



Prioritizing the ICT Facilitators in Palm Date Marketing in Khuzestan Province

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we try, by prioritizing the ICT facilitators in the produce marketing, evaluate the role of those factors. The study is of applied type and the method being used is descriptive- correlational .the population province and using Cochran's formula , a sample size of 144 members was selected census method is used for the purpose of responding to the questionnaires. The findings on the factors represent the fact that the electronic organization leads to flexibility and efficiency as compared with the traditional therefore, with a mean of 5-09, they had the highest rank and teaching technical skills to the employees of the organization at the beginning of each project in ICT with a mean on 2.93, had the lowest rank. Application of IT assists in searching for domestic and international markets for palm date.

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INTRODUCTION

Khuzestan province, due to presence of Vast palm groves and appropriate environmental conditions such as proper water, weather and soil for construction of new palm groves with appealing cultivars and having water and land borders with several countries in the region could, in production and export of the product, processing and production of other palm date- based products, play an important role in earing income and generating jobs in the province and even the country.

However, in view of the fact that other pal date producers, who are mainly the neighbor states, have had extensive activities in the export of the produce and have monopolized same markets [5].

Therefore, the traditional marketing of that produce certainly could not be effective and useful but correct and targeted use of ICT (computer, web, satellite systems, hardware and software networks, et.) in marketing of produce could fill the gaps, introduce Iranian palm date to the world and build some markets. Application of communication technologies will rapidly change the social structure and the people's way of living [5].

Close , increasing competition between different organization and communities and the developments made in recent years have occurred so much deeply, extensively and rapidly that there remains no opportunity to use traditional methods and legacy skills and indeed, it has faced the future of those organizations with new opportunities and threats. [8]

Since today, those organizations are successful that could thrive in the competition – intensive world of today and are constantly using appropriate communication methods in their organizations. [9] Numerous new challenges and issues facing the organization in the current age have been caused by not paying attention to innovation and ways for creating and enhancing it [6].

In an agricultural produce Co., there are four categories of this opportunities in the form of: unexpected events, incompatibilities, process requirements, agricultural changes and the market. The other three sources of opportunity are created beyond the Co. in social and thought environments, which consists of: change in demographic features, change in attitudes and change in new knowledge. There sources are overlapping but differ from one another regarding resk ability and complexity and more than one of them could be a factor for communication and innovation at a time [7]. Today, ICT has seen an extensive and dramatic development in

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different countries and has provided them with much advantages [3] and for drawing in the benefits of ICT, one should implement that technology and use it efficiently [1].

The notable issue here is the fact that the palm date market is regarded as a relatively intact capacity and its potential is such that , as a non-oil product, it has significant dynamism and income – generation that has been ignored by any reason in the past despite of structure-centrism of the agriculture sector in development pains) while in the most countries of the world, people are trying to influence in accessible markets, quality production and adopting knowledge-based strategies for development of the market and coping with competitors by predicting and providing scientific based arrangements. Unfortunately , this outlook is very slow and sometimes much despairing both at the level of palm date grove and garden managers and at the level of official of ministry Agricultural Jihad and Ministry of Industries, mines and commerce [4].

The general objective prioritizing the ICT facilitators in palm date marketing special objectives:

1. Analysis of individual characteristics of Agriculture Experts in Khuzestan province
2. Prioritizing the degree of electronic- preparedness of agriculture experts
3. Prioritizing the applications of ICT in creation of market relations as viewed by agriculture experts
4. Prioritizing the application of ICT in palm date marketing as viewed by Agriculture experts
5. Prioritizing the application of ICT in supply and sales of palm date as viewed by agriculture experts
6. Prioritizing the application of ICT in influencing the market as viewed by agriculture experts
7. Prioritizing the application of IT as regards reduction in production sales expenditures as viewed by agriculture experts
8. Prioritizing the application of IT as regards competitive advantage in palm date market as viewed by agricultural experts

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study is of applied type using descriptive – correlation methods. Conducting the stage of theoretical studies and qualitative investigations by documentary method and the quantitative stage by fieldwork method , using a questionnaire According to the findings, a chronbach alpha coefficient of 0.85 was found to be 0.85 in the ICT section of the questionnaire the population consists of Experts of Ministry of agriculture in Khuzestan , province (n=144) . The consus method was used for collecting data. For description of the study variables, statistical such as frequency distribution, frequency tables, means, standard deviation, variation coefficient, the minimal and the maximal, were used.

