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پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی  
رتال جامع علوم انسانی

## The Strategic SWOT Analysis to Use Social Marketing in the Design of the Research Development Model of Islamic Azad University

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### Abstract

As non-profit organizations, universities have specific goals and missions, their performance must be assessed for exploiting their limited available resources and achieving organizational goals. The purpose of this study is to employ the obtained strategies for evaluating the status of research area in the Islamic Azad University using SWOT analysis and design the research development model of the university through social marketing mix. A mixed methods research (quantitative-qualitative) has been used for the study carried out in two stages. In the first stage, SWOT analysis is used and in the second stage, social marketing is employed given the extracted strategies in the previous stage. In the qualitative section, the statistical sample included experts (deputies, research managers, students and professors who were the members of the young researchers club in the first stage and assistant and associate marketing professors in the second stage) selected via purposive sampling and theoretical saturation. In quantitative section, the research was descriptive and field-based where the statistical sample included 370 respondents from university branches at Tehran and Alborz provinces and selected via stratified random sampling. According to Cronbach alpha coefficient, reliability of the SWOT questionnaire was estimated equal to 98% and that of social marketing was equal to 96%. According to the results of the study, integrated social marketing could result in favorable research behavior.

**Keywords:** SWOT; Integrated Social Marketing; Research; Islamic Azad University.

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## Introduction

In the modern era, there are constant changes and complexities in structures due to the rapid advancement of science and information. Under such circumstances, the only successful academic organizations and institutions are those with proper, relevant, timely, and comprehensive knowledge of their performance, which enables accurate decision-making to progress constantly. Constant improvement in the performance of academic organizations could support the growth, development, and development of proper opportunities. Research area plays a pivotal role in assessing the performance of an educational organization, especially universities, with high validity. In other words, evaluation of the research status in universities reveals the extent to which they have managed to achieve their predetermined goals.

Today, the revenues of research and development activities have become major economic resources for universities. Factors such as the reduced number of students at various academic levels, rapid growth of studies, diverse academic research activities, need of the country and industries for the production of knowledge, and use of academic research findings by various industries have intensified the competition between higher education institutions in terms of revenue generation. These critical issues have resulted in the establishment of numerous educational institutions.

The establishment and introduction of new educational organizations in the society cause the name of universities to create scientific and emotional values in an audience. In addition, new brands of academic organizations build a sense of trust before and after producing knowledge. In addition, recognizing the brand of an

academic center may be associated with the higher level of student recruitment, supply of research budget, various research activities, and cooperation and presence of professors and superior entrepreneurs, and investors, as well as commercial, industrial, and manufacturing enterprises, in the conversion of knowledge into products or commercializing ideas in research and education units. This phenomenon has resulted in the growing number of knowledge-based companies.

The present study aims to determine the methods to achieve the research goals and missions of the Islamic Azad University, which requires changes in the attitude of responsible individuals in the organization by providing proper environment. It is predicted that such changes could occur by social marketing, which is defined as the design, implementation, and control of programs to influence the capability to accept social ideas, including the considerations for product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research (Andreasen, 2012). The commercial marketing principles used to sell products and services to customers could be applied to present ideas, attitudes, and behaviors to the community (Rezaei Pandari and Keshavarz Mohamadi, 2014).

The ultimate goal of social marketing is to enhance the welfare of community members by influencing, and in some cases, changing the behaviors of individuals. In fact, influencing behaviors at individual and community levels is the key principle of social marketing. The main goal of social marketing is to develop effective and favorable behaviors. Favorable social behaviors are voluntary and result in individual or collective benefits. The target

audience plays the main role in the social marketing process. In other words, social marketing is a customer-oriented concept; as long as the target audience takes no action, there would be no influence on behaviors. This is known as performing the actual task in social marketing.

Social marketers are aware of the fact that most of their social marketing recommendations and implementation methods must change in order to meet the needs of target customers. According to these experts, four factors must be in place before observing the desired behaviors; these factors include the product (social marketers have realized that customers take action when marketers propose suitable behavioral changes), costs (the basis of action is taking the profits and expenses into account), location (the behaviors that must be easily performed), and advertisement (an extremely extensive task involving the activities that create communication) (Andreasen, 2011). Social marketing is a new and influential approach to a wide range of social and welfare problems in the areas of health, crime, and environment. Based on this application of social marketing, it is realized that a specific concept has a considerable background in a certain field.

Although previous studies have focused on the basic goals of social marketing for behavioral changes in educational and research organizations (especially universities, the missions and nature of which are to create, modify, and change behaviors), insufficient attention has been paid to the social marketing approach in systematic research studies.

Research is a process that is led to developmental purposes and finally

improvement of human's quality of life. Hence, paying attention to research is one of the most important affairs in scientific and educational assemblies. Undoubtedly, scientific progresses are the only support that can not only guarantee survival of universities but also reinforce political and economic independence of a country in the future. Given that the Islamic Azad University has traditionally had considerable activities in growth, excellence, attraction and training of professionals in various fields in scientific and research scope at national and international levels, the present study intends to employ the potentials of social marketing, propelling and converting the Islamic Azad University into an entrepreneurial university with activities such as strengthening the relationship between the university and industrial and manufacturing societies, increasing stronger scientific inputs and outputs to help accelerate and improve the current social and economic problems in the society.

Therefore, we took the initiative to address the question of how the potentials of social marketing could be used to create, modify, and change favorable research behaviors in the Islamic Azad University in Iran. To this end, a research development model was developed based on the social marketing approach, with an emphasis on determining the problems in research area, particularly regarding the issued regulations and instructions, incentives to participate in research activities, and awareness of the laws and regulations that may hinder proper research.

