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Modelling influential factors on customer loyalty in public libraries: a study of West Iran

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to present a model for influential factors on customer loyalty in public libraries and its evaluation in public libraries of western Iran.

Design/methodology/approach – This research is a correlation study and uses a questionnaire as a data gathering tool. The statistical population consists of all members of public libraries in western Iran. The final data analysis was carried out using 467 completed questionnaires and data were analysed using SPSS19 and AMOS19 software.

Findings – The findings of this study showed that perceived value has the largest influence on customer loyalty with a factor of 0.451. The second most influential factor is customer satisfaction with a factor of 0.214. Three predictor variables are the effect of the services, controlling the provided information and library as a location, which had the highest influence on perceived value of libraries' customers. The findings also showed that perceived value with meaningfulness level of $p < 0.001$ and a value of 0.316 has the most influence on libraries' customer satisfaction.

Originality/value – Identifying and improving the influential factors on customer loyalty in public libraries can increase the customer return rate of these libraries. Public library managers of Iran, especially in western Iran, can use the findings of this study to improve the influential factors on customer loyalty in libraries under their care.

Keywords Iran, Public libraries, Customer loyalty, Customer loyalty model

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Historically, librarians use the term *user* or *patron* to describe who utilises the libraries' products and services. However, according to Weingand (1997, as cited in [Heron and Altman, 2010](#)), both of these terms were originally unrelated to libraries. The term *user* was derived from the drug culture and, in the context of libraries, refers to someone who has previously made use of the services and, thus, knows where to find the necessary information; as a result, this term does not include newcomers. The term *patron* has its



roots in the Renaissance era when royal and rich families supported certain artists. Some librarians believe that people who use a library's products and services, support the library by their actions. However, this use does not reflect support in any way. As an alternative, Weingand (1997, as cited in Herson and Altman, 2010) proposed the term *customer*. Although some librarians were against this term to avoid the image of a business transaction (Herson and Altman, 2010), the fact remains that people are willing to spend time, energy and money to make use of a library's services. In public libraries, the cost of these services is paid for by people through their public taxes. Woodward (2009, as cited in Herson and Altman, 2010) also supported this proposition, arguing that it may be time to replace the word *user* with *customer*. Herson and Altman (2010) and Rowley (2000) called the users of a library's services and products *library customers*. Paying attention to the users of a library's services – that is, library customers – is one of the most important factors in ensuring the survival of these organisations.

Currently, the main focus of librarians in public libraries is on gaining new customers. However, texts on the marketing of library products and services have shown that keeping old customers and trying to get them to return is more affordable than trying to gain new customers (Kerr, 2010). Therefore, to better understand these valuable customers, the factors that influence the return of old customers need to be studied. The term *customer loyalty* has been proposed in the marketing of products and services. During recent years, this term has grown beyond the scope of commercial organisations and now includes non-commercial and non-profit organisations, such as libraries. Without a doubt, there are factors influencing customer loyalty to libraries, and identification and improvement of these factors can increase the customer return rate of libraries and also help to increase the number of customers. Therefore, the current study aims to identify and investigate the factors influencing customer loyalty in public libraries of western Iran (Figure 1).

The current study includes several stages. In the first stage, the question of whether the concept of customer loyalty – normally one applied to commercial, for-profit organisations – can be used regarding libraries which are non-profit organisations is answered. Next, given the current state of Iranian libraries, the importance and necessity of customer loyalty to libraries were established. Then, in the next part of this paper, a literature survey was carried out to identify the important factors affecting customer loyalty and to create an initial model. The main concepts related to this study were defined, based on the literature survey and the research goals, and are presented next. After that, using these concepts, the research hypotheses were defined and the

