Marketing Analysis of Reference and Information Services in Korean Libraries

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are: (1) to measure the extent of 7Ps marketing mix adopted by Korean libraries and to compare its performance between different groups (i.e., public, academic, special, and school libraries), and (2) to identify the marketing activities of Korean libraries. A questionnaire survey was conducted to achieve the objectives of this study and 197 libraries participated in the survey. The data was analyzed using SPSS 12.0 for Windows. The major findings of this study are as follows: (1) the 7Ps marketing mix performed relatively well except 'Price,' (2) special libraries performed best among four groups in the 7Ps marketing mix and followed by academic libraries, (3) the majority of Korean libraries provided their reference and information service through the combination of on-line and off-line methods, (4) most frequently used distribution activities for the off-line reference and information services were by visit and by telephone, (5) most popular distribution activities for the on-line reference and information services were e-mail and electronic board, and (6) Homepage seemed the most popular tool for promotion of the reference and information services in Korean libraries.

Keywords: Marketing; Marketing Mix; Reference and Information Services; Academic Libraries; Public Libraries; Special Libraries; School Libraries; Korea

INTRODUCTION

Libraries and information centers have come from a tradition of being a public good. Librarians have historically been confident that their products had such intrinsic merit that users would automatically be attracted; they believed that people should use the library. However, this is now yesterday's thinking (Weingand, 1999).

Earlier efforts to trace the development of services marketing suggest that the area began to take shape in the 1970s and emerged as a real field of the marketing discipline by the mid-1980s (Berry and Parasuraman, 1993; Fisk et al., 1993). The past two decades have witnessed an incredible growth of interest in non-profit service providers such as libraries.

Like many other countries, Korea has Korean Library Week. It is observed each year from April 12 - 18, which was the 42nd this year since it started 1964 (April 12 – 18). This year's theme was "Library, the place I found my ultimate happiness" and the slogan was "Library, the Power of Changing this World." This is a Korean national observance sponsored by the Korean Library Association (KLA) and libraries across the country every year. It is a time to celebrate the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians and to promote library use and support. The week also provides the opportunity to publicly examine issues of importance to the provision of library and information services. Generally speaking, this may one of the long running marketing activities in Korean libraries.

Perhaps there are many other activities for marketing library although they do not recognize it is a marketing activity. There is little information on marketing focus on reference and information services in Korean libraries.

The purpose of this study is twofold, namely:
(1)   to measure the extent of 7Ps marketing mix (i.e., Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Participants, Physical Evidence, and Process) adopted by Korean libraries and compare its performance between different groups (i.e., public, academic, special, and school libraries), and
(2)   to identify the marketing activities of Korean libraries (e.g., distribution methods for reference and information services, promotion methods, user education methods, regular user survey, etc.).

2. MARKETING REFERENCE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

2.1 Marketing Concepts

In the field of marketing, a number of studies have been conducted to identify the marketing concepts. The Committee on Definitions of the American Marketing Association (AMA) defined marketing as the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services to the consumer (Alexander, 1960). Kotler (1972)'s definition of marketing concept states that the societal marketing concept is customer-oriented backed by integrated marketing aimed at generating customer satisfaction and long-term consumer welfare as the key to organizational goals. Dibb et al. (1991) emphasize that the marketing concept "is a way of thinking - a management philosophy guiding an organization's overall activities." The marketing concept should affect all areas and activities of the organization and not just the marketing activities (Rowley, 1995). According to Low and Tan (1995),

Marketing is concerned with organizing a company's strengths, experience and resources to achieve satisfaction for its clients with an acceptable level of profits. Marketing is therefore concerned with aligning an organization's business objectives with those of the client's.

2.2 Marketing Concepts in Library Services

A number of studies also have been conducted to identify the marketing concepts in the field of libraries. Ojiambo (1994) state that the marketing concept can be seen as a philosophy of action for managers, forcing them to reorient the administration of the organization needs, to offer them a good product/service, and look for feedback. In libraries and information centers, not only the needs of the user are involved, but also his/her problem. According to Koontz and Rockwood (2001), marketing is systematic tried and true approach that relies heavily on designing the service or product in term of the consumers' needs and desires, with consumer satisfaction as its goal. Rowley (2003) defines information marketing as the marketing of information-based products and services. She says that information marketing needs to focus on marketing in contexts and organizations in which information-based products and services are a significant product category. They applied to the marketing concept in library services. Adeyoyin (2005) derived that concept of marketing revolves on three pillars namely, marketing: (1) is consumer-centered; (2) is profit-centered; and (3) is anticipating of changes through time. And he applied to the marketing concept in library services.

