

An examination of the effect of ISO certificates on sales and marketing

Vahidreza Mirabi^{1,*}, Mohammad Reza Dalvand²

¹Faculty of Management, Tehran Central Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

²Department of Management, Qeshm International Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

Abstract: ISO is an international non-governmental organization founded on February 24th, 1947. This organization consists of national standardization institutes in 130 countries. These standards include almost all the instances related to technology, and also help to produce and offer healthier, safer, and more effective goods and services. Till now, many standards have been introduced by this organization. Although each standard is related to a particular part of the organization, this doesn't mean that its effect is limited to that part. So this research studies the effect of applying ISO 9001, ISO 10002, and ISO 14001 on sales and marketing units from the viewpoints of the personnel and managers of these units. Accordingly, the points of senior managers, sales managers, and sales staff of 12 green-pipe manufacturing companies in Isfahan are used. The statistical society includes 500 people, 152 of which have been selected through KOKRAN method according to the proportion existing in the statistical society. The information gathering instrument is a realized questionnaire including 41 questions in three separated parts which are related to the above-mentioned ISOs. Data analysis has been done in two levels: *descriptive statistics* (including frequency, percentage, average, and standard deviation), and *deductive statistics* (including single-variable t-test, single-variable variance analysis test, Friedman test, LSD test). Findings showed that the staff and the managers of the statistical society consider applying the three ISO certificates as effective on sales and marketing. Among the demographic variables, only the education variable has had a meaningful difference concerning the effect of ISO certificates.

Key words: Marketing, Sales; ISO 9001; ISO 10002; ISO 14001

1. Introduction

The International Standard Organization (ISO), located in Geneva, was founded in 1947 February 24th in order to integrate and homogenize the compilation of standard in all over the world, facilitate the international trade, support the producer and consumer, and develop the scientific, technological, and economic co-operations, and today it has 132 members including 90 main members, 34 corresponsive members, and 8 common members. One of these main members is Iranian Standard and Industrial Research Institute which, being active in ISO technical committees cooperates in compiling the international standards. Most of the researches, performed in the field of the effects of ISO on the organization, have approved such effects.

Although different ISOs consider different parts of the organization but the effects of ISO certificates usage cannot be limited to that specific part. This research tries to study the effects of ISO on the performance of sales and marketing units (as indirectly effected units).

2. Research statement

Today, the application of ISO standards is assumed as an inseparable part of service and productive organizations so that many organizations spend huge costs in order to achieve such certificates. Having ISO certificates doesn't necessarily mean the success of an organization, while the absence of such certificates can significantly influence the performance of the organization against its rivals and customers because the name of ISO is more valuable than its reality; on the other hand, the rivals can exploit this problem in their own favor. Therefore, the current conditions of the organizations and their surroundings require that the managers definitely use the ISO certificates and get acquainted with their effects on different parts of the organization.

Numerous researches and studies are done on ISO and its effects on different parts of an organization; whereas, most of the managers don't still have enough information and knowledge about indirect effects of ISO on sections such as sales and marketing. Therefore, the current research aims the examination of the effects of ISO 9001, ISO 10002, and ISO 14001 on the performance of sales and marketing sections of 12 green pipe manufacturing companies in Isfahan. So the "application of ISO certificates in sales and marketing units" and the "performance of sales and marketing units" are selected, respectively, as independent variable and dependent variable.

* Corresponding Author.



3. Research theoretical basics and literature

3.1. Marketing

Marketing is defined as a managerial-social process by which the people and the groups try to meet their needs and requests through producing and exchanging goods with each other (heir et al., 2012). The formal trade principles, originating in USA, were initially taught in some US universities as a separate business course. It is assumed that these principles, as trade principles, have passed the following three steps: “production period” through which marketing was restricted by production limitations (till 1930s), “selling period” through which marketing imposed on the market whatever the company produced (till 1950s), and “customer period” through which all the marketing activities were concentrated on the customer (Huotari et al., 1012). In 21st century marketing entered an interactive era. The fundamental change in the definition and target of marketing in 21st century is that marketing, as a trade principle, has been developed beyond a principle merely for facilitating commercial exchanges and trades between producers and customers (heir et al., 2012; Gr nroos, 2011).