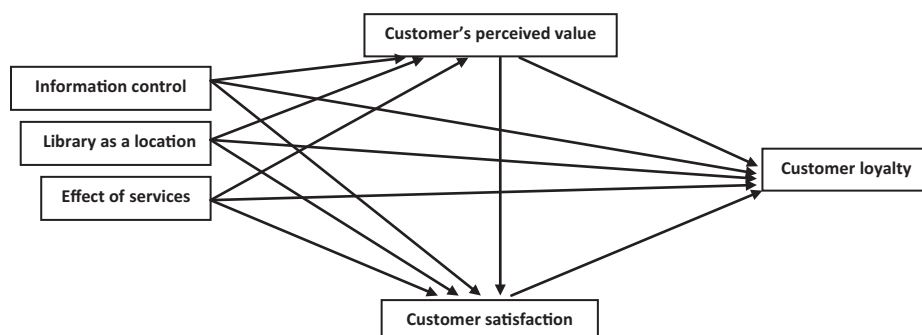


Figure 1.
Influential factors on
customer loyalty in
public libraries of
western Iran (initial
model)

study method, statistical population and tools used in data gathering and data analysis were introduced. Finally, these hypotheses were tested and the results of the data analysis were presented. The last stage consisted of discussion and conclusion in which the theoretical and practical positions of the current study among similar literature were expressed.

Customer loyalty: a concept related to libraries?

The root of marketing is originally from commercial and profit-centred organisations, but several of its concepts have entered the area of non-commercial and non-profit organisations. Among these is the concept of *customer loyalty*. The Oxford dictionary defines *loyalty* as the quality of being loyal (towards duty, love or obligation); a steadfast commitment to duty, a strong feeling of support or allegiance to a government or regime of a country (Crawley, 1999). According to Rowley and Dawes (1999), in the past, libraries did not have the competition present in commercial organisations and, therefore, did not need to worry about customer loyalty. But today, due to the increase of information resources that are freely available to the public, libraries have to compete for customer loyalty. Kiran and Diljit (2011) believed that paying attention to customer loyalty is especially important in academic libraries because academics are concerned that customers will use Google instead of the libraries' resources and services. Hernon and Altman (2010) believed that, even though most librarians speak about attracting new customers instead of keeping the old ones satisfied or finding the reasons behind previous customers abandoning them, libraries desperately need to create loyal customers. The successful group experiences of services by satisfied customers helps increase the library's fame. This fame helps attract the attention of officials who allocate the budget of libraries and their communities (users). Libraries need to pay attention to how they describe their services to managers who allocate their budget. Kerr (2010) pointed out that the issue of the declining number of customers in public libraries is an international challenge and suggested that the most effective way to counter this issue is by paying attention to having previous customers return. Kerr's study emphasised that libraries have a large role to play in the return of these customers, whom he called *lapsed borrowers*, and that these lapsed borrowers must be the main target group in any new marketing campaigns. The concept of customer loyalty has certainly spread to librarianship texts and, to counter the issues created in our current era, one must pay special attention to this concept.

Statement of the problem

One can expect that after expressing their satisfaction with the services, a library's customers will return again to make use of them. However, many studies investigating the satisfaction levels of library customers show no meaningful relationship between satisfaction and using a library's services (D'Elia and Walsh, 1983; Townley and Boberg, 1997). This concept is known as *customer loyalty* in marketing. Also, studies showed that factors other than satisfaction, such as quality of services (Malik, 2012) and customer value (Zeithaml, 1988 as cited in McKnight, 2010), affect customer loyalty directly or indirectly. Therefore, the most important issue in this study is investigating the influence of factors such as satisfaction, service quality and customer's perceived value on customer intention to return and on customer loyalty, and creating a model for these factors in public libraries in western Iran.

Importance and necessity of library customer loyalty

According to Jones and Sasser (1995), real loyalty is when the customer has numerous choices and stays loyal in a fiercely competitive market. Investigations have shown that customer loyalty is an important factor in customer return. Hernon and Altman (2010) suggested that keeping a loyal customer is important because it leads to guaranteed return and increased use of a library's services. Although increasing the number of customers is one of the most important goals of libraries, studies have shown that the cost of keeping a loyal customer is lower than attracting a new one (Mowen and Minors, 2000). Alternatively, according to Gupta (2003), one of the most important advantages of loyal customers is that they can act as missionaries and advise others to make use of the library's services. In other words, loyal customers can help increase the number of customers of a library. A study by Dong (2003) showed that when loyal customers are not satisfied with a library's services, they tend to tell another person about it instead of reporting it to officials or media. Therefore, it seems that paying attention to customers that make use of a library's services can be very beneficial.