Proper exploitation of research areas requires the scientific and fundamental assessment of their conditions or current

status. In the present study, attempts were made to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the research area in Islamic Azad University in order to benefit from the current opportunities. This will result in the improvement of strengths and the elimination of threats in this regard. Furthermore, the foundation will be laid for the rapid growth of this educational institution. One of the strengths of the current research was the application of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis model. The SWOT analysis helps organizations recognize their current environmental relationships, develop proper paths, provide information on competitive advantages, and distinct their organization from other institutions. Comprehending and focusing on the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities in science fields eliminates the uncertainty in transforming knowledge into production (Amini, 2009). An educational organization with several strengths and capabilities, such as the Islamic Azad University, could facilitate the flow of purchases or provision of services and products by recognizing and emphasizing on its strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. Moreover, they will be able to become distinct from other educational institutions through various methods (e.g., performing different applied studies in association with industries, creating a commercial brand) for effective marketing and presenting products and services (i.e., social recommendations).

Social marketing must be applied to ensure the quality of products and services in research areas of every university. A set of social features and suggestions (e.g., behaviors and their benefits) and its added values could help universities to achieve

their goals and missions. This is mainly due to the fact that social values are the same as the rational or emotional understanding of people regarding universities. The mental image and position of a university for the audience and its comparison with other educational institutions are among the foremost properties of social marketing (Abzari, Balouei Jam Khaneh, Khazaei Poul, and Pourmostafa Khoshkroudi, 2013).

Design of a research development model based on the social marketing approach in the Islamic Azad University may contribute to the scientific development of social marketing or proper comprehension of this concept. The present study was carried out in two stages to better realize the application of social marketing in the research activities of the Islamic Azad University. Each stage was the basis for the following stage. The main objective of the current research had been less emphasized in previous studies, which highlights the value and necessity of this research.

Considering the theoretical principles, the SWOT model was used to explore the research variable that was adopted from David (2016); the social marketing mix which has been stated in studies done by Za Gara (2010), Peattie (2009) and Kotler and Lee (2016) was employed to explore the social marketing variable; and hierarchy of the effects model (Lavidge & Steiners, 1961, quoted by Kotler and Lee, 2016) was utilized to evaluate favorable research behavior.

### **Research Background**

In the literature, there are several reports on the efficacy and frequency of the SWOT analysis in the business environment and other areas globally. According to Helms and Nixon, the SWOT analysis has gone beyond companies, expanding to countries

and industries, and is used in almost every business. Scientists and academics have also emphasized on the efficacy of SWOT in planning future strategies in organizations (Helms and Nixon, 2010). On the other hand, Kay, McKiernan, and Faulkner (2006) have claimed that SWOT analysis is the optimal familiar example of an organizational framework. Moreover, Panagiotou (2005) has stated that the SWOT analysis might be more applicable in decision-making processes than any other management method. Consistently, King (2004) has presented the main uses of the SWOT analysis. Although SWOT analysis is a common management approach, it has some limitations. According to Panagiotou, there is still ambiguity in the long history of service cases and continued use of SWOT despite its acronym. Another limitation of SWOT is its open, unstructured nature, which causes planners to have no information on the location of the variables or their appropriate integration in strategic formulation after they are identified (Sasekea Yoneka, 2018).

In 2015, Brad and Brad mentioned a similar limitation, expressing that the main

strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in an organization do not necessarily lead to the efficient formulation of a project. The key information (e.g., relevance of each strength, weakness, threat, and opportunity in perspectives and goals) is often considered in classic the SWOT analysis, commonly without elemental compatibility. Despite the limitations of SWOT, analysts often respond to the SWOT analysis as a preferred tool to begin the process of strategic planning (Helms and Nixon, 2010). Furthermore, the idea that managers need to contemplate the time of assessing the organization's SWOT-based variables is of paramount importance in the decision-making process (Panagiotou, 2005). However, the constant use of the SWOT analysis is a testament to its high efficacy.

According to the literature review, despite the extent and frequency of using SWOT analysis in various issues, there have been no relevant research in this regard, and the existing studies have been focused on the specific aspects of universities, including libraries, trends, and issues of academic libraries (Sasekea Yoneka, 2018).

Author(s)	Year	Name of the Work	The Most Important Results
Hussain, Ahmad and Khalil	2016	Identifying the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats in an organizational environment at the University of the Punjab, Lahu	All students had strong perception that the university was exposed to threats of the internal and external environment.
Khosravi, Zarei and Gheisari Nik	2018	Identifying the most important existing weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats in libraries affiliated with Organization of Libraries, Museum and Documents Center of Astan Quds Razavi based on SWOT matrix and proposing executive strategies to improve the program	Lack of standard building of some libraries, lack of total attitude toward the necessity of exploring the most important weakness, developing credentialism, and lack of interest in studying after graduation are the most important threats for libraries.
Chichirez and Purcăra	2018	Health marketing as one part of social marketing for the benefit of people	Cognitive-social theories were more effective, because they present

		voluntarily through different social programs in order to accept, reject, change or leave a behavior for the benefit of a healthy lifestyle	instructions for behavior change.
Wymer	2017	Developing more effective social marketing strategies	Planning for social marketing is restricted to commercial marketing tactics and too much emphasis on the individual behavior change with too much dependency. Social marketers should use tactics to modify the causes of structural problems as well as upstream causes of social problems.
Butler, Gordon, Roggeveen, Waitt and Cooper	2016	Social marketing and value in behavior? Perceived value of using energy efficiently among low-income older citizens	Social marketing can provide perceived value in behavior of using energy efficiently for consumers.
DeStefano	2013	Power of social marketing, concept and application for creating favorable health behaviors	A social marketing program with a good and purposeful design can be used for changing or creating a healthy and positive behavior in a special target group or society.

