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FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS' ACCEPTANCE OF INTERNET SERVICES IN IRAN

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the factors influencing customers' acceptance of internet services in sports electronic stores in Iran, Tehran Province. In this research, it will highlight the role of content marketing, trust, innovation, website design, ease of use, and evaluation of the company's internet services. In this way, managers can improve the acceptance of such services of the company and provide the basis for making profit and increasing their market share. This research is an applied research, in terms of the data collection method, it is a descriptive survey research and the data collection tool is a standard questionnaire. The population of this research includes managers and employees of selected sports equipment stores in Tehran, for statistical analysis. SPSS software is used for data analysis. The research finding showed that the variable of content marketing, trust, innovation, website design, ease of use, and attitude has a positive effect on company's internet services acceptance. The findings of the research may be used for customers' acceptance of internet services in sports equipment stores in Iran.

Keywords: *Content Marketing, Trust, Innovation, Website Design, Ease of Use, Internet Service Acceptance*

1. INTRODUCTION

With electronic communication, the world is transformed into a small and close virtual community, which is called the global village (Faiz et al., 2016). Significant advances in the field of information and communication technology in the last decade have caused transformation in many fields, including global trade, and as a result, the processes of many activities, including commercial, economic, banking, customs, etc., have undergone changes. One of the most important achievements of information technology in the economic field is electronic commerce, and the ease of access of people to the Internet has also provided a suitable platform for commercial and economic transactions through access to the virtual world (Heydarzadeh & Nikumaram, 2015).

Online and Internet technology applications and services have rapidly become essential in the daily lives of most people and have significantly affected every aspect of operations in organizations (Al-Rashdi et al., 2022). An online social network in the world has many positive aspects that increase people's quality of life, business profitability and government interaction with people. Successful implementation of information systems depends on their usability by potential customers. If users are not motivated to use technology, it will not be very profitable for the organization. Hence, it is necessary for companies to understand the main factors of acceptance of Internet services among their customers. Internet services are profitable for companies and customers. Although customers afraid of the risk of using this type of technology. Some customers feel that internet services will cause them to lose their liquidity. How to achieve this important result is vital for organizations. Information technology has caused the creation of new

jobs, new industries and successive creations and brought about major changes in the way of life. The closeness of the fascination of the people of the world to each other, the interaction of cultures, etc. are examples of these consequences. Electronic developments are the birth of global needs, and the world today needs media such as computers, ways such as the Internet, and exchanges such as electronic exchanges. Information technology has transformed the type and nature of markets and has created markets called Internet and virtual markets, which have a completely different nature from physical markets and the behavior of customers in them is different. Knowing the nature of these markets is necessary in order to develop better strategies to gain a competitive advantage (Domazet & Neogradi, 2019). Virtual and Internet markets are very efficient and low-cost tools for selling products, and companies that want to be successful in electronic marketing must know the characteristics of marketing in the electronic environment and act accordingly (Heidari and Yazdani, 1400). Therefore, the objectives of the research are to determine the effect of ease of use of website, website design, innovation, trust in technology, and content marketing on the acceptance of internet services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The increasing growth and expansion of information technology has created a revolution in the dimensions of human life and the performance of organizations (Sarkara and Chaohanb, 2021). The sports industry has also been greatly affected by information technology, and as a result, Iran's manufacturing companies rely on new technologies to a large extent in their activities.

The sports industry has also been greatly affected by information technology, and as a result, Iran's manufacturing companies use new information technologies to a large extent in their activities. One of the essential tools for the realization and expansion of e-commerce is the existence of electronic services that facilitate the operation and activities related to e-commerce along with financial and monetary systems. In fact, it can be said that the realization of the electronic financial system requires the implementation of electronic commerce in all its dimensions in businesses, especially companies in the field of selling sports equipment (Kim, 2018).