Literature survey and introduction of the basic model

This literature survey was carried out in three stages. During the first stage, given the fact that the current study concerns customer loyalty in Iranian public libraries, a background study was conducted regarding customer loyalty in Iranian public libraries. In the second stage, similar studies conducted in developing countries were investigated. Reviewing studies conducted in other countries not investigated before was part of the third stage of this literature survey, although there were limited studies concerning customer loyalty in public libraries. Finally, the factors influencing customer loyalty are extracted and a model for customer loyalty is introduced.

Part I: literature survey in Iran

Similar to the results reported by Kerr (2010), most Iranian public libraries concentrated on attracting new customers instead of keeping their old customer base and, therefore, very few studies have been conducted concerning customer loyalty in public libraries. Among these few studies, one is a study by Hadadian *et al.* (2012). In their study, a model explaining the relationship between factors of perceived value, communication, customer satisfaction, loyalty, intention to return and preferring a library's name was introduced and tested on the members of the Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi. The findings showed that customer satisfaction and communication directly affect customer loyalty and perceived value indirectly affects customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. In another study, Keshvari and Geraei (2013) investigated and modelled the factors affecting customer loyalty in public libraries of Lorestan province. The findings of their study showed that satisfaction and perceived value had the largest impact on customer loyalty and that dimensions of service quality affected customer loyalty through perceived value and customer satisfaction. It is evident that both of these studies show nearly similar results concerning the factors affecting customer loyalty in libraries.

Part II: literature survey in developing countries

The literature survey showed that there have been very few studies concerning customer loyalty in libraries in developing countries; one example of such a study is the investigation by Gede Mahatma Yuda Bakti and Sumaedi (2013) about the factors

affecting customer loyalty in the academic libraries of Indonesia. On the other hand, there had been no studies regarding customer loyalty in public libraries in developing countries.

Part III: literature survey in other countries

[Martensen and Grønholdt \(2003\)](#) investigated the users' understanding of a library's value, personal satisfaction and loyalty, as well as the interactions between these concepts in five Danish libraries using the European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI). The six investigated quality dimensions included: electronic resources, printed publications, technical facilities, library environment, human aspects of user services and other services (such as training courses for users). According to this study, *customer loyalty* is the result of interaction between human aspects of user services, user value and user satisfaction, with human aspects of user services being the most influential factor on customer loyalty, and technical facilities and other library services being the least influential factors. In another study, [Ladhari and Morales \(2008\)](#) proposed a model and empirical test for understanding the relationship between perceived services, perceived value and recommendation in public libraries using LibQual among 439 customers of Canadian public libraries. The findings of this study showed that the effect of services, library as a location, and information control can explain perceived value in a meaningful way. There is a strong relationship between perceived services and recommendation. The results also support using the LibQual tool for this type of study in public libraries. In another study, [Bae and Cha \(2014\)](#) examined the influence of Korean public libraries' service quality factors on overall user satisfaction and loyalty. In this work, the factors related to the quality of collection, staff, programs, facilities, online services and accessibility were investigated for each library. To measure the effects of these factors, 3,000 users of 60 public libraries across Korea were surveyed. The results of the survey indicated that while the factors concerning the overall satisfaction, convenience of visit and facilities had a high influence on user loyalty, factors related to the collection and program had a relatively low influence.

Therefore, based on the reviewed literature, the factors influencing customer loyalty in libraries were extracted and the following model was designed based on these. This study investigates these relationships and provides a model for customer loyalty in public libraries of western Iran.