### Research Hypotheses and Questions

In order to achieve the research objectives, a general question was raised on the status of the research area in Islamic Azad University based on the SWOT model. In addition, four sub-questions were proposed to evaluate all the components of SWOT.

In the main research hypothesis, the effects of integrated social marketing (social proposals, participation costs, accessibility, and social interactions) on research activities were evaluated with an emphasis on the behavioral barriers of executive regulations and circulars in designing research development models in the Islamic Azad University.

In the sub-hypotheses, we investigated the role of each of the integrated social marketing components (social suggestions, participation costs, accessibility, and social interactions) in favorable research behaviors. Furthermore, another hypothesis was proposed to compare the opinions of the respondents regarding the effects of

integrated social marketing components on favorable behaviors in the research area in the Islamic Azad University based on gender, role, academic rank, province of university branch, and rank of the university branch. As such, the current research encompassed a general question and four sub-questions, as well as a general hypothesis and five sub-hypotheses.

### Research Methodology

The study is developmental and has been conducted via mixed methods research (quantitative-qualitative) in two stages. In the qualitative section, qualitative case study is used and the data has been analyzed by means of content analysis. Purposive sampling along with choosing of key scholars and theoretical saturation has been utilized. The sample size in the SWOT stage was equal to 15 scholars (3 research deputies who had more than two years of work experience, 4 faculty members, 5 students who were members of the young researchers

club, and 3 research managers) and in social marketing stage was equal to 8 experts (assistant and associate marketing professors). Tool of data collection was semi-structured interviews based on open questions that their validity was approved by some professors and PhD students. In quantitative section, the research was descriptive-field and the statistical sample included 370 respondents who were selected via stratified random sampling. The research tool was two researcher self-made questionnaires including 74 questions on the SWOT status and 66 questions on social marketing that were proposed based on the obtained indexes from the quantitative section. Construct validity of the questionnaires was approved using factor analysis and content validity was confirmed based on the feedback of management professors and experts.

Reliability of questionnaires was estimated based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient that was equal to 98% for the SWOT questionnaire and 96% for social marketing questionnaire and favorable behavior. The data was analyzed by the SWOT matrix which is one of the well-known patterns of strategic planning and management. It is a brief and helpful analysis method that identifies factors of opportunity, weakness, strengths and threats in an organized manner and reflects the proportional strategies to the current situation of the profession under study. This analysis is based on the logic that an effective strategy maximizes the strengths and opportunities and at the same time, minimizes its weaknesses and threats. According to Helms and Nixon (2010), the SWOT analysis has gone beyond the firms and has extended to countries and industries

and is relatively used in any business case. The scholars and academicians have emphasized its usefulness that SWOT is primarily used for planning of future strategies in firms. Kay, McKiernan and Faulkner (2006) have stressed the development of this tool and asserted that "SWOT analysis is the best and the most familiar sample of the organizing framework".

### **Results**

Since the research was carried out in two stages, the results of both sections will be presented.

#### ***First Stage (SWOT Analysis)***

Data obtained from SWOT analysis were surveyed in five steps. Initially, one-sample t-test was used to confirm or rule out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The obtained results were based on the mean values, as well as the most and least significant strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. For instance, the most significant strength was to possess a license to carry out various economic activities in the research area of the Islamic Azad University (mean=3.79), whereas the most significant weakness was the poor quality of the performed studies (mean=3.87).

On the other hand, the most significant opportunities were the proper potentials and capacities in the university and research departments, issuing cost management strategies, targeting the expenditure at developing a professional culture, and maximum effort in the research department of the university (mean=3.62). The most significant threat in the university was the lack of appropriate communication among

investors, industrial activists, and academics (mean=3.92).

In order to analyze the internal and external factors, the matrix of strategic or prioritized the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) was formed separately. In addition, the coefficients rank, and scores were obtained by multiplying the coefficient by the rank for each option of the internal and external factors. Afterwards, the comparison matrix consisting of a list of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was developed as well. At this stage, special attention was paid to the organizational missions and strategies and review of the internal and external data of the organization, which provided the basis for identifying and evaluating applicable strategies.

The extracted strategies cause the organization to step up from its current state and achieve its intended status in the future. To this end, the strategies were discussed with the research deputies of the university, and a list of the proposed strategies was prepared during two sessions (three hours each). Following that, each strategy was written based on its importance. Furthermore, the priorities were determined (1=Should Not be Implemented, 2=Can be Implemented, 3=Will Probably Be Implemented, 4=Will Definitely Be Implemented). Afterwards, the prioritized implementation strategies were selected based on the opinions of the experts.

At the next stage, the strategic position and action evaluation (SPACE) matrix was developed in order to determine the strategic area of the research filed for the final matrix of the internal and external factors and exact location of the strategies. According to the results obtained from the

matrix of strategic internal and external prioritized factors (Table 1), if the total score of the matrix was more than 2.5, it was interpreted as the overcoming of the weaknesses by the strengths ahead of the research area in line with the predictions. However, scores of less than 2.5 were the threats overcome by the opportunities. With regard to the results obtained from the formation of the matrix and obtained scores (EFE=2.59 and IFE=2.60), it seems that the status of the research area of Islamic Azad University was at the critical level (Aggressive strategy).