2.3 Marketing Mix

Borden (1965) did not formally define the marketing mix. He simply explains as important elements or ingredients that makeup a marketing program. McCarthy (1964) defined the marketing mix as a combination of all of the factors at marketing manager's command to satisfy the target market. More recently, McCarthy and Perreault (1987) have defined the marketing mix as the controllable variables that an organization can co-ordinate to satisfy its target market. Kotler and Armstrong (1989) defined as the set of controllable marketing variables that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market.

Low and Tan (1995) suggest that marketing mix concept has two important benefits. First, it is an important tool used to enable one to see that the marketing manager's job is, in a large part, a matter of trading off the benefits of one's competitive strength in the marketing mix against the benefits of others. The second benefit of the marketing mix is that it helps to reveal another dimension of the marketing manager's job.

McCarthy (1960; 1964) initially defined the elements in the marketing mix, the 4Ps, as the controllable variables that an organization can co-ordinate to satisfy its target market. The 4Ps of the marketing mix – product, price, place and promotion are briefly described as follows (Copley, 2004).

(1) Product: The item or service being marketed, through its features, quality, benefits and quantities.
(2) Price: This includes the price of the item and product assortments and lines, price changes and payment methods.
(3) Place: The location where the product or service is available to the customer, including distribution channels.
(4) Promotion: Market communication is achieved by personal selling, advertising, direct

marketing, public relations, sales promotion and sponsorship.

Booms and Bitner (1981) suggested 7Ps mix which they extended the traditional 4Ps with including 3Ps: Participants, Physical Evidence and Process. The 7Ps of marketing mix have been conducted by some researchers in marketing fields (e.g., Low and Tan, 1995; Pheng and Ming, 1997; Melewar and Saunders, 2000).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Definition of 7Ps of Marketing Mix

In this research, we applied the 7Ps (Koontz and Rockwood's 4Ps plus Rafiq and Ahmed's 3Ps) of marketing mix which is defined in **Table 1**. Koontz and Rockwood (2001) suggested that marketing strategy is a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated plan that combines four marketing elements, commonly called the '4Ps' they are: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. We added 3Ps of the marketing mix suggested by Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) they are: Participants, Physical evidence, and Process.

Table 1. 7Ps of Marketing Mix in Reference and Information Services

7 Ps	Definition
Product	Products or services of the general reference and information service department. This is, of course, the information, reference, and ancillary services that add value such as personal assistance, referral services, online database searches, document delivery, and interlibrary loan.
Price	Pricing of use of the library is usually that of the time and effort the user spends traveling to the library, as well as the time and effort spent searching for and examining materials and cost of a foregone alternative activity.
Place	Place of service, based upon knowledge of the market of a library, is essential in order to identify users and their discrete information needs and wants. Also, this location element has effect upon how the library can best access their product offerings. To expand the service area, the library may have branches, bookmobiles, or electronic access, FAX, and telephone calls, etc.
Promotion	Promotion includes utilizing persuasive information about general information services, and communicating this information to target market segments that are potential users. Five kinds of promotion include: publicity, public relations, personal representatives, advertising, and sales promotion.
Participants	All human actors who play a part in reference and information services delivery, namely the library's personnel.
Physical Evidence	The environment in which the reference and information services are delivered that facilitates the performance and communication of the service.
Process	The procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities by which the reference and information services are acquired.

3.2. Questionnaire Survey

Considering the results of the pilot test and the literature review, a paper-based questionnaire was designed as the data collection tool. The questionnaire consisted of three

sections, excluding one section for 'Institute's General Information,' with a total 17 questions: (1) Section 1 - it was designed to identify what terms the Korean libraries use for 'Reference and Information Service'; (2) Section 2 – it was designed to measure the extent of 7Ps marketing mix for reference and information services in Korean libraries; and (3) Section 3 – it was designed to identify the marketing activities in Korean libraries.

