents held bachelor degree or higher.

In this study in order of verifying the normal distribution of the variables and indices, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed. The results of this test showed that only two variables of product and promotion had normal distribution and the others had abnormal distribution. Then for testing whether each of these variables or indicators were influential in attracting the respondents to cinema or not, t-student and binominal tests were performed. Product and promotion variables were tested via t-student test. Indicators and variables that had abnormal distribution were tested via binomial test. The results are summarized in Tables 1 to 2.

In Tables 1 to 2 if significance level is lower than error value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected which means that the mentioned variable or indices is influential in attracting people to cinema. Otherwise it is not influential or their influence is not significant.

Table 1
The Result of T-Student Test for Product & Promotion Variable

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	T-student statistic	Freedom degree	Significance level	Influence/no influence
Product	3.18	0.27	6.522	454	0.000	influence
Promotion	0.443	0.03	12.365	454	0.005	influence

Table 2
The Result of Binominal Test for Product, Price, Place & Promotion Variable

Variable & indices	Category	Numbers observed	Observed probability	Significance level	Error	Influence/no influence
Director	3≥	120	0.26	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	335	0.74			
	total	455	1			
Movie star	3≥	121	0.27	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	334	0.73			
	total	455	1			
Producer	3≥	36	0.08	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	419	0.92			
	total	455	1			
Genre	3≥	85	0.19	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	370	0.81			
	total	455	1			
Budget	3≥	428	0.94	1.000 ^a	0.05	No influence
	3<	27	0.06			
	total	455	1			
Nomination in festivals	3≥	186	0.41	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	269	0.59			
	total	455	1			
Awards won in festivals	3≥	177	0.39	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	278	0.61			
	total	455	1			
Special discounts and half priced tickets	3≥	242	0.53	0.189	0.05	No influence
	3<	213	0.47			
	total	455	1			
Place	3≥	114	0.25	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	341	0.75			
	total	455	1			
Location of cinema	3≥	127	0.28	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	328	0.72			
	total	455	1			
Possibility of using public transport to access the cinema	3≥	178	0.390	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	277	0.610			
	total	455	1			
Press ads	3≥	83	0.180	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	372	0.820			
	total	455	1			
Radio advertisement	3≥	25	0.50	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	430	0.950			
	total	455	1			
Television commercials	3≥	112	0.250	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	343	0.750			
	total	455	1			
Film website	3≥	29	0.060	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	426	0.940			
	total	455	1			
WOM	3≥	156	0.660	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	299	0.340			
	total	455	1			
Movie posters	3≥	365	0.200	.000 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	90	0.800			
	total	455	1			
Movie reviews	3≥	205	0.450	.039 ^a	0.05	influence
	3<	250	0.550			
	total	455	1			

Regarding the “price” it can be mentioned that about 38.2 percent respondents considered ticket prices expensive and very expensive and 53.8% average and 8 percent cheap and very cheap.

As the significance level is lower than 0.05 for product and promotion variables, therefore these two variables are influential in attracting people to cinema. But the results of binominal test for price, promotion and the indices for four key variables (4P's) indicates that among all indices, “movie budget”, “special discounts and half price tickets” and “price” variable do not have significant impact in attracting people to cinema.

3.1 The Ranking of the Research Variables

The Friedman test was performed for ranking respectively the indices and main variables in research model. In order to perform this test, the chi-square statistic and the significance level for each variable has been examined. As shown in Tables 3 and 4 for all variables and indices the significance level was higher than 0.05, therefore there is a significant differences between them in terms of their impact on attracting people to cinema so they can be ranked. These rankings are shown in Tables 3 to 8.