In the next stage, SPACE was applied to select the most viable strategic option. In this method, the variables associated with each of the four main parameters of the matrix (i.e., financial strength, university strengths, environmental stability, and competitive advantage) were collected and designed. Afterwards, each parameter was presented to the experts. The parameters of financial strength and university strengths were scored within a range of 1-6 based on their significance and effects on the extracted strategy (SO). In contrast, each of the parameters of environmental stability and competitive advantage were scored from -1 to -6. Following that, all the parameters in the formula, which were associated with the status of the research area of Islamic Azad University, were determined for the evaluated parameters (Fig. 1).

$$X = ES + FS = (-4/8 + 5/66) = 0/86$$

$$Y = CA + IU = (-4/75 + 5/5) = 0/75$$

According to SPACE, the research area of the Islamic Azad University must consider the actions regarding the Aggressive strategy (SO). Using this strategy, the internal strengths could be applied to exploit external opportunities. All

the managers preferred their organizations to be in a situation where internal factors could be used to exploit external events. Organizations often use the WO, ST, and ST strategies to achieve such a status until they become able to apply SO strategies. Finally,

in order to verify the prioritization of the extracted strategies, the quantitative strategic planning matrix (QSPM) was prepared. According to the obtained results, eight feasible strategies were extracted and ranked (Table 2).

Table 1. Internal and External Factor Evaluation Matrix

IFE=2.60 EFE=2.59			Final Matrix of Internal Factor Evaluation				
			Weak			Strong	
			1	2	2.5	3	4
Final Matrix of External Factors evaluation matrix	Strong	4	Conservative Strategy (WO)			Aggressive Strategy (SO)	
		3					
		2.5	Defensive Strategy (WT)			Competitive Strategy (ST)	
	2						
	1						

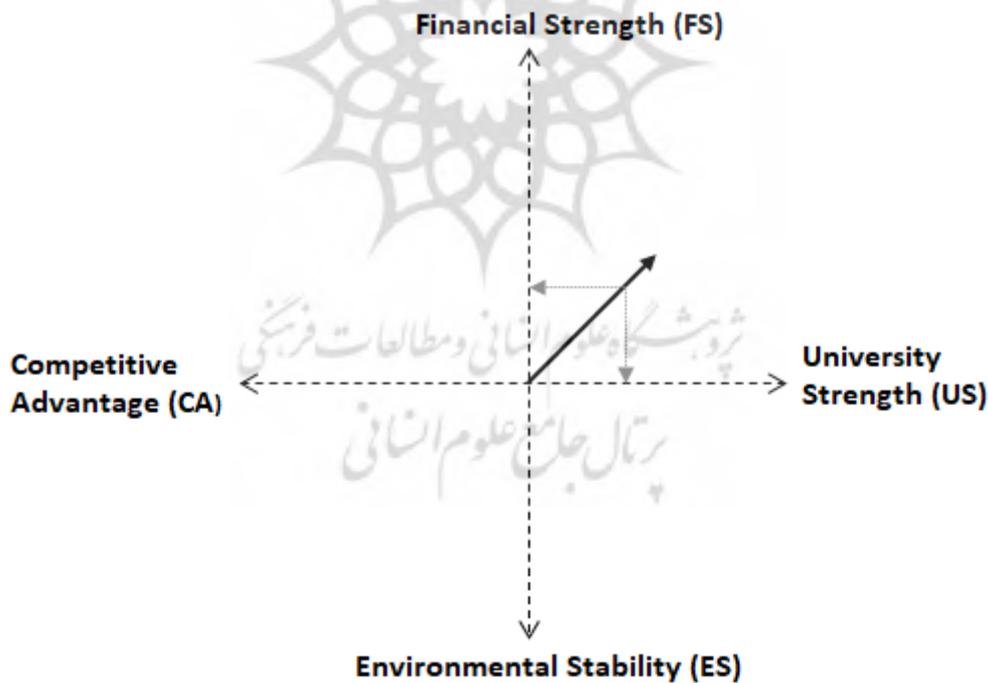


Fig. 1. Evaluation of Strategic Position and Action of Research Area of Islamic Azad University (SPACE)

Table 2. Prioritization of Strategies

	Strategy 8	Strategy 1	Strategy 3	Strategy 6	Strategy 7	Strategy 4	Strategy 5	Strategy 2
<b>Strategies</b>	Development of Entrepreneurial Educations	Development and Participation in International Research Activities	Improvement of Knowledge of Communication with Economic Centers and Industries	Improvement of Competitive Ability of Economic Holding of University	Commercialization of Research and Educational Programs of University	Educational and Research Needs Assessment of Occupations Required in Region	Directing Activities in Line with Vision of University	Development of Research Based on Future of Research through Establishing Economic Holding of University
<b>Obtained Scores</b>	7.127	7.093	6.662	6.437	6.303	6.257	6.226	6.106

### Second Stage (Social Marketing)

In order to address the research hypotheses in the integrated social marketing section, the mean scores of the factors of integrated social marketing (social recommendations, participation costs, accessibility, and social interactions) were compared to the criterion scores associated with each, which were

obtained from the mean scores of the Likert scale multiplied by the number of the items using one-sample t-test. The results demonstrated that the factors of integrated social marketing influenced favorable research behaviors (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of Mean Scores of Respondents Regarding Effects of Social Recommendations on Favorable Research Behaviors

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Criterion Score	t	P	N
Social Recommendations	81.6	5.53	57	85.59	0.000	370
Participation Costs	99.65	6.37	66	101.59	0.000	370
Accessibility	49.97	3.25	36	82.62	0.000	370
Social Interactions	58.91	3.7	39	103.3	0.000	370

The opinions of the participants about the factors of integrated social marketing were compared based on gender, province of the university branch, rank of the branch, work experience, role, and academic rank. According to the results, the mean scores of the opinions of the male respondents about

accessibility were higher compared to the female respondents. On the other hand, the respondents in Alborz province believed in the efficacy of social suggestions, accessibility, and social interactions in promoting favorable research behaviors

compared to the respondents in Tehran province.