We conducted a paper-based questionnaire survey between 29 March and 15 April 2006. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 700 libraries[1] (including information centers) with supplying the return postage stamped envelops. In total, 197 libraries participated to our survey.

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

For purposes of analysis, respondents have been grouped into 4 categories according to library type. These are: Public, Academic, School, and Special library. Questions have been asked exclusively to the librarians who are in charge of the reference and information services.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 12.0 for Windows.

4.1. General Characteristics of the Libraries

A complete overall response to the questionnaire by library type is provided in **Table 2.** The respondents were mostly from academic libraries (40.6%), public libraries (33.0%), and school libraries (17.3%). Only 7.6 percent was special libraries.

Table 2. Responses by Library Type.   Table 3. Number of Librarians for Reference and Information Service Department

Library Type	Frequency	Percent	Library Type	Average
Public	65	33.0%	Public	2.47
Academic	80	40.6%	Academic	3.47
School	34	17.3%	School	.97
Special	15	7.6%	Special	2.33
Other	3	1.5%	Other	2.00
Total	197	100%	Total	2.56

The average number of the librarian who works for Reference and Information Service Department was 2.56 librarians in total. In average, there are 3.47 librarians for reference and information service in academic library group; whereas school library group showed the least in average number (i.e., 0.97 librarians) (See **Table 3**).

4.2. Terms for 'Reference and Information Services' in Korean

How do you say "Reference and Information Service" in Korean? We have a translation word for "Reference" that is "□□" in Korean. However, it is unknown what kinds of equivalent to this word are used in Korean libraries. In this survey we included above

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[1] According to the KLA (Korean Library Association) statistic in 2005, there are 1 national library, 487 public libraries, 438 academic libraries, 10,297 school libraries, and 570 special libraries in Korea.

question in the questionnaire.

As shown in **Figure 1**, the majority of Korean libraries use the word '□□□□□' (Reference Service, 37.4%), '□□□ □□□' (User Service, 23.7%), and '□□ □□□' (Information Service, 23.2%) as the equivalent term to the reference and information services.
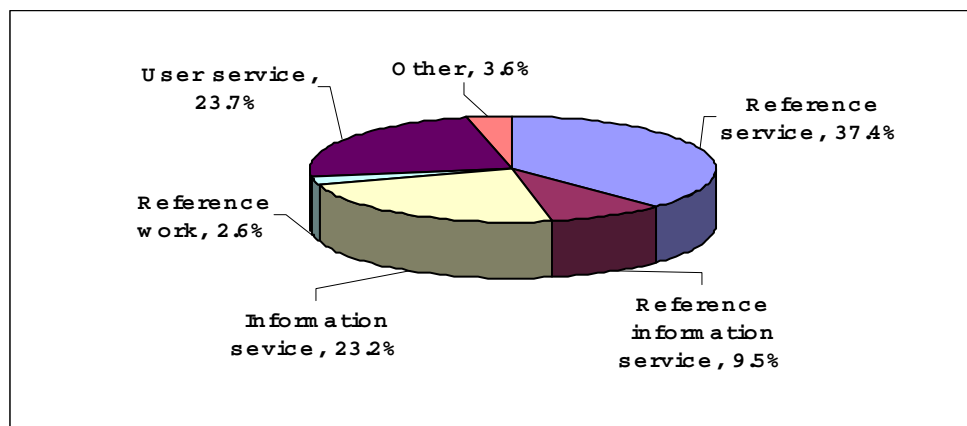

Figure 1. Term used for 'Reference and Information Service'

However, each type of library showed different results in this matter. That is, most of public libraries and academic libraries tend to use the term '□□ □□□' (Reference Service, 41.9% and 41.4%, respectively) most frequently; most special libraries tend to use the term '□□ □□□)'(Information Service, 62.5%); and most school libraries use the term '□□□ □□□' (User Service, 31.0%) for the term of reference and information services (See **Table 4** for more details).