Findings:

- Individual characteristics of Agriculture Experts:

Of the respondents, so (35.4%) were females and 89 (64.67) were males.

The findings of review of the age frequency of the respondent showed that the highest age frequency in the respondents related to the age range 31-40 years with a frequency of 47.4% while the lowest age frequency belonged of over 51 years with a frequency of 13% regarding marital status, most respondents, that is, 121 persons (87.10%) were married while only 18 persons (12.9%) of them were singles . regarding the persons supported, the responses showed that 87 persons (62.6%) of respondents supported 2 persons. As regards the birthplace of respondents, 100 persons (49.80%) were born in villages, 37 persons (49.30 %) were born in cities and 2 persons (1.50%) had not responded to the item.

- Ranking of the electronic –preparedness of agricultural Experts:

As you see in table (1.1), the item " the degree of your access to technology facilities like the computer, the tablet, the cell phone, etc., in your daily life outside the organization" with a mean of 5.47 had the highest rank and " the degree of your knowledge and your ability to use English as a pre-requisite to use IT" with a mean of 3.85 had the lowest rank. Also, the lowest variation coefficient belonged to the item "the degree of your access to technology facilities such as computer, tablet, cell phone, etc., in the daily life outside the organization" (CV=23.02) while the highest variation coefficient related to the item "the degree of access to the fax system" (CV=35.20) (table 1.1)

Table (1.1): Ranking of the Electronic-preparedness of agricultural experts.

	mean	SD	CV
Your access to technology facility such as computer, tablet, cellphone, etc. in the daily life outside the organization	5.47	1.26	23.02
Your access to hardware and office facility such as computer , printer , scanner , etc.	5.15	1.27	24.72
Your trust on advantages and applications of IT for speeding Aps and improving affairs	5.15	1.19	23.13
Your use of network services such as internet to carryout tasks such as banking operations in daily life outside the organizations	5.05	1.54	30.56
Your access to the network and internet	4.94	1.41	28.59
Your access to fax	4.87	1.71	35.20

Your basics skills in using computer, ICDL and internet (Chat, Email, etc.)	4.64	1.15	24.89
Your use of internet, internet or extranet to carryout daily office works	4.62	1.50	32.49
Enjoying appropriate bond width and internet speed	4.41	1.41	31.93
Your understanding and skill regarding the concepts , applications and advantages of IT	3.85	.96	25.01
Your fluency and ability in using English	3.85	1.11	28.82

- *Ranking of the electronic-preparedness of the agricultural organization:*

As you see in table (1.2) the item "the electronic organization leads to flexibility and efficiency as compared with the traditional organization" with a mean of 5.09 had the highest rank and "teaching technical skills to the organization's people at the beginning of every ICT project" with a mean of 2.93 had the lowest rank. Here, the lowest variation coefficient belong to item "the electronic organization leads to flexibility and efficiency as compared with the traditional organization" (CV=24.55) and the highest variation coefficient belong to the item " using advanced telecommunication and network technologies such as fiber optics and wireless network by the organization" (CV=62) (table 1.2)

Table (1.2): Ranking of the degree of preparedness of agricultural organization.

