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Developing a comprehensive model of marketing performance evaluation at the branch level in the Iranian banking system using Grounded Theory approach

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Abstract

Appropriate and rational evaluation is considered as a fundamental issue of today's organizations with multiple branches, especially about banks. In the meantime, utilizing a proper model of marketing performance evaluation at the bank's branch level will bring consequences such as increasing the accountability, services quality improvement, increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty, and finally, the bank profitability. Therefore, the current research was conducted with the aim of designing and explaining a comprehensive model of marketing performance evaluation for the bank branches with the qualitative approach of the grounded theory. Considering the criterion of theoretical saturation, judgmental sampling was used to select 20 people who were interviewed. Based on the findings of the research, the provision of banking services at a certain level of quality by the bank's employees and management affects the marketing performance of the branch over time. Also, the findings showed that factors such as organizational culture, as well as local market conditions and macroeconomic factors, extra-branch rules and regulations, and the severe fluctuation of the local market, manifest themselves in customer relationship management, human capital management, and continuous improvement and finally, the consequence of such management is gaining customer loyalty, creating a successful brand and the bank profitability.

Highlights

- Marketing success in bank branches leads to consequences such as gaining customer loyalty, creating a successful brand, and bank profitability.
- Bank employees are considered as key causal factors in the good marketing performance of bank branches.
- Organizational culture and local market are two underlying factors of the marketing performance of bank branches

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, banking is considered as one of the most influential economic institutions all over the world. Moreover, achieving growth, prosperity and development is practically impossible without a dynamic, efficient and healthy banking system (Mansouria & Sadeghi Amroabadi, 2021). Banking is definitely considered as one of the most essential economic sectors of any country (Abdi Seyedkolai et al., 2021). Also, according to Nilchian et al. (2022), as the main sources of liquidity for production and service companies, banks play a very significant role in the economic growth and development of a country. With the increase of competition in Iranian banking in the last decade, the pressure to improve the banks efficiency has intensified (Eskandari et al., 2021). As specialized and professional organizations for the society's financial resources management, the success of banks depends on their ability to provide services needed by the society, provide services in an efficient manner, and sell services at an affordable price (Azizi & Aminian, 2014). These services are provided by the bank branches. As the main intermediary between customers and the banking network, bank branches play a significant role in the bank's performance, so that the branch's performance directly affects the bank's success. In other words, attracting customers and meeting needs and providing services in each bank is realized through its storefront, which is the bank's branches. Even with digitization, branches are still one of the main sources of bank costs and create most of the value provided to the end customer (LaPlante & Paradi, 2015). Therefore, according to Paradi & Zhu (2013), analyzing the branches performance can lead to gaining an understanding of the performance of the whole bank drivers, supporting cost management initiatives and control and improvement of management performance. Performing such analysis at the branch level can serve as a useful support for decision-making from a managerial point of view (Anna Grazia et al., 2017). Therefore, as Dan Freed (2016) states, in a competitive environment, knowing the performance of different branches is considered as the basis for saving costs and protecting the customer experience. Also, according to the results of marketing efforts, marketing performance evaluation systems can provide feedback in order to make the right decision and plan for the future (Clark et al., 2006). Nevertheless, despite the significance of business performance evaluation, according to Haji Heydari et al. (2014), few studies have conducted with the aim of comprehensive review of marketing performance, and in most of the few studies addressing this issue, financial measures have been more focused. So that it can be said that in most cases, the existing methods of evaluating bank branches are mostly experimental and lack robust scientific foundation, and in most of them, only the financial output is considered important (Salehi et al., 2011), with the main goal of improving the profit growth. According to Brown & Laverick (1994), profit-based measures, which are mainly interested in short-term financial efficiency, show that financial efficiency should be the most important performance evaluation standard, which is not true in most cases. In addition, most studies focus on the organization level instead of the branch level (Fethi &

Pasiouras, 2010). Therefore, the accurate performance evaluation of the banks at the operational level namely the bank branches is very important and one of the most important and basic fields in the economic research (Taheri et al., 2022). Based on what was said, the purpose of the present study is to investigate and explain the different dimensions of marketing performance at the branch level in the Iranian banks and for this purpose, it has been tried to identify various factors of branch marketing performance using a qualitative research and provide an evaluation model for the Iranian banks branches.

2. A Review of the Related Literature

The very first theories regarding marketing performance appraisal systems considered marketing activities primarily as a separate cost center happening at corporate costs. This approach emerged and was developed during the product centralization period, which has shown its weaknesses more by endorsing customer-oriented and relationship-oriented marketing strategies (Sheth et al., 2002). Paradigms like that have changed the role of the customer in the company from the passive marketing action to the leading partner participating in value production considered as an asset of the company that must be managed and evaluated continuously at the right time and place (Gummesson, 2004). This explains the increasing attention to customer accountability and intangibles in customer relationships (Rust et al., 2004).

After the inefficiency of financial metrics in examining the performance of companies, intangible valuation metrics were added to this category (Rust et al., 2004). Different studies have introduced various metrics to evaluate the performance of companies' marketing systems. Clark (1999) has presented 20, Ambler & Riley (2000) 38 metrics, Davidson (1999) 10 metrics, and Meyer (1998) 100 metrics to evaluate marketing performance. Jarachandran et al., (2005) have introduced customer relationship management to measure corporate marketing management. Current studies have taken their approach out of the traditional mode and provide metrics for evaluating customer relationship management (Ling-Yee, 2011), brand equity, customer lifetime (Debruynne & Hubbard, 2000), and customer satisfaction life period (Rust et al., 2000) have emerged as new factors in measuring the performance of marketing management. Lenskold (2003) has introduced four metrics to evaluate the marketing performance of companies: 1) direct measurement method, obtained by dividing the outputs into the marketing system data, 2) controlled test method, which is the effects of the program measures marketing in the environment, 3) method of studying customer intention, which is a technique for monitoring the type of relationship between customers and the company, and 4) the method of hypothetical effect, used to examine the current and past behavior of customers in shopping and its causes.