Table 4. Term used for Reference and Information Service by Library Type

		Library Type			
		Public	**Academic**	**School**	**Special**
Term	**(Reference Service)**	**41.9%**	**41.4%**	24.1%	12.5%
	(Reference & Information Service)	9.3%	12.1%	13.8%	-
	(Information Service)	9.3%	20.7%	20.7%	**62.5%**
	(Reference Work)	-	6.9%	-	-
	(User Service)	37.2%	17.2%	**31.0%**	-
	Others	2.3%	1.7%	10.3%	25.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.3. Performance of Marketing Reference and Information Services in Korean Libraries

4.3.1. Overview of Marketing Mix – 7Ps
Q. How would you rate your library's marketing elements for the better reference and information services?
A. The overall results are shown in **Figure 2**. We adopted 7 point Likert scales for the

questions in the questionnaire.[2]

As shown in **Figure 2**, 'Product' (i.e., focus the activity on products or services such as books, information services, online searches, online catalogs, CD-ROMs, etc) was the most widely adopting strategy to satisfy their users' needs, and followed by 'Place' (i.e., focus the activity on the distribution ways for the reference and information services), 'Promotion' (i.e., focus the activity on the advertisement and promotion), 'Process' (i.e., focus the activity on the procedures, mechanisms and flow), 'Physical evidence' (i.e., focus the activity on the environment for the better reference and information service), 'Participants' (i.e., focus the activity on the training of the librarian), 'Price' (i.e., focus the activity on the price police).
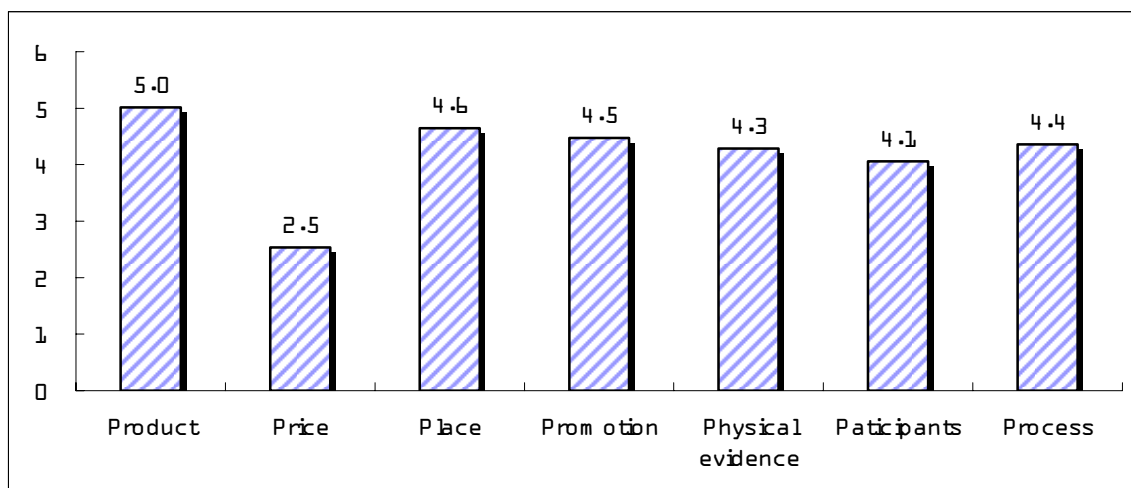

Figure 2. Overall Results of the 7Ps Marketing Mix

4.3.2. Performance of 7Ps Marketing Strategy by Library Group

We analyzed the performance of 7Ps strategy for each library groups and compared among them. To measure the difference between the means of 4 groups we used ANOVA tests in this analysis.

In 'Product' (or Service) strategy, there seemed a significant difference between 4 library groups. Special libraries performed the best among them and followed by academic libraries when the level of statistical significance has been set at 0.05 (95%)[3] (see **Table 5**).

Table 5. Performance of Product Strategy for Library Group

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	F value	P value
	Public	4.89	1.31		

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[2] Where '1= Not at all agree', '4= Neither agree nor disagree,' and '7= Extremely agree.'
[3] An alpha of less than 0.05 can be interpreted to mean that the differences are not due to sampling error.

