A Conceptual Model on Customers Lifestyles and Purchase From the Virtual Stores

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Abstract—Increasing development of Internet and its prominent role in human life has provided the companies with a vast numbers of new customers. One of the top issues in the field of marketing is to identify ways to establish links between companies and individual customers or, in other words, to identify customer behavior in an individual way and providing each customer with relevant service separately. Nevertheless, one of the effective factors in identifying customer behavior is to study their lifestyle. The present paper aims to examine the factors influencing purchase from virtual stores by investigating the relationship between customers’ lifestyle and the decision to purchase. As a result, this research proposed a conceptual model based on the technology acceptance model (TAM) and eight-category of VALS lifestyles for explaining how customers’ lifestyle influence their purchase intention from the virtual stores.

Keywords: Consumer Lifestyle; Virtual Store; Purchasing Decision; VALS Model.

I. INTRODUCTION

E-commerce has changed the function of business. The commercial operation through Internet and computer networks has led to a change in consumer behavior. Since the end of 1998, online retailing has become a big business [1]. However, e-commerce is still a new concept for many people. In the information age, conducting business activities through the Internet, especially for small and medium companies that want to compete with larger firms is an integral part of business planning of organization. One of the hottest areas of consumer marketing is to support communication between the company and individual customer at a time [2]. On the other hand, to predict the fact that whether specific products or services, advertising in a particular media and sales through special media are attractive for the target audience especially in the marketing industry, it is necessary to predict accurately marketing industry [3]. Therefore, marketers seek to identify factors affecting consumer purchasing behavior. One of these factors is lifestyle of online customers. The theory of life was emerged for the first time in the work of Max Weber. Weber considered lifestyle as a tool to identify the situation or identify differences between social groups. A similar approach can be seen in Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption, which is largely stimulated by interest in social prestige [4].

Appropriate design of virtual stores can emulate stores with specific products. In case merchants know their customers, so they can provide one by one marketing [5]. There is little empirical evidence to suggest that personalization increases the likelihood of consumers purchasing from online stores [6].

In this situation, few studies have been yet done on psychological criteria regarding Iranian online consumer behavior and on segmenting them. On the other hand, the general agreement on the purchase from virtual stores is different from the purchase from traditional retailers. There are few empirical studies that have focused on the impact of these differences [7]. Although the need to predict consumer behavior exists implicitly in all marketing efforts, to examine whether the specific products or services, advertising in a particular media and sales through social channels are attractive specifically for the intended audience or not, it is highly necessary to accurately predict the probable situation especially in the direct marketing industry [3].

After years of stagnation, Iranian virtual stores have been faced with a wide range of tastes and demands of online customers, and their success depends on the accountability to all the wide ranges of the customers. However, Iranian markets have not yet a clear plan to identify individual customers and to personalize their buying process. Thus, in the virtual world, some methods such as provision, distribution and mass marketing advertising are still used. In the current study we aimed to examine whether the lifestyle of the online customer can influence their purchasing behavior or not? To address this issue, then, the theoretical basics of lifestyle, purchasing decisions and its relevant different models are reviewed and the developed model for this study is described in the following sections.

II. RESEARCH THEORETICAL BASICS

A. Online Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is physical, emotional and subjective activities which people are involved with them at the time of...
Based on the VALS, lifestyle has a typology of eight categories to address people lifestyle in marketing. The VALS 2 instrument because it is a well-known model and used by many previous researches to address people lifestyle in marketing.

B. Lifestyle

Lifestyle theory was first emerged in the works of Max Weber [4]. The modern theory defines lifestyle as some patterns of people life [10]. To analyze lifestyle, a variety of instruments has been developed and is used such as geodemographic analysis, mind-oriented monitor system, VALS and VALS 2. In this research we focus on the VALS 2 instrument because it is a well-known model and used by many previous researches to address people lifestyle in marketing.

C. Eight styles of VALS 2

Based on the VALS, lifestyle has a typology of eight categories that include:

1) Innovators
   This group includes successful, active and experts who are usually responsible for the supervision and control over others. The need to respect among them is severe and they have many sources of information. This people demand growth, development, finding new things and satisfy themselves through various methods [11].

2) Thinkers
   Thinkers pay special respect for the power institutions and social practices but they are receptive to new ideas. Although their income allows them to have plenty of choices, thinkers are conservative and practical consumers. In purchasing, they are looking for durability, utility and value [12].

3) Achievers
   Consumers in this group are more active, have more information resources at their disposal and are seeking the support and appreciation of family due to success in their career and family issues. They have more tendency to their job and love to be in control of their lives and often are successful in this work [11].

4) Experiencers
   The experiencers are voracious consumers and spend relatively more of their income on fashion, entertainment and social relations. Their purchases reflect their veracity for having interesting and attractive things [12].

5) Believers
   Similar to thinkers, believers are motivated by ideals. They are conservative and traditional people with strong opinions on the basis of tradition, family proven rules, religion, society and country. As a consumer, believers are predictable, select familiar and established products and brands and are mainly loyal customers [12].

6) Strivers
   Consumers who belong to this group are seeking secure position in society. To achieve this status and progress to higher stages, they make choices. Strivers are those who look at others to figure out what to do [11].