	mean	SD	CV
Electronic organization in creases flexibility and efficiency relative to a traditional organization	5.09	1.25	24.55
Lows relating to security and super vision in the virtual medium in the organization	4.73	1.32	27.93
Presence of a good physical space for ICT in the organization	4.40	1.37	31.14
Specialty and understanding of official and managers of the ICT sections of potential and applications of IT	4.06	1.14	27.97
The organization's enjoying and independent IT management unit and specialize man power for it's improvement and development	3.65	1.48	40.44
Organization's access to LAN	3.60	1.73	48.13
Availability of appropriate educational software and CD's on applications of IT in the organizations	3.39	1.40	41.36
Constant presence and activity of consultants and specialists in IT at the organization	3.29	1.62	49.29
The quality of investing of budgeting and allocations of resources for incorporations and development of technology in the organizations	3.22	1.51	47.02
The organization's access to WAN	3.12	1.73	55.61
Your access to the organizations computer information from the outside of organizations	3.04	1.88	6178
True username and password Holding in service or continued education in IT for employee of the organizations through classes and seminar	3.04	1.57	51.61
The organizations use of advance telecommunications and network technology such as fiber optics and wireless network	3.01	1.87	62.00
Teaching technical skills to the employees at the beginning of each ICT project	2.93	1.42	48.58

- *Ranking of application of IT in making market relations:*

As you see in table(1.3), the item "Ict could assist in creation of a virtual cooperative of palm date producers for selling the produce " with a mean of 4.03 had the highest rank and " with ICT the palm date planters get understood early about the facilities and services of the agricultural jihad organization" with a mean of 3.41 had the lowest rank here, the lowest variation coefficient related to the item " ICT leads to improvement in internal communication with firms selling palm dates (CV=15.83) while the highest variation coefficient by the lowest variation coefficient belong to the item " using advanced telecommunication and network technologies such as fiber optics and wireless network" (CV=29.92). (Table 1.3)

Table (1.3): Ranking of application of ICT for creation of market relations as viewed by agricultural experts.

	mean	SD	CV
ICT could assist in creation of virtual cooperative of palm date producers for sealing the produce	4.03	0.65	16.08
ICT provides the Experts and the farmer with newest information on prices and weather conditions	3.99	0.74	18.62
ICT assist in making relations between palm date growers and domestic and international purchasers	3.94	0.68	17.36
ICT improves domestic communications with palm date sealing firms	3.91	0.62	15.83
ICT makes constant communication with purchasers	3.86	0.73	18.88
ICT assists in creating a network for contact between palm date growers and palm date marketing industries	3.86	0.83	21.53
ICT creates a network among palm date grower throughout the country	3.76	0.78	20.63
ICT is an important part of marketing relations of this company	3.59	0.91	25.28
ICT fills the information's gap between palm date growers and palm date merchants	3.53	0.93	26.47
With ICT palm date growers yet early informed about the facility and services of the agricultural Jihad organizations	3.41	1.02	29.92

- *Ranking of application of IT for palm date marketing:*

As you see in table (1.4), the item "ICT assists in searching for domestic and international palm date markets" with a mean of 4.05 had the highest rank while "ICT assists in identification of the customer's behaviors and preferences" with a mean of 3.76 had the lowest rank. Here, the lowest coefficient of variation belong to the item "ICT assists in development of the packaging industry, marketing and processing industries of palm date (CV=14.06) while the highest coefficient of variation belonged to the item "ICT assists in identification of the customers behavior and preferences" (CV=21.47) (table 1.4).