Product	Academic	5.15	1.25	2.934	.022**
	School	4.59	1.44		
	Special	5.87	0.92		
	Other	4.67	2.31		

* : p≤0.1, ** : p≤0.05, *** : p≤0.01

In 'Price' strategy, there seemed a significant difference between 4 library groups. Academic libraries showed the best performance and followed by special libraries when the level of statistical significance has been set at 0.00 (100%) (see **Table 6**).

Table 6. Performance of Price Strategy for Library Group

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	F value	P value
Price	Public	2.29	1.23	13.896	.000***
	Academic	3.22	1.25		
	School	1.59	0.86		
	Special	2.40	1.06		
	Other	1.33	0.58		

* : p≤0.1, ** : p≤0.05, *** : p≤0.01

In 'Place' strategy, there seemed a significant difference between 4 library groups. Special libraries performed the best among them and followed by academic libraries when the level of statistical significance has been set at 0.00 (100%) (see **Table 7**).

In 'Promotion' strategy, there seemed a significant difference between 4 library groups. Special libraries performed the best among them and followed by academic libraries when the level of statistical significance has been set at 0.1 (90%) (see **Table 8**).

In 'Participants' strategy, there seemed a significant difference between 4 library groups. Special libraries performed the best among them and followed by school libraries when the level of statistical significance has been set at 0.05 (95%) (see **Table 9**).

Table 7. Performance of Place Strategy for Library Group

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	F value	P value
Place	Public	4.57	1.31	27.169	. .000***
	Academic	5.33	1.14		
	School	2.74	1.48		
	Special	5.47	1.25		
	Other	5.67	0.58		

* : p≤0.1, ** : p≤0.05, *** : p≤0.01

Table 8. Performance of Promotion Strategy for Library Group

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	F value	P value

Promotion	Public	4.40	1.49	3.539	.008*
	Academic	4.77	1.34		
	School	3.82	1.11		
	Special	4.80	1.01		
	Other	3.67	1.53		

* : p≤0.1, ** : p≤0.05, *** : p≤0.01

Table 9. Performance of Participants Strategy for Library Group

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Average	Standard Deviation	F value	P value
Participants	Public	3.58	1.43	4.343	.002**
	Academic	4.19	1.29		
	School	4.24	1.28		
	Special	5.00	1.00		
	Other	4.00	1.73		

* : p≤0.1, ** : p≤0.05, *** : p≤0.01

However, no significant differences were found either in 'Physical Evidence' or in 'Process' strategy between 4 library groups.

4.3.3. Marketing Activities in Korean Libraries

In this section we present the status of various marketing activities in Korean libraries. We only analyzed the overall results from the collected data. More details will be followed in future analysis, for example, by library type, library size, user size, and so on.

Q1. How does your library provide the information services?
A1. 75.1 percent of the libraries answered that they provide information service through the combination of on-line and off-line. 19.3 percent of them said through only the off-line, and only 5.6 percent of them provides their information service through on-line alone (see **Figure 3**).
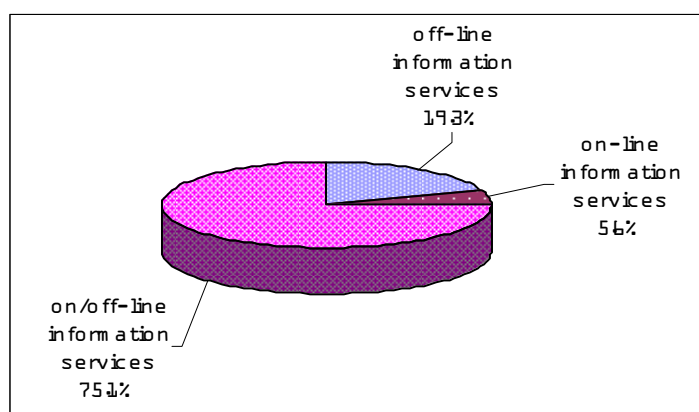
Figure 3. Method of Information Service