Some studies provide additional indices that affect bank competition (Muala et al., 2013). Moreover, Lympelopoulos et al., (2012) examine this area and use exploratory results to develop a bank-marketing model. Lumanaj et al., (2013)

showed that quality customer service generates better revenue. Efficient marketing provides smooth coordination and effective control of communications in a dynamic business environment (Ivan, 2012). Sychrová (2013) stresses that besides traditional indices, other parameters related to marketing management integrated with the marketing strategy are of great significance. Identifying the right key parameters should help evaluate marketing effectiveness (Milichovský & Šimberová, 2015). Marketing is a complex phenomenon with many multidimensional aspects with opposite orientations of criteria that adopting multi-criteria evaluation methods is appropriate for such an analysis (Ginevičius et al., 2013). In spite of the irreplaceable marketing status quo, some organizations downplay this management element. In other companies, individuals usually make subjective evaluations of marketing decisions without any data, analysis, or measurable metrics (Pajtinková, 2012). Jafarnejad & Mokhtarzadeh (2007) have presented a quantitative model for auditing the compliance of production and marketing strategies for manufacturing and industrial companies. They argue that marketing and production units are the most significant parts of any company, and compliance between production and marketing strategies in companies would result in their continued profitable and productive life.

Moreover, in domestic studies, Mehregan & Bandarzadeh (2005) sought to use a stable, balanced scorecard to find a new way to evaluate organizational performance by identifying various quantitative and qualitative indices designed with multiple perspectives. Regarding this, they studied the ten branches of a bank using 137 quantitative and qualitative indices under 21 scenarios. In their research entitled "Ranking of bank branch heads according to the marketing characteristics as a superior competitive advantage," Keyvanshkouhi & Daraei (2010) evaluated the heads of branches of the Welfare Bank in Bushehr. Sedighi Shiraz (2012) evaluated and ranked the branches of Post Bank using data envelopment analysis. Salehi et al. (2011) have examined the performance evaluation model of branches in Ghavamin Bank. Faizi & Solokdar (2014) studied the performance of public and private banks by identifying the effective indices in their evaluation, the weighting of landscapes and indices by the fuzzy hierarchical entropy technique and bank ranking using the fuzzy TOPSIS technique. They have simultaneously examined public (Melli, Sepah and Keshavarzi) and private (Mellat, Sarmayeh and Pasargad) banks to identify effective performance indices and to facilitate effective and useful decision-making. In the study entitled "Measuring the productivity of bank branches with the approach of network data envelopment analysis," Azar et al. (2014) examined the approach that the process of providing services in banks consists of interactive and interdependent stages. He examined the productivity of one of the branches of a bank in Guilan. The development of a comprehensive framework for evaluating marketing performance with a hybrid approach by Haji Heidari et al. (2014) can also be cited. In a paper entitled "Presenting the evaluation model of bank branches with a combined approach of principal component analysis and data envelopment analysis," Azar & Nobahar (2015) examined 100 3rd grade branches of Keshavarzi Bank using ten main

indices and 36 sub-indices. In their study entitled, "Evaluation of banks' performance based on VIKOR method," [Khalilzadeh & Moradi Tadi \(2015\)](#) presented a multi-criteria decision model using the VIKOR method for banks performance evaluation T at both financial and non-financial levels. In that study, three private, semi-private and public banks were selected and studied as a case study. The financial criteria obtained in that study were the ratio of fuel to receivables, capital adequacy ratio, return on assets, profitability and share of resource absorption, as well as the main non-financial criteria, which were service quality and pricing. [Bani Asadi \(2015\)](#) conducted a study on prioritizing marketing performance evaluation indices using the Delphi method and hierarchical analysis. [Ehsanifar & Abbasi \(2016\)](#) examined the branches of the western region of Tehran in Bank Melli with the combined approach of fuzzy TOPSIS and a balanced scorecard. They selected 11 indices - profit margin, market share rate, new customer acquisition rate, customer retention rate, transaction productivity, knowledge sharing among employees, the number of new service items, debt ratio, having specialized skills, customer satisfaction and the employee's knowledge of the goals to evaluate performance. The relationship between market orientation and organizational performance has been studied by [Bojar Dolabi et al., \(2016\)](#) in Bank Mellat, considering the mediating role of e-marketing and market performance. [Abdekhoda \(2016\)](#) examined the effect of marketing strategies on the marketing performance of the bank in Mashhad Bank Keshavarzi and showed that for every unit increase in marketing strategy at least several times in different dimensions is added to the bank's marketing performance. In their study entitled "Presenting a model for evaluating the performance of Tejarat Bank branch management using multi-criteria decision making," [Goudarzi & Haddadi \(2017\)](#) studied 37 managements of Tejarat Bank branches management and showed the model suitable for evaluation is a balanced scorecard, and 12 indices are very important. In a published paper, [Keymasi & Narges Saremi \(2017\)](#) stated that one of the reasons for the poor performance of some bank branches is their poor marketing. By examining the concept of "local marketing," they examined to what extent the bank branches are the nation intelligent in the face of the environment and with what quality they carry out marketing actions appropriate to their area of authority.