The highest mean score of the respondents' opinion regarding the effects of social suggestions and participation costs on favorable research behaviors belonged to the university branches with the academic degrees of comprehensive, small, large, very large, and medium, respectively. In terms of the effects of accessibility on favorable research behaviors, the highest mean score of the respondents' opinion belonged to the university branches with the academic degrees of comprehensive, small, very large, large, and medium, respectively. In addition, the highest mean score of the opinions regarding the effects of social interactions on favorable research behaviors was observed in the university branches with the academic degrees of very large, comprehensive, small, large, and medium, respectively.

The highest mean score of the respondents' opinions about the effects of social suggestions, participation costs, and accessibility on favorable research behaviors was reported in research managers, research deputies, student members of the young

researchers club, faculty members, and faculty members of the young researchers club, respectively. Furthermore, the highest mean score of the experts' opinion about the effects of social interactions on favorable research behaviors belonged to research deputies, research managers, student members of the young researchers club, faculty members of the young researchers club, and faculty members. On the other hand, the highest mean score of the respondents' opinion about the effects of all the factors of integrated social marketing on favorable research behaviors was correlated with the academic rank of the respondents (professor, associate professor, instructor, and assistant professor), respectively.

Comparison of the subscales regarding the effects of the integrated social marketing factors on favorable research behaviors based on gender, university branch province, role, academic rank, rank of the branch, and work experience using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated no significant difference between the opinions of the respondents (Table 4).

**Table 4. MANOVA Results on Comparison of Mean Subscales of Effects of Integrated Social Marketing Factors on Favorable Research Behaviors Based on Gender, Province of University Branch, Role, Academic Rank, Branch Rank, and Work Experience**

Source of Changes	Subscales	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Squares	F	P	Eta-squared	Power
Gender	P1	24.76	1	24.76	0.0809	0.36	0.002	0.146
	P2	14.98	1	14.98	0.368	0.54	0.001	0.093
	P3	7.23	1	7.23	0.68	0.4	0.002	0.131
	P4	1.89	1	1.89	0.138	0.711	0.000	0.066
Province of University Branch	P1	3.42	1	3.42	0.43	0.508	0.001	0.101
	P2	3.08	1	3.08	0.076	0.78	0.000	0.059
	P3	1.98	1	1.95	0.184	0.66	0.001	0.071
	P4	2.84	1	2.84	0.206	0.65	0.001	0.074
Role	P1	108.6	4	27.16	0.88	0.47	0.010	0.282
	P2	175.44	4	43.86	1.08	0.36	0.010	0.341
	P3	43.28	4	10.82	1.02	0.39	0.011	0.323

	P4	53.59	4	13.39	0.97	0.42	0.011	0.308
<b>Academic Rank</b>	P1	129.77	3	43.25	1.43	0.234	0.014	0.378
	P2	209.15	3	69.71	1.73	0.159	0.017	0.452
	P3	54.47	3	18.15	1.72	0.163	0.017	0.448
	P4	79.21	3	26.40	1.95	0.12	0.019	0.503
<b>Branch Rank</b>	P1	76.93	4	19.23	0.626	0.644	0.007	0.205
	P2	82.19	4	20.54	0.503	0.733	0.005	0.171
	P3	19.28	4	4.82	0.453	0.771	0.005	0.157
	P4	27.64	4	6.91	0.500	0.736	0.005	0.170
<b>Work Experience</b>	P1	119.69	4	29.92	0.978	0.419	0.011	0.310
	P2	144.67	4	36.16	0.890	0.470	0.010	0.283
	P3	28.35	4	7.08	0.667	0.615	0.007	0.217
	P4	69.65	4	17.41	1.27	0.281	0.014	0.397

Based on the analyses performed regarding the research items, the model of research activity development for Islamic Azad University was presented using the social marketing approach. The factors in this model were recognized based on the theoretical studies, followed by factor analysis to simplify the factors. According to factor analysis, 10 factors with the special values of  $>1$  were identified through the analysis of the main components by Varimax rotation. As such, the social suggestions component was identified with the three main factors of research affair management, participation in research and monitoring activities, and evaluation and control.

On the other hand, the components of participation costs, accessibility, and social interactions were identified with several factors, including financial and business participation, research and technology participation, and management and voluntary participation, access to information and research products and services, and advertisement, public relations, and direct communication and task assignment, respectively. These factors were

could properly demonstrate favorable research behaviors.