Q2. Does your library conduct user survey regularly to understand their needs for the new information services?
A2. 74 percent of the libraries answered 'No' in this question and only 26 percent said they conduct a regular user survey to understand users' need for the new information service (see **Figure 4**).
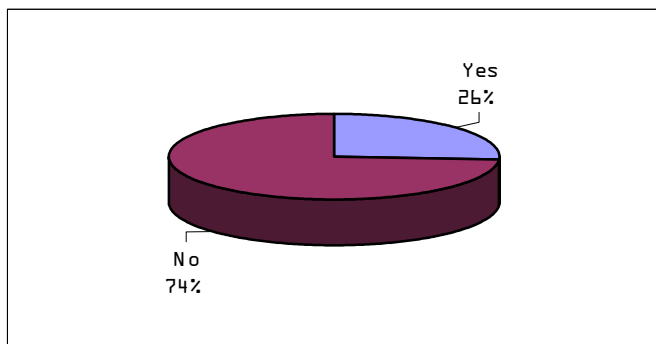

Figure 4. Conduct a Regular User Survey?

Q3. Does your library charge the fees for any special information service?
A3. 89 percent of the libraries answered 'No' in this question and only 11% said they charge the fees for a special information service (see **Figure 5**).
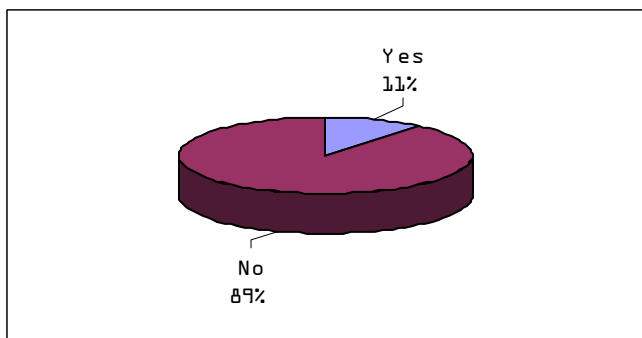
Figure 5. Charge the Fees for a Special Information Service
Q4. If you answered 'Yes' to the Q3, how much does your library charge the fees per service?

A4. 50 percent of the libraries answered as less than 1 US dollar in this question and 40 percent said they charge in between 1 US dollar and 10 US dollars, whereas 10 percent said over 10 US dollars (see **Figure 6**).
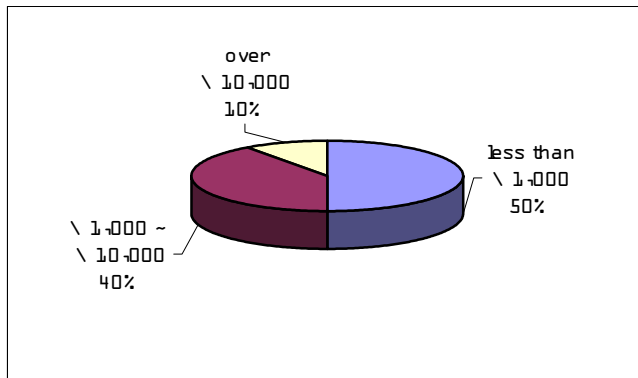

Figure 6. Fees per a Special Information Service

Q5. If you answered 'No' to the Q3, does your library plan a policy for fees in the future?
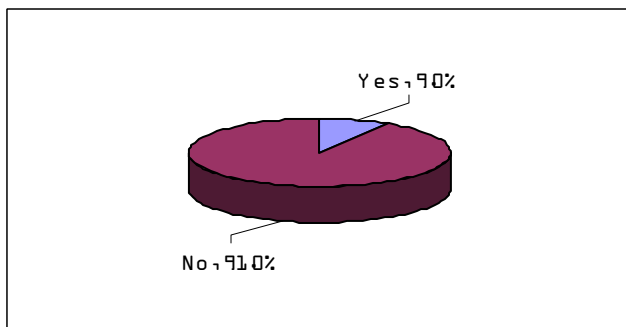**A5.** 91 percent said 'No' and only 9 percent said they have a plan for it (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7. Future Policy for Fees