An index based on multiple layer data envelopment analysis was presented by [Sadeghi Askari et al. \(2019\)](#) in their study on Bank Maskan. Also, using the weight restriction approach in data envelopment analysis, [Ahadzadeh et al. \(2019\)](#) evaluated the performance of the branches of a commercial bank. [Eslami et al. \(2021\)](#) conducted a study on the performance evaluation of bank branches with a data mining and expert system approach. An interactive model of performance appraisal indicators was presented in the study of [Mohammadi Moghadam et al. \(2021\)](#) in the Refah Kargaran Bank. The next year, [Mohammadi Moghadam et al. \(2022\)](#), conducted a study on the subject of evaluating and analyzing the quality of bank branch performance using content analysis methods and multiple criteria decision making in a fuzzy environment.

3. The Study Model

Since the purpose of the current research is to present a comprehensive model for marketing performance evaluation in bank branches, it can be considered an applied research in terms of purpose, and a qualitative research in terms of method. Also, since in this type of research, the goal is to collect patterns and ideas to find a deep understanding of the subject instead of testing the hypothesis, it is an exploratory research in terms of nature. Considering the research purpose and few researches conducted in this approach, it was tried to use the Grounded Theory method in this study. Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach in which phenomena are investigated in their natural context, and in this way, theory emerges from the data. This method also provides a new approach to deal with the research subject and finally, it can be said that compared to the theory derived by collecting a series of concepts based on experience or mere reflection, the Grounded Theory is more likely to represent the reality and it can be a reliable guide for action by creating deeper insight and understanding. Grounded theory, according to the definition of [Glaser \(1992\)](#), is the process of building a documented and codified theory with the organized collection of data and inductive analysis of the collected data set in order to answer new questions in fields that do not have sufficient theoretical foundations to formulate any hypothesis and test; according to this definition, induction is the main axis in grounded theory. Grounded theory is a method in which, instead of inferring from previous assumptions, other researches or existing theoretical frameworks, theories, concepts, hypotheses and propositions are discovered directly from the data and provides a deep understanding in relation to the studied entities. Grounded theory is a systematic and precise approach to conceptualization, so that the theories resulting from this method are inductively branched from the studied phenomenon. The implementation procedure of this method is started with a study area and related cases are gradually added. In the first stage, during the process called open coding, appropriate codes are first assigned to different parts of the data and categorized in the form of categories. At this stage, in fact, we identify concepts and discover the features and dimensions of each concept ([Strauss & Corbin, 1998](#)). After open coding, in the second stage, called axial coding, the researcher thinks about the different dimensions of the categories and finds links between them. Finally, during the third step, called selective coding, we refine the categories, and all these steps eventually lead to the emergence of a theoretical framework.

In the current research, according to its purpose, the statistical population for conducting interviews consists of all the managers and experts of the banking industry and experts, specialists, scientists and professors of marketing and management sciences. Since the focus of this research was on the development of theory, it was necessary to select people who are completely familiar with the research subject, who have the necessary experience and knowledge about the phenomenon and are involved in working with it, and who have the best conditions to present the required information and have a desire to participate and

provide their experiences; therefore, the best approach was to use Judgmental Purposive Sampling based on the researchers' judgment until reaching theoretical saturation to select from among the statistical population. The interviews continued until the theoretical saturation was reached, and upon reaching a point where no new concepts could be found, it ended after interviewing with 20 people. Among this sample, 15% are female and 85% are male, 70% are employed in the country's banking system and 30% in other jobs, 65% have a Ph.D. degree and 35% have a master's degree. Since this sample included the most knowledgeable people in the field of banking and marketing, questions were asked from them about the criteria and indicators of the marketing performance of bank branches and their analysis of the effects and consequences of these indicators. If the interviewee allowed, the interviews were recorded so that by reviewing it several times, a more detailed analysis and examination of the people's views could be found. To ensure the research validity and reliability, from the re-examination strategies were used including checking the model compliance and theory created by the participants' views by the interviewees, external review by people other than those designated for the interview and pluralism (interviewing people from different levels of marketing and banking with different responsibilities).

4. Empirical Results

Following the grounded theory strategy, open coding process was implemented immediately after each interview. At this stage, we tried to identify latent themes by reviewing the collected data sets. Then the appropriate concepts and labels were assigned to the codes extracted from the interviews, and then the next data collection path was determined based on the theoretical sensitivity criterion. A summary of the samples from the interviews and tags is presented in Table 1. After this stage, the axial and selective coding process was carried out to reach the basic dimensions and components of the research and extract the research conceptual model. The dimensions of the marketing process, along with their most important components and indicators, were extracted by reviewing the studies and theories available in the field of the subject under study and also with the information received from the interviewees, and accordingly, 64 categories were obtained from the data gathered from the interviews. Next, the categories were conceptualized into 18 main categories. The last step was also dedicated to identifying convergent concepts and formulating them in 6 categorical clusters.

Table 1. An example of raw data, concepts, and coding

Row	Raw data obtained from data collection	Concepts (codes)
1	Ensuring the customer that the personal information and account will not be disclosed, and trusting the employee as a confidential and secretive person. Also, arguing in the branch environment is a very important and effective factor.	A sense of security

Row	Raw data obtained from data collection	Concepts (codes)
2	The customer's belief and feeling that he/she can really count on the long-term benefits of the services received.	Trust and confidence
3	The customer's real perception and feeling that the employee is really eager to solve his/her problem.	Sympathy
4	It is not acceptable for a customer to receive his facilities from us, takes a guarantee from another bank, opens his LC elsewhere, and goes elsewhere for insurance.	completeness of the service portfolio
5	Crowdedness of a branch may be attributed to the good service of the bank and having many customers, or to the slowness of the employees and the weakness of the bank's technology.	proper service delivery speed
6	Customers' participation in the design of products, processes, etc., which should be offered to customers.	Customer participation in banking
7	Trust between people and the organization leads to regular and logical interactions and relationships between people.	Organizational Trust
8	For a long time, the person or organization remains your customer and purchases more of your services or products.	Behavioral loyalty