Service quality and customer satisfaction

"Historically, library quality has been regarded as synonymous with collection size; an assessment of what the library has – rather than with what the library does" ([Hernon, 2002](#), p. 225)[1]. Gradually, this approach has changed. The central role of customers in evaluating the quality of services in libraries is known and it is said that "only customers are the judge of quality and all other judgments are irrelevant" ([Parasuraman et al., 1988](#), as cited in [Rehman, 2013](#)). For a library, the quality of services includes the interactions between the library and the people using it. The view of a library and its customers is not similar regarding quality. A library might work according to internal standards, but still seeks to satisfy its customers ([Hernon and Altman, 2010](#)). Based on the LibQual tool, used to evaluate the quality of a library's services, the quality of services of a library has three dimensions: information control, effect of services and library as a location ([Heinrichs et al., 2005](#)).

Applegate (1997, as cited in Kassim, 2009) considers customer satisfaction to be a personal and emotional reaction to the services or products of the library. Customer satisfaction is the basis of existence and success of any organisation. Satisfied customers are repeat customers who are the most effective marketing tools of the organisation (Matesic, 2009, as cited in Varlejs and Walton, 2009). In marketing literature, the concept of customer satisfaction is a direct result of marketing. In other words, service quality compared to customer satisfaction is the available services, while satisfaction is the [satisfying] experiences that customers have regarding those services. A good understanding of service quality shows good customer satisfaction (Malik, 2012).

Next is a brief explanation of the relationship between the two concepts of quality of services and customer satisfaction. In some of the studies, these two concepts are used interchangeably; however, one must remember that these two concepts are not the same. Some believe that quality of services is inherently objective while customer satisfaction deals with subjective factors (Roszkowski *et al.*, 2005; Hernon and Nitecki, 2001; Hernon, 2002). Another difference between these two concepts is that quality of services is mostly related to qualitative factors, while customer satisfaction might also deal with quantitative factors, such as the cost of services. Also, evidence shows that quality of services is the infrastructure upon which customer satisfaction is built (Roszkowski *et al.*, 2005). Although some believe that customer satisfaction is the prologue of service quality (Hernon and Nitecki, 2001), investigating customer satisfaction provides us with an important tool for gathering qualitative and quantitative data used in improving the quality of services (Thakuria, 2007). However, concerning customer loyalty, the investigation of customer satisfaction is more important than the quality of services, making service quality the prologue to customer satisfaction because customer satisfaction has a larger effect on customer loyalty in most organisations, including libraries (Roszkowski *et al.*, 2005).

Customer perceived value

Zeithaml (1988, as cited in McKnight, 2010) defined *customer value* as a general assessment by a customer regarding their input and the return they have received from a product or service based on their understanding of what was given and what was received. Rust and Oliver (1994, as cited in McKnight, 2010) also considered this concept to be an abstract one that exists in the customer's mind. From an organisation's point of view, this value can be affected by the value customers have to the organisation:

Not all customers have the same value, some are more valuable (those who are loyal and buy a lot) and some have less value (those that are temporary and don't buy much) (McKnight, 2010).

The research hypotheses

The current study, therefore, postulates the following hypotheses:

- HA1. Information control has a direct and meaningful relation with customer's perceived value.
- HA2. The effect of services has a meaningful relationship with customer's perceived value.

- HA3.* Library as a location has a direct meaningful relationship with customer's perceived value.
- HB1.* Information control has a direct and meaningful relationship with customer satisfaction.
- HB2.* The effect of services has a direct meaningful relationship with customer satisfaction.
- HB3.* Library as a location has a direct meaningful relationship with customer satisfaction.
- HC1.* Information control has a direct and meaningful relationship with customer loyalty.
- HC2.* The effect of services has a direct and meaningful relationship with customer loyalty.
- HC3.* Library as a location has a direct and meaningful relationship with customer loyalty.
- HD.* Customer's perceived value has a direct meaningful relationship with customer satisfaction.
- HE.* Customer's perceived value has a direct meaningful relationship with customer loyalty.
- HF.* Customer satisfaction has a direct meaningful relationship with customer loyalty.