Q6. In which way does your library distribute the off-line information services?
A6. 41.7 percent said by 'Visit', 40.9 percent said by 'Telephone', 8.4 percent said by 'FAX' as the way of the off-line information services (see **Figure 8**).
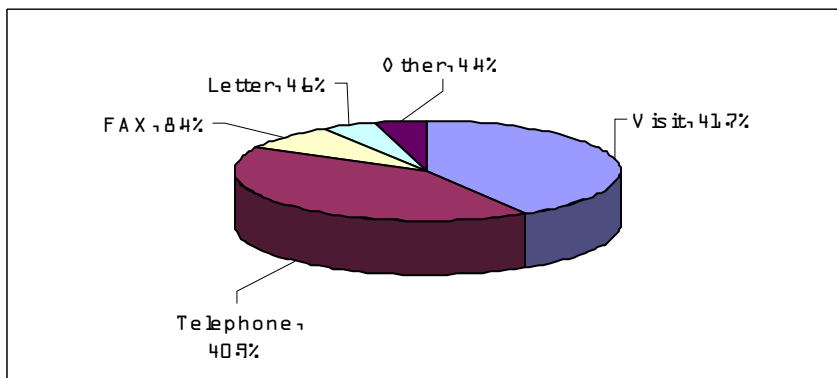

Figure 8. Methods of Distribution for the Off-line Information Services

Q7. In which way does your library distribute the on-line information services?
A7. Electronic mail (35.7%) seemed the most popular way of the distribution for the on-line information services, and followed by electronic board (30.9%), Q&A (21.0%). Interesting, however, few libraries (0.3%) use the video conferencing for the purpose of online information services. We were unable to investigate whether this information technology application is practical or not in this survey. Also, there need a follow up survey for those libraries answered 'Other' (5.7%) to identify their distribution way for the on-line information services (see **Figure 9**).
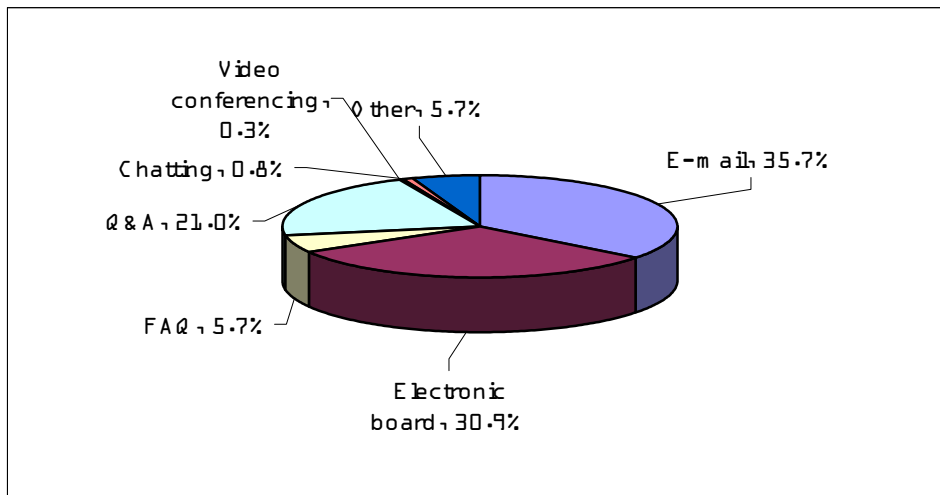