Axial coding is based on determining one category as the main category and then relating the rest of them as subcategories. It is the main idea or phenomenon that is the basis and axis of the process, and all other main categories are related to it. The axial category is the conceptual label or title that is developed for the design framework. Considering that in the present research, the researcher seeks to evaluate the marketing performance of bank branches in Iran, after collecting data and analyzing them in the open coding stage, and by examining the presented features and the categories nature, the marketing performance from among the main categories was chosen as the axial category, which includes four categories of: 1) customer acquisition and retention, 2) customer experience and feeling, 3) market share, and 4) financial indicators. It is expected to achieve customer acquisition and retention, customer desirable experience and feeling, market share, and improvement of financial indicators by fulfilling the causal and context conditions and proper intervening conditions. Figure 1 shows the categories and subcategories of the branches' marketing performance.

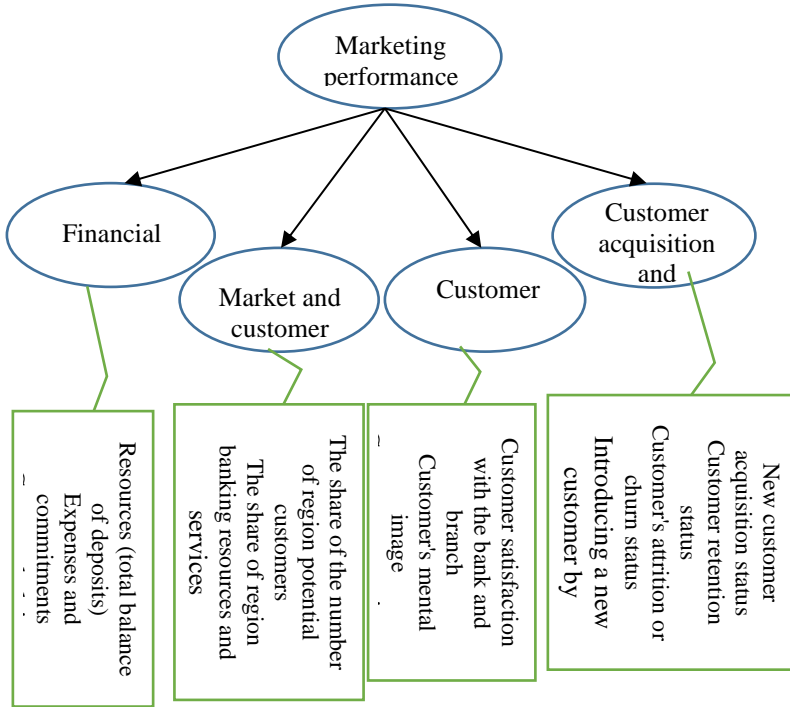


Figure 1. Marketing performance and the related categories and subcategories

A set of events and conditions affecting marketing performance constitute the causal conditions, which can be any event or possible occurrence. The first step in improving marketing performance is a competent and motivated knowledge-based human resource, which can provide the proper conditions for optimal performance. In this regard, it is necessary to create the field of providing quality services to customers, under the light of capable management, to achieve optimal performance. Also, these categories affect the axial category of marketing performance. The main and related subcategories are shown in Figure 2.

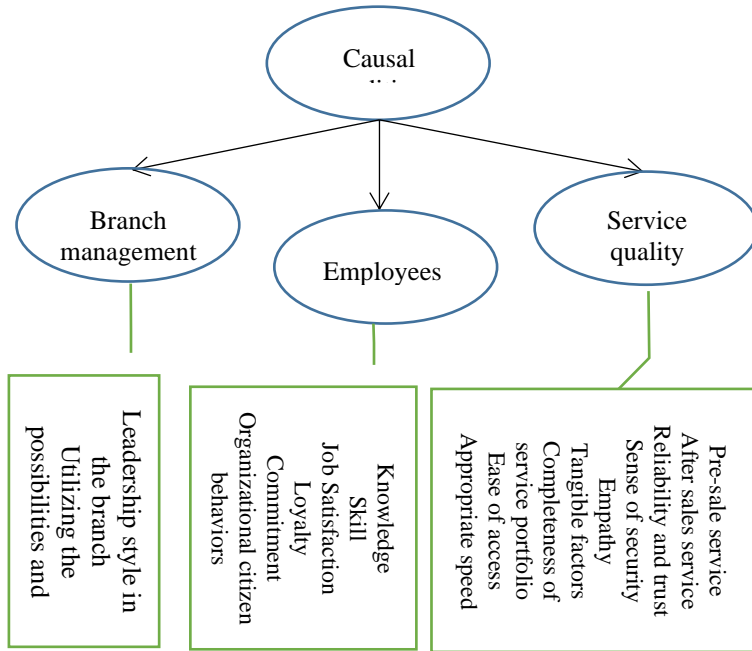


Figure 2. Causal conditions of marketing performance and its related categories and subcategories

Context refers to special features indicating the phenomenon in question, namely the environment of events and occurrences related to the phenomenon. Also, the set of special conditions in which the action and reaction strategies take place is the context that about the marketing performance of the branches, two main categories of: 1) local market, and 2) organizational culture of the bank are considered as the context of forming the branches marketing performance. Also, in a bank, a strong organizational culture can be considered as a platform for successful marketing of that bank's branches. These factors, i.e. the potential, state, and conditions of the local market, along with the dominance of the organization's desirable culture, can be considered as a proper platform for improving performance, especially marketing performance; because it is very difficult to provide a successful performance in branch marketing without a proper context. The related categories and subcategories are presented in Figure 3.