Methodology

The current study is a correlation study using structural equation modelling. Structural equation modelling is a very powerful and general multivariable analysis technique which belongs to the family of multivariable regression. In other words, it is an extended form of general linear model and enables the researchers to analyse a collection of regression equations simultaneously (Hooman, 2011). As a first step, the researchers reviewed the related literature, identified the factors influencing customer loyalty of public libraries and developed the final model. Then, based on the identified factors, a questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert-type variable range. To evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, the first edition was sent to three professors in the field of library and information science in Iran and the final edition was created after taking their opinions into effect. Pilot studies are one of the most popular tools for evaluating the reliability of any research tool. Therefore, the questionnaire was given to 30 members of public libraries of the Lorestan province and Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the factors. As can be seen in Table I, Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory for all factors. Because the goal of the study was proposing a model for customer loyalty in public libraries of western Iran, firstly the western Iran provinces, based on the number of public libraries, were sorted into three categories of large, moderate and small (based on the statistics provided by the Institution of Public Libraries of Iran, April 2013). Then, three provinces, Khoozestan (large), Lorestan (moderate) and Ilam (small), were selected randomly as the samples for this study. At the next step, the necessary questionnaires were sent to public libraries of each province

based on the Krejcie and Morgan table (Cohen *et al.*, 2000) and, finally, the ones completed until May 2013, which consisted of a total number of 467 questionnaires, were collected. The SPSS19 and AMOS software were used for data analysis.

Results

Table II shows that 131 of the participants (50.6 per cent) were male and 128 (49.4 per cent) of them were female. As expected, students made up the majority of the sample.

Because all factors were measured in an interval scale and, with the assumption that each two factors have normal distribution, the analysis of correlations is parametric and, therefore, Pearson's correlation coefficient must be used to determine the relationship between them. Table III shows the correlation between

Component	Effect of services	Information control	Library as a location	Perceived value	Satisfaction	Loyalty
Number of questions	6	5	3	6	5	4
Cronbach's alpha	0.840	0.945	0.828	0.836	0.809	0.870

Table I.
The reliability of each research component

Indicator	Frequency	(%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	249	53.3
Male	215	46
Undetermined	3	0.6
Total	467	100
<i>Occupation</i>		
Student	130	27.84
University student	126	26.98
Office worker	36	7.71
Housewife	8	1.71
Self-employed	17	3.64
Undetermined	150	32.12
Total	467	100

Table II.
Demographic features of the statistical sample

Order	Factors	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Effect of services	24.18	4.39	1					
2	Information control	17.29	4.44	$r = 0.484$	1				
3	Library as a location	11.88	2.56	$r = 0.445$	$r = 0.18$	1			
4	Perceived value	32.25	4.27	$r = 0.659$	$r = 0.588$	$r = 0.528$	1		
5	Satisfaction	19.49	3.45	$r = 0.601$	$r = 0.616$	$r = 0.553$	$r = 0.683$	1	
6	Loyalty	21.74	8.94	$r = 0.371$	$r = -0.112$	$r = -0.017$	$r = 0.372$	$r = 0.135$	1

Table III.
Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of the study factors

latent factors of this study. Based on the results of [Table III](#), the correlation between the values for perceived value and satisfaction is 0.683 which is statistically meaningful with $p < 0.001$. Also, the correlation between values of loyalty and perceived value is 0.372 and is meaningful with $p < 0.001$. Among the factors related to quality of services, effect of services has a negative meaningful relation with customer loyalty with the value of -0.371 .