Dependence on oil income is one of the prominent features of Iran's economy, which has increased in the last three decades. Therefore, the importance of the sports industry and marketing capabilities can be pondered considering the opportunities and threats of the economic and legal environment, especially in the coming decades when oil facilities will be more limited. Today, most of the countries of the world, using the existing potentials in a tight competition, are seeking to take advantage of the economic, social, and cultural benefits, and especially to receive a greater share of income and increase the level of employment resulting from the sports industry in their country. Considering these benefits, the importance of attracting customers for the purpose of making money is felt more than ever. Therefore, competition in this field, like competition in all other important industries, is almost impossible without providing new methods and innovative ideas and technological to provide the necessary infrastructure for growth and innovation in all economic sectors (Bohalis, 2018).

The Internet is a developing technology that has provided a different environment for international marketing activities and the expansion of business relations, and therefore the evaluation of the effects of the Internet on companies active in international

markets is a growing part of the body of knowledge of marketing and management of international companies. The expansion and development of information technology in the world and its rapid entry into daily life has created new issues and necessities, and internet business has replaced traditional methods. With the advent of the Internet and when the first website was designed in 1991, businesses, especially their marketing department, underwent a lot of changes, and the impact of the Internet on business activities has occupied a large volume of marketing research literature.

The Internet has been identified as a growing technology that facilitates companies to develop new business relationships and capture opportunities in transnational markets. Internet marketing is the process of using the Internet to help companies attract new customers and maintain stable relationships with existing customers. The main goal of Internet marketing is to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products and services between buyers and sellers. In recent years, many researchers have suggested that the Internet has had a great impact on the internationalization and development of transnational activities of SMEs, and the advances made in the field of Internet marketing have become an alternative to traditional methods, and through this, small to medium-sized companies have been able to focus more have on global markets. Based on this, not only large and multinational companies that have enough capital for marketing activities can use Internet marketing capabilities for their international activities, but also companies with a small structure and little capital can benefit from this technology. According to Michael Porter, businesses should learn internet marketing and move towards online channels as soon as possible if they are looking for presence and survival in today's competitive markets. The use of the Internet and other digital media to support marketing activities by academics and marketers has greatly increased.

In practice, internet marketing includes the use of a website along with online promotional techniques, which has led to an increase in the effectiveness of internet marketing compared to traditional marketing, while internet technology affects all different departments of companies. Technology has affected marketing more and an increasing trend is observed in the change of traditional marketing patterns, which includes changes in communication, exchange and distribution of products and services. The capabilities of Internet marketing by strengthening advertising, sales, market research, services and procurement and by establishing direct connections with international customers and suppliers will lead to the growth of companies' export markets (Yousfi et al., 1400).

2.1. Previous Research

Based on a review of past literature related to sustainable competitive advantage and the concept of marketing, Naror and Slater (1990) consider the structure of marketing to be a combination of three distinct components: customer orientation, competition orientation, and inter-task coordination. In the conceptualization of Naror and Slater (1990), customer orientation refers to the company's sufficient understanding of its target customers in order to be able to create higher value for them continuously. They believe that customer-centricity is the heart of market-centricity and creating more value for customers requires continuous understanding of the entire customer value chain.

Customer orientation focuses on discovering and fulfilling the purchasing needs of customers while keeping their best interests in mind. Sellers who have been sales-oriented have prioritized short-term results such as sales over achieving short-term results such as

sales over long-term results such as loyalty. Kelly says that management can have a positive or negative effect on the customer orientation of salespeople by giving special gifts to salespeople, participating in decisions, etc. There is a positive relationship between customer orientation and job performance in various fields. can be investigated. Researchers have identified specific signs for customer-oriented salespeople, which include job satisfaction, organizational commitment, emotional intelligence, organizational culture, and motivation and sales skills (Pettijohn, 2002). Researchers have pointed out that role conflict and role ambiguity have a negative indirect effect on customer orientation through job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003). However, Strong and Harris in 2004 concluded that the variables that affect customer orientation behavior need more research.