There are various definitions and different inclusive and creditable viewpoints and opinions about the nature of marketing which are not yet valuable enough to be added to the academic knowledge; however, considering various interpretations of marketing activity and its functions and structuring skills can still be valuable (Gr nroos, 2011). During the 21st century markets has become more complicated and more global and accordingly marketing, as a professional principle, has undergone such changes too. Consequently, marketing, as a newer profession, lacks global clarity, classification, and description of roles and duties. Various companies and organizations intend to offer a definition of marketing according to their style (Berthon et al., 2012).

Marketing is said to be an effort to make a connection and relation between value of the product (goods or services) and the customer. Sometimes marketing is known as the art of selling but, in fact, selling or sales is only a small function of marketing. Marketing is literally defined as “providing goods or services in order to meet the customers’ needs”. In other words, marketing includes understanding the customer’s needs and

requests and adjusting the company’s products to meet those needs and encompass the profiting process for the company (Kaplan, 2012). A successful marketing involves possessing appropriate product in an appropriate time and appropriate place and ensuring that the customer is informed of the product; because this will result in future orders (Berthon et al, 2012).

Till now, several researches have been done on marketing and marketing management, many of which are concentrated on factors effecting sales and marketing (Riks et al., 2014). The initial conclusion made from these researches is that we can’t delineate some specific factors as effective on marketing because there are some other unknown factors which are continuously added to the factors effecting marketing. Among these factors, ISO certificates can be mentioned. ISO certificates, introduced in 1947 by the International Standard Organization, are now considered as one of the principal benchmarks for every organization, and not only have direct effects on their target sections but also influence the other sections of the organization indirectly (Huotari et al., 2012).

3.2. What is ISO?

ISO was firstly founded in 1926 under the name of *International Standard Association (ISA)* with attendance of 20 countries from all around the world, but it was shut in 1942. Then in 1947 the International Standard Organization, located in Geneva, again established the ISO (Sampaio et al., 2009). By gradual attendance of other countries this organization has currently 132 members consisting of 90 main members, 34 corresponsive members, and 8 common members. This organization has the *Iranian standard and Industrial Research Institute* as one of its main members which is, and has been, cooperating in compilation of the international standards through performing activities in the technical committees. These standards which currently include 11950 instances have been compiled by 2856 committees and sub-committees and more than thirty thousand experts (Buttle, 1997).

3.3. What are quality and ISO standards?

How and by means of which tools the quality of products and services can be guaranteed or is there any system and principle for this? In order to respond and meet this need of the companies the

International Standard Organization has defined various standards, the most well-known of which is ISO 9000 that has encompassed many of the Iranian organizations, firms, and companies (Feng et al., 2008). This section is to present a more accurate definition of ISO 9001, as one of the most important standards of ISO 9000 group, and also ISO 10002 and ISO 14001.

3.4. ISO 9001

Standards of 9000-Series are managerial standards which express the basics and fundamentals of a quality management system. In other words, the standards of ISO 9000-Series are not the standards of a product but, meanwhile, they present executive guideline to achieve good quality for products and satisfaction of customers (Sampaio et al., 2009). The standards of ISO 9000 series are completely public and applicable to all the sections of industry and services. Among the standards of ISO 9000 group only ISO 9001 has certificate and the other ones play a guiding role (Costa et al., 2009).

In 1994 the ISO 9000-series standards were reviewed for the first time but no remarkable change was exerted on them. The only change was made to convert this standard from a *quality guarantee standard* to a *quality management standard* (Biazzo et al, 2003).

3.5. ISO 10002

The aim of compilation and publication of this international standard is offering guidelines about the process of handling claims related to the services of the organization including programming, planning and designing, executing, maintaining, and improving this process. The claims handling process which is described in this standard is better to be used as one of the quality management system processes. ISO 10002 is not applicable to the quarrels or dissensions referred to the officials out of the organization (those quarrels which are pursued by the qualified references) and also to the quarrels related to the recruitments. This standard is applicable to the organizations, being of any kind, producing any kind of products, and offering any kind of services (Ang, 2006). It provides conditions essential for a successful management of the customers' claims and includes claims management controls and helps you to pursue the dissatisfactions of your customers in your business (Yaya, 2011).

4.6. ISO 14001

ISO 14000 is related to the environmental management and helps the company or the institute to minimize the inadequacies and damages to the environment (such as harmful weather changes, and poisoning the water or the ground) through obeying the formal environmental laws and rules of the governments.

ISO 14000 is very similar to ISO 9000 regarding quality and quality observation in production process. In this respect, the organization obviously needs to publish and develop an organizational methodology which can control its effectiveness and efficiency and examine the environmental aspects (Chapple et al., 2001).