Table (1.4): Ranking of application of ICT for palm date marketing as viewed by agricultural experts.

	mean	SD	CV
ICT assists in searching domestic and international palm date market	4.05	0.61	14.96
ICT assists in development of packaging, marketing and processing industries palm date	4.01	0.56	14.06
ICT assists in useful feedback from foreign customers who do not know Iranian palm date	4.01	0.74	18.48
ICT assists in tracking information from domestic and foreign market on the price and the use of palm date	3.90	0.75	19.35
ICT assists in identifications of customers behavior and preferences	3.76	0.81	21.47

- *Ranking of application of ICT for supply and sales of palm dates:*

As you see in table (1.5), the item "ICT assists in sales had a good price" with a mean of 4.04 had the highest rank while "ICT assists in identification of the appropriate time for going to the market" with a mean of 3.78 had the highest rank. Here, the lowest coefficient of variation belong to the item "ICT assists in sales at an appropriate price" (CV=16.18) while the highest coefficient of variation belonged to the item "ICT makes it easier to remove local and international intermediates who are active in palm date trade" (CV=21.47) (table 1.5)

Table (1.5): Ranking of application of ICT for supply of palm dates as viewed by agricultural experts.

	mean	SD	CV
ICT assists in sealing at good prices	4.04	0.65	16.18
ICT assists in sealing palm date at any point of the world	4.00	0.67	16.76
ICT is an effective means for seals in domestics and international markets	3.99	0.69	17.38
ICT makes placing order for the produce easier for the costumer	3.96	0.64	16.19
ICT makes it easier to removed local and foreign intermediate who are active in palm date trade	3.94	0.62	15.80
ICT assists in identifications of the appropriate time to market	3.90	0.85	21.84

- *Ranking of application of ICT in influencing the palm date market:*

As you see in table (1.6), the item "ICT assists in influencing and known faring markets" with a mean of 3.86 had the highest rank while "palm date growers who use ICT in the job have more self-esteem" with a mean of 3.51 had the lowest rank. Here, the lowest coefficient of variation belonged to the item "ICT provides appropriate international knowledge and understanding about palm date marketing" (CV=17.40) while the highest coefficient of variation belong to the item "palm date growers who use ICT in their job has a higher self-esteem" (CV==25.05) (Table 1.6)

Table (1.6): Ranking of application of ICT in influencing the palm date market as viewed by agricultural experts.

	mean	SD	CV
ICT assists in influencing and knowing foreign market	3.86	0.80	20.72
ICT leads in creation of secondary market	3.93	0.73	18.55
ICT makes available good international knowledge and understanding about palm date marketing	3.97	0.69	17.40
ICT assists in introduction of newer and more market appealing cultivars	3.85	0.82	21.42
Palm date growers who use ICT in their job have more self-steam	3.51	0.88	25.05

- *Ranking of application of ICT in reducing the costs of palm date production and sales:*

As you see in table (1.7), the item "ICT leads to reduction in costs for getting information on the palm date market" with a mean of 3.80 had the highest rank while "ICT prevents from making agencies for palm date marketing" with a mean of 2.91 had the lowest rank. Here, the lowest coefficient of variation belonged to the item "ICT leads to reduction in costs for getting information on the palm date market" (CV=16.22) while the highest coefficient of variation belonged to the item "ICT prevents from making agencies for palm date marketing" (CV=36.13) (table 1.7)

Table (1.7): Ranking of application of ICT in reducing the costs of palm date production and sales as viewed by agricultural experts.

	mean	SD	CV
ICT reduces costs for getting information's on palm date market	3.80	0.62	16.22
ICT reduces marketing costs (through making website , radio promotion efforts, etc.	3.73	0.73	19.60
ICT reduces the travel and transaction costs of farmer	3.72	0.73	19.70
ICT reduces the risks of the production and sales of palm date expenditures	3.55	0.83	23.27
ICT reduces the costs of warehousing , making sales and maintains branches	3.37	0.82	24.29
ICT prevents from creational agencies for palm date marketing	2.91	1.05	36.13

- *Ranking of ICT regarding competitive advantage in the palm date market:*

As you see in table 1.8, the item " one of the main weaknesses of the sales of the palm date of the region is non-observation of hygiene during harvest, warehousing, etc. " with a mean of 4.10 had the highest rank while "the cultivars of the palm date produced in the region resistant to shelving pests " with a mean of 3.13 had the lowest rank. here, the lowest coefficient of variation belonged tom the item" ICT leads to a competitive advantage in domestic and international markets as compared with other producers" (CV=15.38) while the highest coefficient of variation belonged to the item " the cultivars of the palm date produce in the region are resistant to shelving pests " (CV=26.88)(table 1.8)