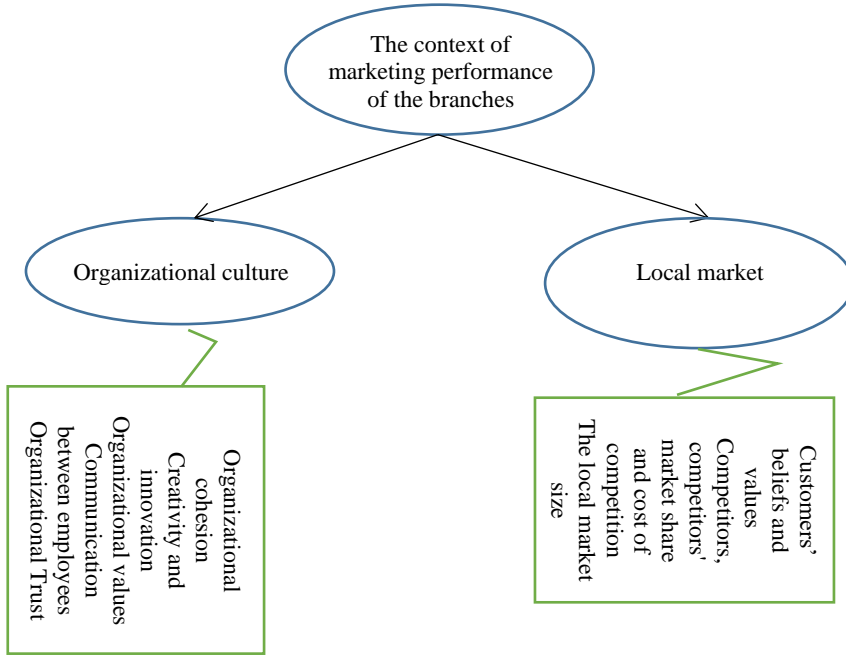


Figure 3. The marketing performance context and its related categories and subcategories

As structural conditions belonging to the phenomenon in question, intervening conditions affect action and reaction strategies. These conditions limit or facilitate strategies within a certain context. Three subcategories of macroeconomic factors, extra-branch rules and regulations, and severe market fluctuations are the intervening conditions of branch marketing performance. Intervening conditions deal with multiple factors involved in moving towards improving marketing performance, which should be strengthened or neutralized in order to accelerate category-centric strategies. Any of the intervening factors in the marketing performance of the branches, can accelerate or hinder the achievement of the desired performance. Figure 4 shows the intervening conditions and its related categories and subcategories.

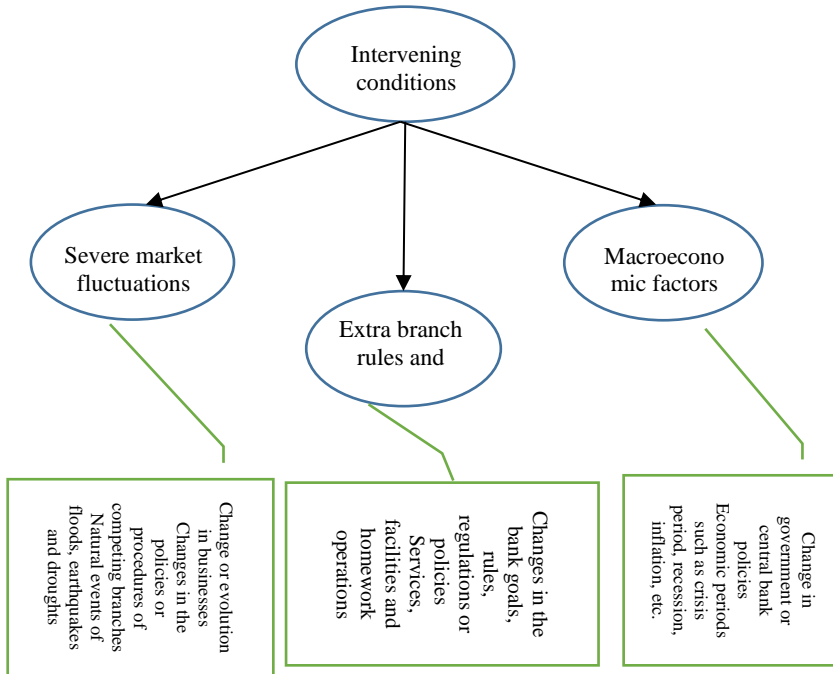


Figure 4. Intervening conditions of marketing performance and its categories and subcategories

Setting the strategies is based on the actions and reactions relevant in the field of control, management and dealing with marketing performance. Every strategy has a purpose and is done for a reason. Although the goal of the strategy may not be related to the phenomenon, it will have consequences for the phenomenon. The three main categories of human capital management, customer relationship and continuous improvement are the success strategies in marketing performance of branches. Also, strategies help to reach faster to the desired phenomenon, that is, to improve marketing performance. Since it is the people who determine the success or failure of any organization, the first important factor in the success of marketing performance is the effective management of human capital. In other words, the first step to succeed in marketing is to pay full attention to employees who can create new capacity in the bank's business and make the branches and, as a result, the bank successful. In the next stage, the bank's success must be guaranteed through effective communication with customers, continuous improvement in processes and procedures, and creating a permanent growth circle of customers, employees, society and the bank. Marketing strategies along with categories and subcategories are presented in Figure 5.