#### ***A) Social Recommendations***

The component of social suggestions was identified with three main factors and 19 variables, as follows:

- *Research affair management, with the total explained variance of 94.808 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 94.346 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 94.452 from the perspective of the faculty members.*
- *Participation in research and monitoring activities, with the total explained variance of 89.234 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 87.499 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 88.704 from the perspective of the faculty members.*
- *Monitoring, control, and evaluation, with the total explained variance of 76.690 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 84.171 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 76.380 from the perspective of the faculty members.*

### **B) Participation Costs**

The component of participation costs was identified with three main factors and 22 variables, as follows:

- *Financial and business participation, with the total explained variance of 76.066 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 89.906 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 74.209 from the perspective of the faculty members.*
- *Research and technology participation, with the total explained variance of 88.137 from perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 85.947 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 86.260 from the perspective of the faculty members.*
- *Management and voluntary participation, with the total explained variance of 84.718 from perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 80.607 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 84.090 from the perspective of the faculty members.*

### **C) Accessibility**

The component of accessibility was identified with two main factors and 12 variables, as follows:

- *Access to information, with the total explained variance of 72.784 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 88.967 from the perspective of the faculty members of the*

*young researchers club, and 86.790 from the perspective of the faculty members.*

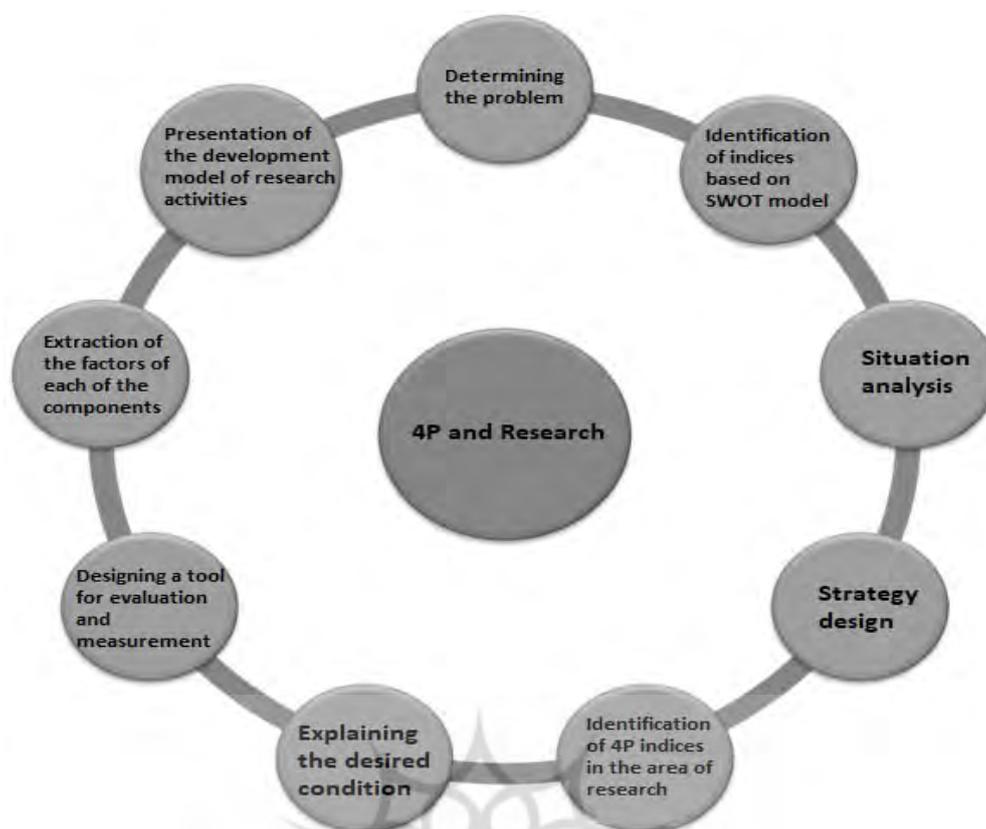
- *Access to research products and services, with the total explained variance of 71.196 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 83.442 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 71.009 from the perspective of the faculty members.*

### **D) Social Interactions**

The component of social interactions was identified with two main factors and 13 variables, as follows:

- *Public relations and direct communication, with the total explained variance of 85.387 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 74.122 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 82.678 from the perspective of the faculty members.*
- *Informing and assigning tasks and advertisement, with the total explained variance of 73.075 from the perspective of the student members of the young researchers club, 71.773 from the perspective of the faculty members of the young researchers club, and 72.013 from the perspective of the faculty members.*

The proposed research model is depicted in Fig (2).



**Fig. 2. Proposed Model for Development of Activities in Research Area of Islamic Azad University Based on Social Marketing Approach**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Strategic planning and management is the foundation of organizational and industrial management. Evaluation of the internal and external factors in this regard is essential to strategic planning and management since the management process in every industry is influenced by its interactions with the environment. The SWOT analysis is a brief, analytical model that systematically identifies of the factors associated with opportunities, weaknesses, strengths, and threats, reflecting the strategies proportional to the current status of the profession. In the present study, the results of SWOT analysis indicated that the strategies adopted in the research area of the Islamic Azad University was at the critical level aggressive strategy (SO) based on SPACE.

One of the basic principles of strategic management is that organizations must

develop strategies to take advantage of external opportunities and diminish the impact of external threats. Therefore, all managers would prefer their organization to be in a position to exploit external trends and events based on internal factors. In general, organizations use WO, ST, and WT strategies in order to be able to apply SO strategies. As a result, the research area of the Islamic Azad University could contribute to the realization of this issue based on the extracted strategies in the present study.