Pearson's correlation coefficient matrix

Chi-square index is an index for determining the absolute fitness of a model and, whenever it is greater than zero, the fitness of a model becomes meaningless. Meaningful chi-square shows the meaningful difference between assumed and measured covariance. However, as chi-square is related to the sample size, its value is inflated for big samples and usually becomes statistically meaningful. This causes the chi-square to almost always reject the model (Bentler and Bonett, 1980, as cited in [Hooman, 2011](#)). Due to this fact, most researchers use a proportion of its degrees of freedom chi-square (relative chi-square) (Arbuckle, 1997, as cited in [Colquitt, 2001](#)). Incremental fit index (IFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) are indexes that are used to compare the fitness of a model with a base model that does not allow covariance between variables. The closer these indexes are to 1, the better the fitness of the model is, although it is necessary to note that for a model to be acceptable, these indexes must be at least 0.90 (Bentler, 1990, as cited in [Hooman, 2011](#)). Another one of the fitness indexes is root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). According to Brown and Cudeck (1993, as cited in [Hooman, 2011](#)), the models for which this index is higher than 0.10 have poor fitness, models with the index between 0.10 and 0.08 have moderate, models with the index between 0.08 and 0.05 have satisfying and models with the index lower than 0.05 have perfect fitness. As can be seen in [Table IV](#), comparison of IFI and CFI values with fitness of model shows satisfactory fitness for the current model. RMSEA value (0.052) shows that the model has satisfactory fitness. The relative chi-square is 2.582 and is not statistically meaningful with $p < 108$ which confirms the satisfactory fitness of the model. However, as this test is greatly affected by the sample size, it is usually ignored by experts unless its value (regardless of its meaningfulness) is not higher than 5, the model is usually considered to have satisfactory fitness ([Beshlideh, 2012](#)).

[Table V](#) shows that the perceived value by the customers of public libraries has the largest influence on their loyalty with a coefficient of 0.451. Customer satisfaction of public libraries with a coefficient of 0.214 is the second most influential factor on customer loyalty of these libraries.

The findings show that the predictive variables of the library as the location and information control had no meaningful positive impact on the loyalty of the library's customers ($p < 0.001$). On the other hand, the variable of effect of the services had a negative effect on the customer loyalty ($p < 0.001$ and $S = -0.324$). The three

Table IV.
Fitness indexes of
the model

Fitness indexes of model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Final model	2.582	1	2.582	0.98	0.99	0.97	0.99	0.99	0.052

Hypotheses	Path	S	SE	C.R.	<i>p</i>	Unstandardised estimate	Results
HA1	Information control → Perceived value	0.271	0.033	8.117	0.001	0.260	Supported
HA2	Effect of services → Perceived value	0.438	0.031	13.483	0.001	0.421	Supported
HA3	Library as a location → Perceived value	0.181	0.056	5.636	0.001	0.300	Supported
HB1	Information control → Satisfaction	0.239	0.027	7.005	0.001	0.186	Supported
HB2	Effect of services → Satisfaction	0.195	0.028	5.416	0.001	0.153	Supported
HB3	Library as a location → Satisfaction	0.163	0.045	5.096	0.001	0.219	Supported
HC1	Information control → Loyalty	0.077	0.098	1.582	0.114	0.155	Not supported
HC2	Effect of services → Loyalty	-0.324	0.101	-6.243	0.001	-0.656	Not supported
HC3	Library as a location → Loyalty	0.106	0.159	2.329	0.020	0.371	Not supported
HD	Perceived value → Satisfaction	0.316	0.032	7.976	0.001	0.256	Supported
HE	Perceived value → Loyalty	0.451	0.118	8.025	0.001	0.949	Supported
HF	Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.214	0.133	5.379	0.001	0.557	Supported

Table V.
Paths and their
standard coefficients
in the final model

predictor factors of effect of services (0.438), offered information control (0.271) and library as a location (0.181), respectively, have had the largest influence on customers' perceived value. The customer loyalty findings provided in Table V show that the predictive variables of location (0.219), information control (0.186) and effect of services (0.153) had the largest impact on customer loyalty. The results also show that perceived value with a coefficient of 0.316 and meaningfulness of $p < 0.001$ has the largest influence on customer satisfaction.

After analysing the gathered data, the initial model for customer loyalty of public libraries of western Iran was revised and the final model according to Figure 2 was