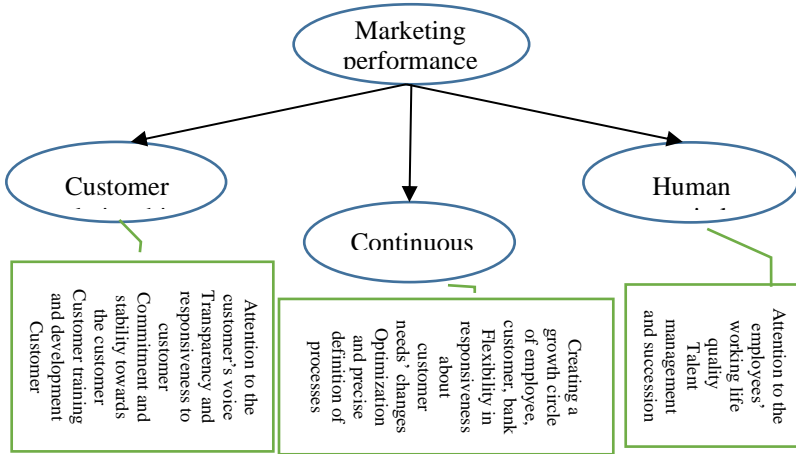


Figure 5. Marketing performance strategies and its related categories and subcategories

The consequences are the results of actions and reactions that cannot always be predicted and are not necessarily the same consequences that people seek. Rather, they can be the incidents and events in the present and future, may take a negative form, and be real or implied. It is also possible that what is considered a consequence at one time, becomes a part of the conditions and factors at another time. The three main categories of 1) profitability, 2) brand growth and strengthening and 3) customer loyalty are the success consequences in marketing performance. Regarding the consequences of marketing performance, it can be said that branches with successful marketing performance will ultimately experience profitability, customer loyalty, and the growth and strengthening of the bank's brand. The results of branch marketing performance along with its related categories and subcategories are presented in Figure 6.

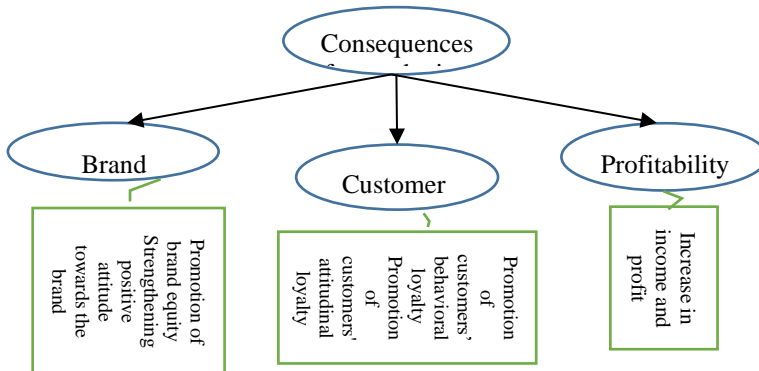


Figure 6. The consequences of marketing performance and its categories and subcategories

Selective coding, which is the process of choosing one category as the axial category and relating all other categories to that, is considered as the third stage of coding in Grounded Theory. The main idea is to expand the main storyline around which everything is formed. Specifically, selective coding deals with the process of systematically selecting the main and axial category and relating other categories to it, validating relationships, and filling in gaps with categories that need further refinement and expansion. After presenting the six categories of causal, axial, context, intervening, strategies and consequences in the previous figures, the paradigm model of branch marketing performance is presented in Figure 7.

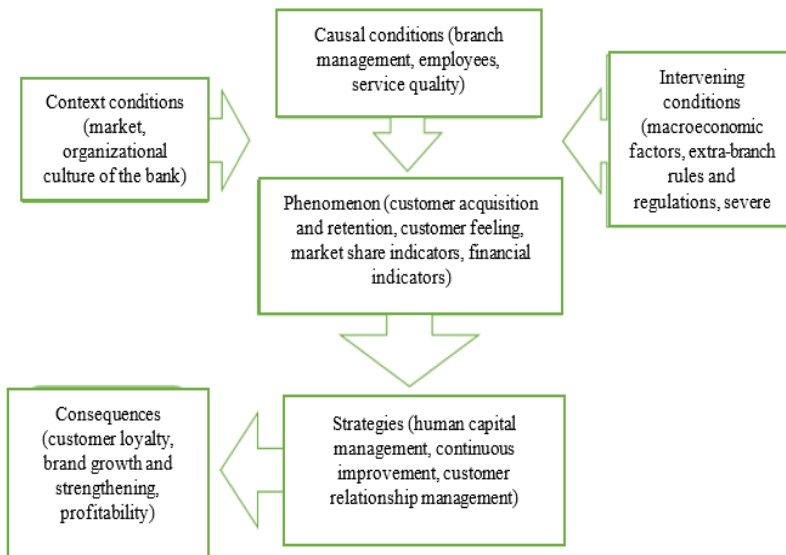


Figure 7. Paradigm model of branch marketing performance

The grounded theory approach aimed to produce a theory, not a mere description of the phenomenon. In order to turn the analysis into theory, it is necessary that the categories are regularly related to each other. In this regard, selective coding is the process of integrating and improving categories. This process connects the categories by writing the storyline. According to Strauss and Corbin, this is reaching a paradigm model, and according to Glaser, it is the theory emergence from the data and the meanings abstracted from a human and social situation (Ferasatkah, 2016).

5. Research narrative (Marketing performance of branches)

As the core category of the research, marketing performance and providing local solutions to improve it were proposed. In this regard, the researcher's attention was focused on ways to improve the marketing performance of branches, because success in branch marketing has significant consequences in relation to banks and society.