7) Makers
   Similar to experiencers, makers are motivated by self-expression. They are suspicious and distrustful to new ideas and large enterprises including large businesses. They are reluctant and are offended to violate the personal rights. They are not impressed by material assets and follow practical and functional purposes. Since they prefer value to luxury, they prefer to buy simple products [12].

8) Survivor
   Survivors are cautious consumers. They represent a very small market for most products and services. They are loyal to their favorite brands, especially if they can buy them by a discount [12].

III. TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

The key objective of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is to follow the effects of external factors on beliefs, attitudes and intentions [13].

Davis [14] presented the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness as the most important individual beliefs about the use of information systems. Perceived usefulness means the extent to which the user believes that using a particular system can improve his work performance. Perceived ease of use means the extent to which the user expects that use of the system in question do not need efforts. According to the model, the two behavioral beliefs lead to his behavioral intention and actual behavior. Davis [13] found that perceived usefulness is a stronger predictor of behavioral intention in the use of information technology.

Fig 1. Technology Adoption Model [14]

A. Lifestyle and TAM

There has been recently a growing interest in the use of psychological characteristics as an explanatory tool in the literature to help us in understating how to use information technology (IT) [15]. It has been shown that individual characteristics provide grounds for technology users to behave in special conditions in a special way [16]. For example, the characteristic of openness to experience acts as a moderator of the impact of computer-based communications on group decision performance, and the features namely emotional stability and extraversion act as the moderator of the relationship between the path and regulation compliance. On the other words, those who take a low score in extraversion and emotional stability are more likely to have a positive attitude to supervision in their workshop [17].
While individual differences are considered as an important part of online shopping preferences change, to explain how individual differences (as lifestyle) can affect the attitude to do online purchasing from virtual stores, following assumptions are presented:

**Hypothesis 1:** VALS lifestyles have a significant positive impact on the ease of the purchase from virtual stores.

**Hypothesis 2:** VALS lifestyles have a significant positive impact on the perceived usefulness of the purchase from virtual stores.

**Hypothesis 3:** VALS lifestyles have a significant positive impact on the peers’ influence in the purchase from virtual stores.

The perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a person believes that by using a particular technology he can be free of physical and mental effort. The client thinks that thinks that the purchase from virtual stores is difficult is less likely to have a positive attitude about the purchase from virtual stores than those who believe that shopping from such virtual stores is convenient [6]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented.

**Hypothesis 4:** The perceived ease of use positively influence attitude toward purchase from virtual stores.

The purchase of virtual stores can be useful in terms of perceived benefits and advantages of online shopping to be defined. In addition to low prices, low cost of a data mining can help to understand the usefulness of the purchase of virtual stores, when compared with the purchase of the traditional shops or even when compared with other virtual stores.

Consumers have generally favorable attitudes toward products and services that they believe have the appropriate level of quality properties. Consumers also have a negative attitude toward brands that they feel they do not have the appropriate level of quality characteristics or attributes [6]. Therefore:

**Hypothesis 5:** The perceived usefulness of the purchase from virtual stores positively influence attitude toward purchase from virtual stores.

**Hypothesis 6:** The perceived usefulness of the purchase from virtual stores tends to have a significant positive impact on intention to purchase from virtual stores.

Many consumers purchase the products and services that are offered by their peers. Peer influence provides individual incentives and norms that encourage people to take specific action. This type of influence can easily affect the ease that a person feels in relation to the virtual store.

**Hypothesis 7:** Peers’ influence through the purchase from virtual stores has a significant positive impact on the purchase from virtual stores.

Attitudes conduct behavior by providing selective attention to the issue and subject in the context which is consistent with people’s attitudes. In the field of consumer behavior, attitude is intention to behave consistently in a favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to the products and services or business management methods. Therefore:

**Hypothesis 8:** Attitude towards the purchase from virtual stores has a significant positive impact on the purchase from virtual stores

Attitudes are defined as “positive or negative feelings of people about the target behavior”. In other words, if a person feels positive about a behavior, will have a rather powerful justification for that behavior, thus he probably will do that. Numerous studies have proven the importance of the impact of attitude on intention as well as the link between intentions and behavior. Based on these findings, this study suggests the hypothesis:

**Hypotheses 9:** Intention to purchase from virtual stores has a significant positive impact on the purchase from virtual stores.

The mail objective of the research is to investigate the consumer lifestyle effect on his/her purchase decision from virtual stores. In order to address this issue, VALS lifestyle has been reviewed and its eight different lifestyle has been described. Using the technology acceptance model, factors influencing the usage of online virtual stores were collected from related literature. Then considering different VALS lifestyle category and TAM model, the proposed conceptual model were developed. Based on this model the lifestyle of the consumer affects its Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and Perceived Peers’ Influence on the virtual stores. The next step is to test this model in different situation, different virtual stores and courtiers to check its validity and robustness. Comparing the results from different studies on this model can provide the virtual stores organizers with better understanding of their customers and help them to personalize their stores and offering for each costumer separately. This will lead to a good personal marketing plan and will increase the purchase from the virtual stores. Based on the theoretical literature and the results of previous research, the following conceptual model is suggested for the study the relationship between lifestyles and purchase from virtual stores.
REFERENCES