Figure 9. Methods of Distribution for the On-line Information Services

Q8. In which way does your library promote the information services?
A8. Homepage (38.0%) was the most popular way of the promotion, and followed by electronic board (12.8%), user education time (12.6%), e-mail (10.1%). It is found that few libraries (1.1%) do not promote their information services to the users (see **Figure 10**).
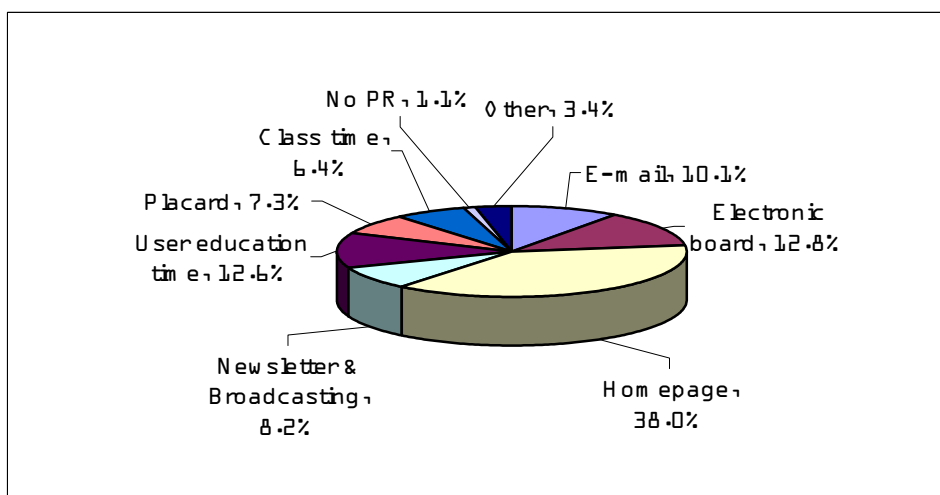

Figure 10. Methods of Promotion for the Information Services

Q9. In which way does your library offer a user education program for the information

services, if any?

A9. By Homepage help function (20.6%), and followed by user education time (20.3%), when user require (20.1%). It is found that relatively a few libraries (6.2%) do not run any of user education programs for the information services (see **Figure 11**).
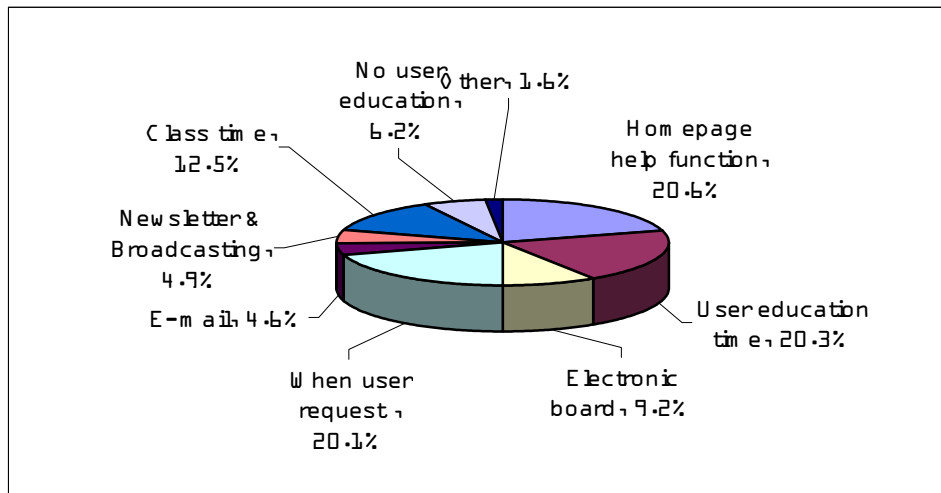

Figure 11. Methods of User Education for the Information Services

5. CONCLUSION

According to RUSA reference guidelines, the goal of information service is "to provide the information sought by the user. Information service should anticipate as well as meet user needs. It should encourage user awareness of the potential of information resources to fulfill individual information needs" (RUSA Access to Information Committee, 2000).

Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives.

The purposes of this study are: (1) to measure the extent of 7Ps marketing mix (i.e., Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Participants, Physical Evidence, and Process) adopted by Korean libraries and to compare its performance between different groups (i.e., public, academic, special, and school libraries), and (2) to identify the marketing activities of Korean libraries (e.g., distribution methods for reference and information services, promotion methods, user education methods, regular user survey, etc.).

A questionnaire survey was conducted for the purpose of this study. The major findings of this study are as follows:

Firstly, the 7Ps marketing mix performed relatively well except 'Price,'

Secondly, special libraries performed best among four groups in the 7Ps marketing mix and followed by academic libraries,

Thirdly, the majority of Korean libraries provided their reference and information service through the combination of on-line and off-line methods,

Fourthly, most frequently used distribution activities for the off-line reference and information services were by visit and by telephone,

Fifthly, most popular distribution activities for the on-line reference and information services were

e-mail and electronic board, and

Finally, Homepage seemed the most popular tool for promotion of the reference and information services in Korean libraries.

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