Compared to the weaknesses and strengths detected in the research area of the Islamic Azad University, it could be stated that the university's research field is currently faced with several opportunities. Some examples of the potential capacities in the research area of this university include the issuance of a cost management strategy,

targeting of expenditures to develop a proper work culture, maximum effort in the research department of the university, policy-making to increase the number of the graduate students (especially PhD candidates), and raising awareness regarding the application of research and its association with industries. Correspondingly, the research area of the Islamic Azad University has been unable to eliminate environmental issues and threats. The mentioned examples could be used as an opportunity to interact with industries and introduce the related services to the community and other organizations, thereby ensuring proper work conditions for the graduates.

In the QSPM, eight possible and important strategies were identified and categorized based on the obtained scores in order to gain a higher attraction score. In this regard, the highest rank belonged to the strategies of expansion and participation in international research activities and participation in internal and external research groups based on the policy of attracting national and international graduate students (total attraction score: 7.127). On the other hand, the lowest rank belonged to the strategies of developing entrepreneurship education in all academic levels and encouraging individuals for entrepreneurship at an operational level to recognize the need for internal and external beneficial experiences based on the geographical index and distribution of academic units (total attraction score: 6.106).

Our findings on the prioritization of strategies could provide an appropriate image for using the status and facilities of Islamic Azad University in strategic

decision-making, especially for those involved in the research area. Therefore, the research area of the Islamic Azad University will have the opportunity to make significant progress through identifying the research potential of each section, including human, material, scientific, and technology departments. Planning is the prerequisite for the implementation of every managerial task. Most importantly, development of hierarchical programs in the form of organizational strategies could effectively prevent the waste of resources, directing them toward clarity and enforceability. As such, macro-managers of higher education and the Islamic Azad University should specifically use the findings of the current research to formulate appropriate strategies for proper planning in their research area.

Our findings are in line with the studies by Khosravi et al. (2018) and Sasekea Yoneka (2018). According to the latter, the SWOT analysis of the libraries in Jamaican universities indicated that academic libraries do not work in a vacuum and must involve changes and competition on all levels. Therefore, they must take advantage of their strengths in order to exploit opportunities, avoid threats, and address weaknesses.

Similarly, in the identification of the most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the research area of the libraries affiliated to the Organization of Libraries, the Museum and Documentation Center of Astan Quds Razavi based on the SWOT matrix, Khorsavi et al. concluded that the lack of space, non-standard building of some libraries, lack of proper mechanisms to remove outdated sources, and lack of a general attitude toward the necessity of research were the foremost weaknesses. As such, there should

be attempts to qualitatively and quantitatively expand libraries. Moreover, some of the most important opportunities of the libraries were reported to be the presence of graduated employees, appropriate science and research potential, identification of libraries in educational and cultural centers, and diversity of services.

After obtaining the results of SWOT environmental factor analysis, we evaluated the effects of integrated social marketing on favorable research behaviors in the second stage of the present study. According to the findings, integrated social marketing was effective in four factors of social suggestions, participation costs, accessibility, and social interactions in the development of research behaviors. In other words, our findings demonstrated that social marketing is perceptible and is not specific to the management of health, poverty, and communications. In fact, considering its essential goal, which is to make behavioral changes, it could be claimed that the highest position integrated social marketing is in educational environments, especially universities. It is noteworthy that social marketing is not synonymous with advertising. Evidently, advertisement or social communication is part of social marketing. Taking these issues into account could increase the significance and value of research.

On the other hand, the findings of the current research could be used to measure the benefits of social marketing strategies in the further development of the Islamic Azad University in competition with other universities, which in turn improves interactions with industries and places the Islamic Azad University among the world's leading academic brands. This also helps this organization to recruit powerful

scientific and technical staff on national and international levels. Consistent with the previously mentioned reports on the barriers to social marketing, our findings cannot be merely a descriptive report, which is a key strength of the current research that could increase the knowledge of social marketing in terms of favorable development of changes in research behaviors.

In this regard, our findings are in congruence with the results obtained by De Stefano (2013), Chichirez and Purcărea (2018), and Waymer (2017). De Stefano concluded that the proper and purposeful design of social marketing could change or create positive and healthy behaviors in the target group or a specific population. In addition, Chichirez and Purcărea reported that considering the changes in individual behaviors, social marketing could also positively influence social changes. On the other hand, the results obtained by Waymer confirmed that the development of effective social marketing strategies and impact of social marketers on improving their achievements depends on the recognition of the potential causes of social problems and methods to reduce their subsequent damages.

Although the mentioned studies have been conducted in the area of health behaviors, their findings have confirmed the efficacy of social marketing in the behaviors of customers. Therefore, social marketing could be used as a customer-oriented planning pattern to bridge the gap between education and obligation (Maibach, Rothschild, and Novelli, 2002). The aim of this pattern is to enhance the perception of the audience, who is prepared to perform a specific behavior without the intention to do so, about the benefits of that specific

behavior or diminish the barriers to performing the behavior in order to increase its possibility (Kotler and Lee, 2016). In other words, social marketing could be used to increase benefits, diminish barriers, improve motivation or change opportunities for performing a specific behavior (Maleki, Mohammadi, Shari'atinia, Abedirad, Nasiri, Kouhgard, Akaran, Zamani, and Fararouei, 2014). Therefore, integrated social marketing could be exploited based on its mission as a tool to attract more workforce, ideas, and resources to improve and develop research activities since the development of research activities is a proper and advertisable idea.