Table (1.8): Ranking of ICT regarding competitive advantage in the palm date market.

	mean	SD	CV
One of the mangers of weak point of sales of the regent of palm date is non-observations of heighten during harvesting , warehousing , etc.	4.10	0.86	21.03
The palm date produce in the region can compete with palm date produce in other part of country	4.05	0.77	19.11
The palm date produce in the region can compete with palm date produce in other part of the world	4.05	0.69	17.16
One of the mangers of weak point of sales of the regent of palm date is lack of good processing industries	4.00	0.89	22.32
ICT improves ability to compete with other palm date producers	3.86	0.65	16.97
ICT improves competitions in domestic and international market as compared with other producers	3.79	0.58	15.38
The cultivars produce in the region have good quality regarding market	3.71	0.80	21.57
The high palm date cargo costs from this region to the sales market is a serious challenge for its sales	3.63	0.91	24.68
The cultivars produce in the region are resistant to shelving pests	3.13	0.93	26.88

Also, for the purpose of ranking components of the role of ICT in palm date marketing, the seven items of any of those components were summed up and the score so obtained was taken as the score of that component and the frequency distribution of the component s of the role of ICT in palm date marketing (the total score of any component) is given in table 1.9. As you see, the component of palm date marketing (with a mean of 3.95) was the highest rank while the tendency to change (with a mean of 3.51) had the lowest rank.

Table 1.9: Descriptive statistics of the component of the role of ICT in palm date marketing (the study variables).

No	Component	mean	SD	minimum	Maximum	Rank
1	Palm date marketing	3.95	.68	1.29	4.86	1
2	Supplied and sales	3.94	.69	1.43	5	2
3	Influencing the market	3.82	.78	1.71	4.71	3
4	Commentating advantage	3.81	.77	1	5	4
5	Creating market relations	3.78	.87	1	5	5
6	Reduction in productions and sales costs	3.51	.79	1	4.86	6

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of examination of the age frequency of the respondents showed that the highest age frequency in their respondents belonged to 31-40 years with a frequency of 47.4 % while 41-50 years with a frequency of 21% was next to it. The lowest age frequency belonged to more than 50 years with a frequency of 13%. The mean age of the respondent was 38.82 years. The lowest coefficient of variation belonged to the item "the electronic organization increases flexibility and efficiency as compared with the traditional organization" (CV=24.55) while the highest coefficient of variation belonged to the item" the use of advanced telecommunication and network technologies such as fiber optics and wireless network by the organization" (CV=62). The lowest coefficient of variation belonged to the item " ICT improves internal communication with palm date sales firms " (CV=15.83) while the highest coefficient of variation belonged to the item " using advanced telecommunication and network technologies such as fiber optics and wireless network by the organization" (CV=29.92) also, for purpose of ranking the components of the role of ICT in palm date marketing , the component of palm date marketing (with a mean of 3.95) had the highest rank while reduction in sales costs (with a mean of 3.51)had the lowest rank . Hailu, [2] found in their study entitled "potentials of

ICT in the agricultural sector" that ICT is an important factor in economic development and growth in the country. There, it is mentioned that marketing of the produce along with ICT could bring about an efficient agriculture.

Recommendations:

Palm date sales market be identified through cooperatives that are scattered throughout the country in a vast geographical scope.

The palm database including the type of produce uses and properties, the domestic and export prices of produce as well as the images of the produce be created.

A centralized market (for example, the central union of Iranian rural and agricultural cooperatives) be selected as a sales center for palm date. That is, with creation of a database centered at the union, the customers would place orders for purchasing the produce to it and the union gives them then the guarantees required for the quality of the produce.

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