The ISO 14000 standards group is very extensive but, here, we just mention ISO 14001.

ISO 14001 can be applicable to any organization which tends to execute, maintain, and improve a bio-environmental management system.

The range of ISO 14001 applications in every organization depends on various factors such as the nature of that organization's activities and the conditions under which it acts (McAdam et al., 2002). So ISO 1400 is a standard which is not written for just a specific industry or profession, but it can be applicable to any kind of organization with any kind of product and any kind of service. This is why we say that the ministries, banks, insurance firms, universities, hospitals, hotels, airlines, etc, can achieve ISO 14001 certificate (Quazi et al., 2001).

4. Research goals

The main goal of this research is to study the effect of ISO 9001, ISO 10002, and ISO 14001 certificates on the performance of sales and marketing units from the viewpoints of managers and staff of 12 green-pipe manufacturing companies in Isfahan. So what follows is a list of sub-goals according to the main goal.

- 1- Determining the effectiveness of ISO 9001 certificate on performance of the sales and marketing units.
- 2- Determining the effectiveness of ISO 10002 certificate on performance of the sales and marketing units.
- 3- Determining the effectiveness of ISO 14001 certificate on performance of the sales and marketing units.
- 4- Determining the difference between the respondents' viewpoints about the role of ISO certificates in the performance of the sales and marketing units on the basis of demographic features.

5. Research questions

- 1- Can ISO 9001 certificate be effective on the performance of sales and marketing units?
- 2- Can ISO 10002 certificate be effective on the performance of sales and marketing units?
- 3- Can ISO 14001 certificate be effective on the performance of sales and marketing units?
- 4- Is there any difference between the respondents' viewpoints about the role of ISO certificates in the performance of sales and marketing units on the basis of demographic features?

6. Research method

This research is of applied type and regarding that in this research library (bibliographical) method, literature review, and field methods such as questionnaire have been used so the method of this research can be called a descriptive-surveying method.

6.1. The statistical society

The statistical society in this research includes all the senior managers, sales managers, and sales staff of 12 green-pipe manufacturing companies in Isfahan. The whole statistical society consists of 500 people including 382 males and 118 females.

6.2. Sampling method

Regarding the duties extension and dispersion of the statistical society, the sampling method in this research has been *level proportionate to volume* in which the number of samples is selected randomly proportionate to the type of employment.

6.3. Determining the sample volume

In order to determine the sample volume regarding the unavailability of the portion of pro and con, first, the above-mentioned portion was obtained by means of 30 questionnaires and, then, the sample volume was assessed through kokran formula. So with regard to the portion of 0.8 PROs versus 0.2 CONs the sample volume was obtained 165. Therefore, 165 questionnaires were distributed among the members of the statistical society but 152 of them were given back.

6.4. Data collection method

In this research, collecting data and information related to the research questions was mostly done through field methods, and collecting data and information related to the research literature was done through library methods such as books, scientific magazines, etc., and then their content was analyzed.

6.5. Data collection instruments

The instrument of data collection in this research is realized questionnaire. With regard to the questionnaires of previous researches and with the help of university professors and experts a questionnaire consisting of 41 questions was prepared. The distribution of questions in this research was based on three selected ISOs. Of these questions 12 were related to the effect of ISO 9001 on sales performance, 14 were related to the effect of ISO 10002 on sales performance, and 15 were related to the effect of ISO 14001 on sales performance. This questionnaire was used to collect data for studying the effect of the three mentioned ISOs on the sales performance in 12 green-pipe

manufacturing companies in Isfahan. The questionnaire used in this research included two kinds of questions. The first group of questions was related to the personal information of the respondents such as sex, professional background, age, education, and type of employment; the second group of questions included the main questions of the research which were related to the principal subject of the research and planned based on the Likert spectrum.

6.6. Justifiability and durability of questionnaire

Theorists, university professors, and experts were asked to help examining the justifiability of the questionnaire and finally, by using their opinions, its justifiability was approved.

In the current research the main instrument of data measuring was questionnaire and its durability or creditability has been calculated by kronbach alpha method.