Social marketing may result in the formation and development of favorable research behaviors. It is notable that the behaviors of the audiences in social marketing cannot be determined based on statistical data only, and their demographic characteristics must be considered as well. A social marketer must have the same demographic characteristics as the audience in order to make the necessary plans based on the collected data. For instance, education level might affect the behaviors of the audience since education changes the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors of individuals (Kafashpour, Mortazavi and Sadegh Hasani Moghadam, 2012). Participation of individuals in social activities is influenced by their beliefs, motivations, and knowledge (Demari, Heydania, and Rahbari Bonab, 2014). Therefore, it could be stated that adopting the behaviors of the community is rooted in the attitudes and beliefs of individuals; as long as these beliefs are not replaced with appropriate behaviors, there is no guarantee

for desirable behaviors in the community (Heydarnia and Demari, 2007).

The present study aimed to compare the mean scores of the opinions of respondents in the four main factors of integrated social marketing (social suggestions, participation costs, accessibility, and social interactions) and the effects of demographic characteristics (gender, role, province and rank of the academic unit, academic degree, scientific rank, and work experience in the university) on favorable research behaviors. In this regard, our findings are consistent with the results obtained by Kafashpour et al. (2012).

As mentioned earlier, the audience uses data acquisition as an important factor to increase confidence and reduce risks. According to the current research, the opinion scores of the respondents, who had a higher knowledge level regarding the issue or were more involved in this field, were higher comparatively. Furthermore, the mean scores of the opinions of research managers and experts, research deputies, students, and professors (members of the young researchers club) in social suggestions, participation costs, and accessibility were higher compared to other students and professors. Similarly, assistant and associate professors had higher mean scores in all the factors of social marketing compared to other professors and students. In other words, the respondents with more information about the issue believed in the efficacy of integrated social marketing in enhancing the research behaviors in the Islamic Azad University.

In conclusion, the findings of the current research regarding the research activities of the Islamic Azad University could propose an effective executive solution to correct the

regulations, circulars, and instructions by affecting the voluntary behaviors of the audiences in order to enhance social and individual welfare, change collective and individual behaviors, and develop policies to change and modify favorable research behaviors. As a result, the Islamic Azad University could be converted into an entrepreneurial university with a wide range of activities, such as enhancing the interactions between the university and industrial and production organizations, increasing efficient scientific inputs and outputs in order to improve the social and economic issues in the community, motivating participation in research activities, and enlisting the university as a top-notch educational brand in the world.

#### Research limitations

- Because the individuals who participated in the study were not adequately familiar with strategic planning and analysis of environmental factors, the researcher had to hold continuous sessions throughout the whole process of data

collection to make the respondents familiar with the research process and how to complete the questionnaires. For this reason, a lot of time was spent.

- Since questionnaire was used in this study, limitations of questionnaire surveys should be considered in analysis, interpretation and generalization of the data.
- Samples of the Islamic Azad University branches located in Tehran and Alborz provinces were used in this study. Therefore, generalization of data to other branches and universities should be done cautiously.
- The study has just been conducted for the student members of the young researchers club. Thus, generalizing it to other students should be done cautiously.
- Access to all instructions, rules and circulars of the university for analysis and exploration of weaknesses, strengths and opportunities was restricted.

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## استراتژی های تحلیل SWOT راهبردی جهت استفاده از بازاریابی اجتماعی در طراحی مدل توسعه پژوهش دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی

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### چکیده

دانشگاه‌ها مانند هر سازمان دیگری برای استفاده از منابع محدود در دستیابی به اهداف مشخص و برنامه‌ریزی شده، نیازمند سنجش عملکرد هستند. هدف پژوهش حاضر استفاده از استراتژی‌های حاصل ارزیابی وضعیت حوزه پژوهش دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی با استفاده از تحلیل SWOT و طراحی مدل توسعه پژوهش دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی با استفاده از آمیخته بازاریابی اجتماعی است. پژوهش توسعه‌ای است و از روش تلفیقی (کمی- کیفی) استفاده شده است. در مرحله اول تحلیل SWOT و در مرحله دوم با توجه به استراتژی‌های استخراج شده مرحله قبل، از بازاریابی اجتماعی استفاده شده است. در بخش کیفی، روش پژوهش مطالعه موردی کیفی است و نمونه آماری خبرگان که با استفاده از رویکرد هدفمند و با روش انتخاب صاحب‌نظران کلیدی و استفاده از معیار اشباع نظری انتخاب شدند. در بخش کمی، روش پژوهش توصیفی-پیمایشی است و نمونه آماری ۳۷۰ نفر پاسخگویان از واحدهای دانشگاهی استان تهران و البرز که بصورت تصادفی طبقه‌ای متناسب با حجم انتخاب شدند. تحلیل داده‌ها در دو سطح آمار توصیفی و استنباطی انجام شد. با توجه به نتایج حاصل از تشکیل ماتریس عوامل داخلی، خارجی و امتیاز کسب شده ( $IFE=2/60$ ،  $EFE=2/59$ )، موقعیت حوزه پژوهش دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی در منطقه تهاجمی (SO) قرار گرفت. بدین معنی که قوت‌های پیش روی حوزه پژوهش بر ضعف‌های آن غلبه دارد. بر اساس تحلیل عاملی با استفاده از تحلیل عناصر اصلی آمیخته بازاریابی اجتماعی با چرخش واریماکس ده عامل با مقدار ویژه بزرگتر از یک یافت شد. نتایج نشان داد آمیخته بازاریابی اجتماعی منجر به رفتار مطلوب پژوهشی می‌شود.

واژه‌های کلیدی: SWOT، آمیخته بازاریابی اجتماعی، پژوهش، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی.

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