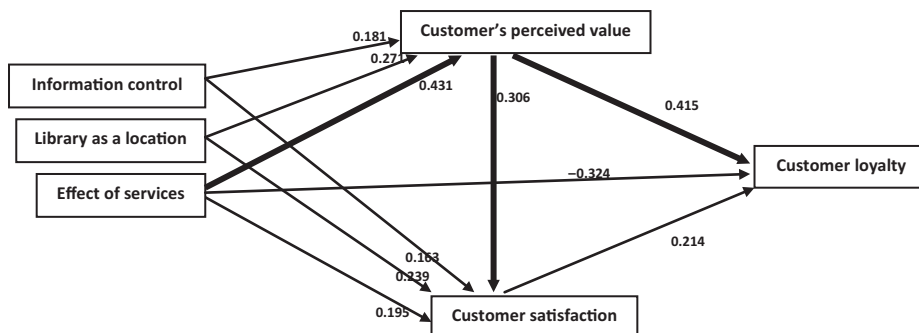


Figure 2.
The influential
factors on customer
loyalty in public
libraries of western
Iran, final model

proposed. Customer satisfaction and customer's perceived value directly influence customer loyalty. Also, the role of customer's perceived value is more important so that the perceived value of public library members has the largest influence on their loyalty to the library with a value of 0.451 and customer satisfaction is the second most influential factor on customer loyalty with a value of 0.214. The final model also shows that perceived value has the largest influence on customer satisfaction. Among scopes of service quality, the effect of services (the same as the human side of services in LibQual) with a value of -0.324 has a large and reverse effect on customer loyalty. On the other hand, it was seen in this study that the human aspects had the largest influence on customer's perceived value which in turn affects customer loyalty. This result, which is the same as the results in the study by [Martensen and Grønholdt \(2003\)](#), shows the importance of librarians in returning of customers and repeat use of library services. Therefore, it is suggested that improving the job satisfaction of librarians and giving them sufficient training on the correct interaction with customers can increase customer loyalty to the library. It is worth noting that, in general, quality aspects influence customer loyalty through customer's perceived value and customer satisfaction.

The current study is among the first to investigate factors affecting customer loyalty in Iranian public libraries. Therefore, at an international level, the findings of this study can help to improve, develop and complete the customer loyalty models presented by researchers of different countries. These findings can also clarify the factors affecting customer loyalty in Iranian public libraries. As was mentioned in literature review, the factors of service quality, customer's perceived value and customer satisfaction were investigated as the most influential factors affecting customer loyalty. Therefore, these factors were the ones investigated in the current study and the findings showed that customer loyalty is directly affected by customer satisfaction and customer's perceived value, and that the different dimensions of service quality indirectly affect customer loyalty by affecting customer's perceived value. Among these dimensions of service quality, the effect of services has the highest effect on the customer's perceived value. In other words, the results obtained in public libraries of western Iran were similar to the results of previous studies. The results of this study can be used to create customer loyalty models in Iranian public libraries, as well as to draw the attention of managers of Iranian public libraries to the importance of customer loyalty and, thus, help in strengthening the factors affecting customer loyalty and create plans to gain more customers.

Recommendations for future studies

The current study investigated the factors affecting customer loyalty in public libraries of western Iran. The first recommendation for further study is to conduct similar studies in other types of libraries and in other parts of the country to identify different dimensions of customer loyalty. In addition, the model obtained from the current study showed that perceived value affects customer loyalty both directly and indirectly through affecting customer satisfaction; therefore, investigating the mediating role of customer satisfaction between service quality and customer loyalty can be the subject of further studies. Also, some of the studies regarding customer loyalty in commercial organisations can be extended and used in

non-profit organisations, such as libraries. Due to the widespread use of library software in almost all libraries, membership history and the use of services can be easily accessed and used to identify loyal members. Interviewing these members can be vital in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the library and the reasons behind returning customers. This can lead to strengthening of different sections of the library, endeavouring to fix the weaknesses, using loyal members in advancing the library's goals and implementing of programs to increase customer loyalty. On the other hand, very few studies concerning customer loyalty in libraries have been conducted in Iran; therefore, we hope that this study can lead to continued study of customer loyalty in libraries in Iran, aiding other researchers in conducting similar investigations in the different libraries of Iran.

Note

1. In the current study, the concept of service quality is defined according to LibQual. However, some of the experts in this field don't agree with the LibQual system. Herson (2002) says "LiBQUAL+ has been administered to both library users and library non-users. Furthermore, LiBQUAL+ is web-based and has produced a low response rate, one that its proponents characterise as representative of the population".

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