As for the questionnaire, in the preliminary distribution 30 questionnaires were distributed among the non-official, contractual, and official employees; then the whole questionnaire was assessed by kronbach alpha formula which equaled 0.992 and therefore it was approved to have a good durability.

$$\alpha = \frac{J}{J-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum r_i^2}{J^2} \right)$$

Thus we have,

$$\alpha = \frac{41}{40} \left(1 - \frac{41 \cdot 85}{400 \cdot 59} \right) = 0.992$$

7. Conclusions of the statistical data analysis

7.1. Single-variable t-Test

According to the information obtained from the first part of the questionnaire the average of the questions is 3.72. The maximum score related to presenting the information about the long-term change consequences is 4.02 and the minimum score related to the change planning, proportionate to the skills and specialties of the persons, is 3.45. Table1 contains the information obtained using the single-variable t-test.

Table 1: Single-variable t-test related to the ISO 9001

	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	T	P
ISO 9001	3.72	0.573	0.046	15.52	0.001

Accordingly, the t observed in $p \leq 0.05$ is meaningful; thus, the application of ISO 9001 certificate plays a role higher than the mean level in the management of sales and marketing.

Table 2: Single-variable t-Test related to ISO 10002

	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	t	P
ISO 10002	3.71	0.499	0.045	17.56	0.001

According to this table, the **t** observed in $p \leq 0.05$ is meaningful; thus, the application of ISO 10002 certificate plays a role higher than the mean level in the management of sales and marketing.

Table 3: Single-variable t-test related to the ISO 14001

	Average	Standard deviation	Standard error	t	p
ISO 14001	3.72	0.576	0.046	15.42	0.001

According to the table, the **t** observed in $p \leq 0.05$ is meaningful; thus, the application of ISO 14001 certificate plays a role higher than the mean level in the management of sales and marketing.

7.2. Variance analysis and pair comparison test

7.2.1. Analyzing variance related to ISO 9001

Table 4: Contains a summary of the conclusions obtained from the difference between the viewpoints of the staff about the role of using ISO 9001 certificate in sales and marketing management based on the demographic features.

	Squares average	F	P	Eta	Power
Sex	0.041	0.140	0.710	0.002	0.066
Working background	0.247	0.850	0.535	0.059	0.318
Education	0.921	3.17	0.018	0.136	0.802
Type of cooperation	0.182	0.628	0.536	0.015	0.152

According to Table 4 the **F** related to the educational degree is meaningful in $p \leq 0.05$ level;

thus, the viewpoint of the staff about using ISO 9001 depends on their educational degree.

Table 5: Pair comparison of score average difference of the staff viewpoints about the role of using ISO 9001 in the sales and marketing management based on the educational degree.

Educational degree	Average difference	Meaningfulness level
Under-diploma/diploma	-0.847	0.001
Under-diploma/ associate degree	-0.963	0.001
Under-diploma/ BA	-1.19	0.001
Under-diploma/ MA and higher	-1.10	0.001
Diploma/BA	-0.347	0.015
Associate degree/ BA	-0.232	0.046

According to Table 5 the differences between the score average of the staff having degrees of "under-diploma" versus "diploma", "diploma, associate degree, BA, MA and higher" versus "BA", and "associate degree" versus "BA" are meaningful.

7.2.2. Analyzing the variance related to the ISO 10002

Table 6: Shows a summary of the meaningfulness of difference between the staff viewpoints about the role of using ISO 10002 certificates in sales and marketing management based on the demographic features.

	Squares average	F	P	Eta	Power
Sex	0.017	0.100	0.753	0.001	0.061
Working background	0.370	2.18	0.053	0.139	0.743
Educational degree	1.17	6.90	0.001	0.254	0.992
Type of cooperation	0.297	1.75	0.180	0.041	0.357

According to Table 6 the **F** related to the educational degree is meaningful in $p \leq 0.05$ level. Therefore the difference between the staff

viewpoints about the questions related to the ISO 10002 depends on their educational degree.

Table 7: Pair comparison of the score average difference of the staff viewpoints about the role of using ISO 10002 in sales and marketing management based on educational degree.

Education	Average difference	Meaningfulness level
Under-diploma/ diploma	-0.783	0.001
Under-diploma/ associate degree	-0.958	0.001
Under-diploma/ BA	1.02	0.001
Under-diploma/ MA and higher	1.02	0.001
Diploma/ BA	-0.242	0.026
Diploma/ MA and higher	-0.246	0.039

Accordingly, the differences between the score average of the staff having degrees of "under-diploma" versus "diploma", "associate degree, BA, MA and higher, and diploma" versus "BA", and "diploma" versus "MA and higher" are meaningful.

7.2.3. Analyzing the variance related to the ISO 14001

Table 8: A summary of the meaningfulness of the difference between the staff viewpoints about the role of using ISO 14001 in the sales and marketing management based on the demographic features.