As a multi-dimensional concept, it is necessary to analyze the performance of branches along with related factors. For this reason, "What are the factors related to the marketing performance of bank branches in the country?" was raised as the researcher's main question. In response to this question, marketing performance was identified as an axial phenomenon and considered as the center of the paradigm model. The four main categories of customer acquisition and retention, customer experience and feeling, market and customer share indicators, and financial indicators constitute the marketing performance. It is expected to achieve improvement in the mentioned indicators with the availability of the causal conditions, context and proper intervening conditions.

The three main categories of branch management, branch employees and the quality of service provision in the branch constitute causal conditions and factors affecting the marketing performance of branches. In this regard, benefiting from knowledgeable human resources with necessary skills is the first step to success, which can provide conditions for providing quality services and achieving desired performance under the light of efficient management. For this purpose, it is necessary to apply the necessary accuracy and sensitivity in recruiting employees, and to provide a suitable field for growth and activity so that branch employees can work in a merit-based system. Based on the review of research literature and existing theories in the field of banks' performance, the issue of marketing performance needs to be examined beyond other performance variables, such as the managers' tendencies and attitudes and the intellectual paradigms of the organization. In addition to the conditions known as the causes of marketing performance, optimal marketing performance requires the basis and fields of growth and perfection.

The two main categories of the bank's organizational culture and the market constitute the basis for the formation of branches' marketing performance. A strong organizational culture in an organization can be considered a platform for dynamic performance. The existence of a strong culture of the organization in serving the customer is considered as many developed organizations and successful banks as the first step of their development. On the other hand, the local market of establishing the branch should be sufficiently strong and have potential in order to provide optimal financial performance. In other words, a strong organizational culture along with the potential of the local market can be considered as a proper context for the development of marketing performance because growth is not possible without a proper context.

The three main categories of macroeconomic factors, extra-branch rules and regulations, and extreme fluctuations in the local market are the intervening

conditions of the branches' marketing performance. Intervening conditions are related to several factors involved in the movement towards the axial category, which should be strengthened or neutralized in order to accelerate the strategies of the axial category. Intervening factors can accelerate or hinder the achievement of desired marketing performance. Usually, strategies are implemented by banks to strengthen the effect of causal conditions on the axial category that is, marketing performance. The three main categories of effective human capital management, customer relationship management, and continuous improvement constitute marketing performance improvement strategies. Using strategies can improve marketing performance faster. The first factor considered necessary in marketing performance is capable and motivated human resources to provide quality products and services. In other words, developing the capabilities, abilities and motivation of bank employees is the first step to improve marketing performance. Knowledgeable, capable and motivated human resources create new capacity in the bank and change the branches marketing performance.

There are consequences as a result of improving and developing the marketing performance of the branches for the bank, which are called as the consequences of desirable marketing performance. The three main categories of profitability, customer loyalty, and brand growth and development are the categories that form the consequences of the desirable marketing performance. In a branch with desirable marketing performance, customer loyalty and profitability have been obtained by achieving success in marketing, sustainable development and growth of the bank brand in that region. This sustainable growth and development of the bank has mutual relations with customers and employees, each of which can contribute to the passion for life and hope for the future of the people of that society. In this way, the interests of the bank, customers, employees, and finally the society are fulfilled and guaranteed.

As the findings of the research show, bank branches are formed with the presence of employees and management of the branch and they continue to work by providing banking services at a certain level of quality so that a branch achieves success. With the passage of time, under the influence of the society's macroeconomic factors, extra-branch rules and regulations, and extreme fluctuations in the local market, and in the context of the local market and organizational culture, the branch officials try to develop customer relationship management strategies, human capital management, and improvement and Implement continuous development to achieve marketing performance. Successful marketing performance ultimately has the consequences of customer loyalty, growth and strengthening of the bank's brand and earning more profit and income. However, the identified intervening conditions can affect, adjust or intensify the context conditions, causal factors, strategies and even the axial phenomenon directly. The findings of the present study in the form of the proposed model are presented in Figure 8.

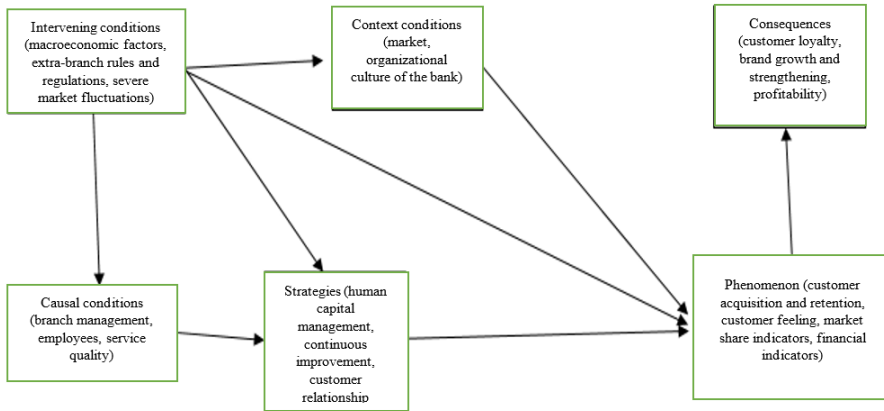


Figure 8. The study proposed model

6. Discussion and conclusion

Due to its importance, the issue of marketing performance evaluation at the level of bank branches has been highlighted in the existing literature. The role of branches, which are the main intermediaries in the relationship between customers and the banking network, is very significant, so that the success of any bank depends on the optimal performance of its branches.