Table 3
The Result of Friedman Test for Ranking the Indices of Product, Place and Promotion Variables

Variable	Chi square	Significance level	Numbers
Price	1571.388	0.000	455
Place	235.937	0.000	455
Promotion	1.842E3	0.000	455

Table 4
The Result of Friedman Test for Ranking the Variables

Chi square	Significance level	Numbers
616.171	0.000	455

Table 5
Ranking of Product Indices

Index	Mean rank	Rank
Genre	6.13	1
Director	5.84	2
Movie star	5.67	3
Nomination in festivals	5.28	4
Awards won in festivals	5.06	5
Producer	2.30	6

Table 6
Ranking of Place Indices

Index	Mean rank	Rank
location of Movie Theater	2.16	1
Possibility of using public transport to access the cinema	1.56	2

Table 7
Ranking of Promotion Indices

Index	Mean rank	Rank
WOM	11	1
Movie reviews	9.24	2
Television commercials	7.63	3
Press ads	7.54	4
Movie posters	7.42	5
Radio advertisement	5.24	6
Film website	5.15	7

Table 8
Ranking of the Research Variables

Variable	Mean rank	Rank
Place	4.874	1
Product	3.57	2
Promotion	1.98	3
price	1.65	4

CONCLUSION

The results showed that all of the hypotheses except the second hypothesis were confirmed.

- (1) Based on the results, place was the most influential variable in attracting audiences and the priority of its indices were: the location of Cinema and the possibility of using public transport to access the cinema.
- (2) The results showed that product has the second place among the four variables in attracting the audience. All indices of this variable except “movie budget” were found to be influential in attracting audiences and their priorities were respectively: film genre, director, movie star, awards won and nomination at the festivals and producer.
- (3) The results showed that the promotion variables and its 7 indices are influential in attracting audiences. The priorities of indices were respectively: word of mouth, movie reviews, television commercials, press ads, movie posters, radio advertisement and film website.
- (4) The results showed that price and its index were not an influential variable in attracting audiences and it is the only unexpected result in the present study. The majority of respondents believed the price of the ticket is average or cheap.

DISCUSSION

The results show that place is the most influential variable in attracting audiences to cinema. This result was not unexpected, because the majority of cinema in Tehran are located in the most crowded parts of the city and the existing traffic restrictions, makes these areas not easy accessible for all citizens. Therefore it can be suggested that cinema builder via the collaboration of government agencies, select the location which can be easily accessible by public or private transportation.

Since the majority of movie audiences are interested in foreign movies and they are not only aware of today's standards of movie making in the world, but also the quality of Iranian movie doesn't fulfill their need and expectation compared to foreign movies, the product variable was the second most important variable in the eyes of the audience.

So it can be suggested that in order to absorb more audience to cinema, decreasing the number of movies produced in one year, allocating more budgets for each of them and showing foreign movies in cinema can be effective.

Because people have lost their trust to media advertising, promotion variable has the third rank after place and price. Word of mouth and movie reviews are the reasons that make this variable still effective. WOM based on the scientific research is such a successful tool in selling consumer product, due to its creditability and trustworthiness. Movie as a product is not an exempt from this rule.

Using broadcast news and publishing professionals review about the film before its release in any city, is a useful method for starting a wave of information and stimulate public opinion and increase its word of mouth. WOM (recommendation of friends and critics about film) is more believable than advertising among audience.

Unlike the popular belief that society is sensitive to the price of the tickets and expensiveness of it, results show that only 38.2 percent of respondents believed that movie tickets are expensive or very expensive. The majority believed that the prices are average or lower. Therefore these people are not sensitive to price variable and higher prices not only wouldn't decrease their number of selling ticket but also would increase the cinema's profit. From other point of view, constructing luxurious cinema in addition to offer superior services and presence motivation provides more money and profit for cinema holders.

But for that portion of the audience who are sensitive to prices, based on the following proposition, different ticket prices can be designed:

- Dividing the seats of cinema in accordance to their view toward the screen.
- The quality of the film.

SUGGESTIONS TO FUTURE RESEARCHER

- Examine the impact of cultural, political, economic, social and technological factors on movie sales.
- Divided the movie goers to professional goers and people who go to movies for entertainment and pleasure, then examine the impact of promotional tools used for attracting these two groups to cinema.
- Examine the impact of emerging media such as satellite networks on attracting people to cinema.

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