	Squares average	F	P	Eta	Power
Sex	0.000	0.002	0.966	0.000	0.050
Working background	1.15	1.15	0.337	0.079	0.432
Educational degree	8.08	8.08	0.001	0.285	0.997
Type of cooperation	1.71	1.71	0.186	0.041	0.351

According to Table 8 the **F** related to the educational degree is meaningful in $p \leq 0.05$ level. Therefore the difference between the staff

viewpoints about the role of using ISO 14001 in the sales and marketing management depends on their educational degrees.

Table 9: Pair comparison of the score average difference of the staff viewpoints about the role of using ISO 14001 in sales and marketing management based on the educational features.

Education	Average difference	Meaningfulness level
Under-diploma/ diploma	-1.18	0.001
Under-diploma/ associate degree	-1.30	0.001
Under-diploma/ BA	-1.40	0.001
Under-diploma/ MA and higher	-1.42	0.001

8. Conclusions analysis

8.1. Analyzing the first question

Regarding the information obtained from the table related to the first question of the research, the average of these questions is 3.72 which demonstrate the higher effect of average usage of ISO 9000 certificate on sales. The *t* observed in table 1 is accompanied with $p=0.01$; accordingly, the conclusions can be generalized to the whole society. 12 items of the questionnaires are related to the first question of the research. Among these 12 questions, the question "Can using the symbol of ISO 9001 on the product package help attracting more customers?" has got the highest score with average of 4.05. The lowest score is got by this question "Do the customers consider the ISO 9001 as a benchmark for their purchase?" The average of this question is 3.01. The remarkable point is that though this question has got the lowest score but, concerning the Likert spectrum, its 3.01 score is higher than the supposed average 3. So it can be admitted that from the viewpoint of HANGAM company's managers ISO 9001 is considered as a principal benchmark by their customers. In the first question of the research the only demographic feature that demonstrated meaningfulness is educational degree. The conclusions show that sex, working background, and type of cooperation couldn't influence the preferability of the viewpoints. In this step, education with 3.17 and $p=0.018$ has got such an effect that those persons with higher educational degrees have been more satisfied by the effect of using ISO 9001 on sales and have given better answers to the items of the first question.

8.2. Analyzing the second question

The information and data obtained from the second question show that in this step, similarly, ISO

10002 has been successful in improving the sales conditions. In this step, the scores average 3.71 is higher than the supposed average 3. Also in this step, $p=0.001$; thus, the conclusions can be generalized to the whole society. This step includes 14 question of the questionnaire among which the question "offering the guarantee for responding the customers, in case of dissatisfaction about a product, until achieving the customer's satisfaction" has got the highest score with the average of 3.98. As for the ISO 10002, the lowest average related to the question "has the usage of ISO 10002 got any effect on improving the responsibility against the claims?" is 2.47. For the ISO 10002, similarly, the only role-playing feature among the demographic features is educational degree. Thus HANGAM company hasn't considered any difference, regarding the suggestions, between male or female, working background, and or type of cooperation. Since $p < 0.001$, the conclusions can be generalized to the whole society.

According to the pair comparison of the conclusions obtained from the second question of the research, the higher the education level is, the higher level of satisfaction from ISO 10002 would be gained. Thus it can be demonstrated that the satisfaction of ISO 10002 has got a positive correlation with the education level.

8.3. Analyzing the third question

The third question of the research is related to the ISO 140001. In this step the scores average is 3.72. Regarding $p=0.001$, the conclusions obtained from this step, which includes 15 questions of the whole questionnaire, can be generalized to the whole society. In this section "using modern machineries to decrease the air pollution" has got the highest average 4.2. Among the questions, "using a recycling system according to the ISO 14001 standards" not only has got the lowest score with average of 2.89 but also is lower than the average level. Information

obtained from analyzing the variance of the third question shows that again the only factor influencing the satisfaction and the viewpoints about the effect of ISO 14001 on sales is education. Since $p=0.001$ in table8, only the factor of education has got a meaningful difference; however, using ISO doesn't consider any difference between male or female marketers, working background differences, and the type of cooperation. Accordingly, the staffs with higher educational degrees consider ISO as more effective on sales. Therefore, regarding all of the conclusions and averages obtained from this research, it can be concluded that the effects of ISO 9001, ISO 10002, and ISO 14001 certificates on sales and marketing of the products of HAMGAM manufacturing company are the same as each other and, meanwhile, higher than the supposed average level of Likert spectrum.

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