Instead of predicting a mechanism and structure to review and evaluate marketing performance, banks generally only seek to collect data based on branch performance. As previous studies show, the evaluation of banks in different countries has focused on short-term performance (1 year period) (Ozçalıcı et al, 2022). In this way, with a low level of satisfaction, some branches are simply closed, while it is possible that the branch has the potential to become one of the best branches. The current research has been done in an attempt to investigate this process from the start to the end and from several aspects. The first step in the growth of the branch's marketing performance, in line with the research of Jafari et al. (2022), is to provide quality and desirable services to potential and actual customers, and in this regard, it is necessary to have knowledge-oriented, skilled, satisfied, committed, and loyal human resources and also capable managers. with a combination of capable, knowledgeable and aware people, successful banks can use their resources and facilities for study, investigation and optimal use, and therefore, motivated, skilled and knowledgeable employees can be considered as the most important and valuable assets of banks (in line with the results of Ali Kaveh et al. (2022), Maghami Dolat Abad & Qolipour (2022), Alizadeh et al. (2022)). As a result, it can be said that the effective management of human capital is the best strategy of banks and its branches, only with its help, and through the creation of a growth circle including employees, customers, society, the bank and shareholders, and the continuous implementation of the process of evaluation, improvement and development along with effective customer relationship

management, the bank will be able to achieve success. Based on the obtained results, the local market and the organizational culture of the bank are the conditions by which the contextual conditions affect the main phenomenon. Hence, in locating branches, senior bank managers should decide on branch establishment and planning by studying local market indicators.

On the other hand, as the context for the activities of all branches, the organizational culture should be the focus of senior managers' attention. These findings are in line with the research findings of [Kaveh et al. \(2022\)](#) in the Tose'e Ta'avon Bank, which showed that the components of organizational culture have a positive effect on performance. Despite the fact that macroeconomic factors, extra-branch rules and regulations, and severe fluctuations in the local market are usually not taken into account in the assessment of branches, they have a wide impact on the branches performance and ultimately the whole bank in different ways. Assuming inflationary economic conditions prevail for some time, these conditions will affect the local market, change the customers' behavior and affect the marketing performance. On the other hand, if the senior managers do not pay attention to the employees by changing the living conditions of them, after a while it will probably have an impact on their behavior and will again affect the branch marketing performance. On the other hand, this factor directly affects financial indicators and other marketing performance indicators. Therefore, senior and branch managers should take proper and effective strategies to take advantage of opportunities and adjust the effect of crises in different conditions and according to the above-mentioned intervening conditions. Effective management of human capital, effective communication with customers and continuous improvement are among the success strategies of marketing performance, which help to achieve the desired marketing performance faster. Profitability and customer loyalty, as well as helping the growth and development of the bank's brand, will be the result of the branch's marketing performance. Also, the results obtained by the bank affect the branch performance in the next cycle. Under the influence of the results obtained from previous planning and implementation cycles, marketing strategies and functions are adjusted, and in case of successful continuation, we will witness the stages of continuous growth and development of the branches and finally the whole bank. Based on the obtained results, the intervening factors (macroeconomic factors, extra-branch rules and regulations, and severe fluctuation of the local market) have a significant relationship with the causal, context variables and strategies and even the branch's marketing performance. These findings are in line with the research of [Abdi Seyedkolai et al. \(2021\)](#) who believes that the banks activity is affected by their environmental conditions and in most cases, they behave influenced by macroeconomic factors such as GDP, employment level, inflation and specific exchange rates.

7. Suggestions and application of findings

Since in order to ensure the survival and profitability of the bank, the success of each branch in the marketing performance plays an important role, the bank

management should continuously monitor the marketing management at the branch level through the continuous evaluation of the branch marketing performance indicators. For this purpose, there is a need to collect and analyze some information that are not recorded in the operational records of the bank. Also, along with other non-financial and financial indicators, service quality from the customer's point of view, customer's experience and feeling towards the branch, branch's market share, the status and process of new customer acquisition and retention, are needed to be continuously monitored and controlled by the senior management. According to the research findings, several factors are involved in the marketing performance of branches and consequently, considering a limited number of indicators without considering all factors can be very misleading. Also, there is a need to study the context factors of the branch's success, and to identify and manage the effective factors. On the other hand, the intervening factors should be controlled and the positive effect of the effective factors should be strengthened through the application of the proper strategy, and relying on the context factors, the intervening factors should be used in order to improve the branches marketing performance. However, marketing performance indicators should be evaluated and monitored continuously over time and under any conditions.

8. Research limitations and suggestions for future researchers

In conducting the present study, there were limitations that can be considered in future studies. First, the current study was focused on the banking and marketing experts' views and did not include the ideas of other stakeholders in the banking industry. Future researchers can use the views of other stakeholders of the banking industry. The model developed in this study was based on the grounded theory approach while the future researches can validate the identified structures with quantitative methods. Also, the axial codes can be given more attention in future studies and their dimensions and effects on other categories or axial codes can be studied. As another research topic, it is possible to examine the impact of different factors and the prioritizing them and identify factors affecting the branch performance, such as the effect of the performance of different branches and the effect of the performance of the headquarters and the whole bank on a branch. Also, another research area can be investigating the effect of the bank's desirable marketing performance on the society. On the other hand, different parts of the model can be analyzed and tested in different banks and branches and the ability of the model in measuring the branches performance can be evaluated. In this research, general indicators, components and dimensions are used, while it is necessary to conduct applied studies of the model in different banks. Also, in order to validate and specify the robustness of such models, they can be widely implemented so that their accuracy and efficiency can be confirmed; therefore, it is suggested that the research results, presented in the form of a paradigmatic and structural model, should be practically implemented in the banking industry. This can help the development of the model along with the

application of the results of scientific research in the industrial environment, and therefore, it is requested to inform the authors of this research about the model results and feedback in case of using it in practice.

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