Research conducted by Bashkoh Ajirlu et al. in 2021 titled the effect of e-commerce marketing capabilities and export experience on export performance: the mediating role of distribution efficiency. The statistical population of the study consists of the managers of Fars Industry, Mining and Trade Organization, which is a total of 318 people. Using Morgadan table, 175 people were selected based on simple random sampling method and questionnaires were distributed among them by referring to Fars Industry, Mining and Trade Organization. The instrument of data collection was a questionnaire, the face validity of the questionnaires was confirmed based on the opinions of professors and experts. Also, after the distribution and collection of data, the value of AVE and CR coefficients for all variables was higher than 0.5, indicating convergent validity and the output of the Fornell Tracker table indicated divergent validity. The results showed that e-commerce marketing capabilities, export experience and distribution efficiency have a positive effect on Saddarati's performance.

In 2018, Sharifi and Yazdani conducted their research on the effect of Internet marketing capabilities on the development of international markets of export companies. The current research, by conducting research on Iran's top export companies, examines the role of internet marketing capabilities on the growth of the international market, considering the role of export capabilities. The research method used is descriptive, survey and correlation. Also, the statistical population of the current research includes all employees, managers and relevant experts in the export sample companies of 2016. The results indicate that the internet marketing capability variable has a positive and significant effect on the availability of information and capabilities of the international network. Also, the results confirm the effect of international strategic orientation on international market capabilities and the effect of international market capabilities on the growth of international market development strategies. However, the effect of information availability on international strategic orientation and internet marketing capability on international strategic orientation was not reported to be positive and significant.

In 2022, Al-Rashdi et al. conducted research titled "Effective factors on the acceptance and impact of using online social networks among students of public universities in Abu Dhabi." This study proposed a developed model of the Unified Theory of Technology Acceptance and Use (UTAUT) and found that five variables play an important role in determining the performance impact of online social networks, which are: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitation conditions and actual use, in addition to the significant moderating role that service quality plays in the model, which remains significant in two relationships. The findings of this study can

provide important insights into how to more successfully incorporate online social networks to improve student performance and public university services, and how to encourage management to ensure greater adoption of new technologies and thus enable better learning outcomes, wider access to services. Therefore, according to the issues raised, it is assumed that:

H1: The ease of use of website has a positive effect on the acceptance of internet services

H2: Website design has a positive effect on the acceptance of internet services

H3: Innovation has a positive effect on the acceptance of internet services

H4: Trust in Technology has a positive effect on the acceptance of internet services

H5: Content marketing has a positive effect on the acceptance of internet services

According to the research background and assumptions, the conceptual model of the research is presented as follows:

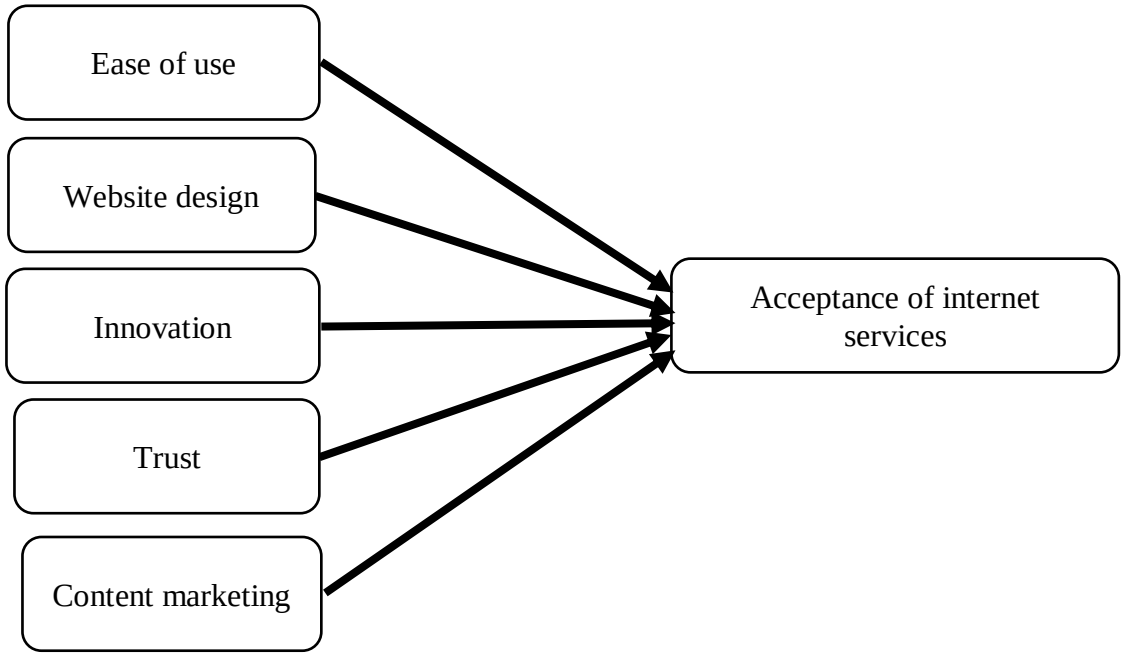


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The present research is descriptive and survey. The statistical population includes managers and employees of selected sports equipment stores in Tehran, which is a total of 370 people. The sample size was obtained through the Morgan and Karjesi table, according to which the sample size is equal to 223 of the managers and employees of the selected sports equipment stores. Sampling was done by available sampling method. In order to collect data and information for analysis, a standard questionnaire was used. To measure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire in this research, the opinions of professors and experts in this field were used. In this research, Cronbach's alpha method was used to calculate the internal consistency of the questions. For this purpose, 25 questionnaires were randomly distributed among the managers and experts of the

company, and after collecting the results, Cronbach's alpha was 0.76, which indicates that the questionnaire has good reliability. To test the hypotheses According to the characteristics of research variables and measurement method, Pearson's correlation coefficient test and regression test were used using software SPSS version 22 to measure the current status of research variables. The results of the research indicate the confirmation of the research hypotheses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research Results

4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics

The data analysis presented shows various characteristics of respondents based on gender, occupation, education, and work experience.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

	Amount	Frequency	Cumulative frequency percentage
Gender			
Woman	106	45.9	45.9
Man	117	54.1	100
Total	223	100	
Occupation			
Employees	80	34	22.1
Expert	51	22.1	18.9
Operations Manager	44	18.9	14
Mid-level manager	37	14	11
CEO	11	11	100
Total	223	100	
Education Level			
Diploma	31	9	9
Associate's degree	43	18.9	27.9
Bachelor	84	44.3	72.2
Master	51	16.4	88.6
PhD	14	11.4	100
Total	223	100	
Work Experience			
5 - 1 years	43	18.9	18.9
5 - 10 years	61	33.6	52.5
10 - 15 years	50	24.6	77.1
15 - 20 years	41	17.2	94.3
> 20 years	28	5.7	100
Total	223	100	

From a total of 223 respondents, 117 were men (54.1%) and 106 were women (45.9%). The cumulative frequency percentage shows that 100% of the respondents have been recorded by gender.

The distribution of jobs shows that most respondents are regular employees, totaling 80 people (34%), and experts totaling 51 people (22.1%). Operational managers number 44 people (18.9%), middle managers 37 people (14%), and CEOs total 11 people (11%). This data shows a variety of job levels within the organization, with the cumulative distribution reaching 100%.

Based on education levels, the majority of respondents hold a bachelor's degree, totaling 84 people (44.3%), followed by associate degrees totaling 43 people (18.9%) and master's degrees with 51 people (16.4%). Diplomas are held by only 31 people (9%), while those with a PhD number 14 people (11.4%). This cumulative frequency percentage also reaches 100%, indicating various levels of education among the respondents.

The work experience of respondents varies, with the majority having 5-10 years of experience, totaling 61 people (33.6%). Respondents with 10-15 years of work experience number 50 people (24.6%) and those with 1-5 years of experience total 43 people (18.9%). Work experience of 15-20 years is recorded by 41 people (17.2%), while those with more than 20 years of experience number 28 people (5.7%). This data shows a fairly even distribution of work experience among the respondents.

4.1.2. Validity and Reliability

For assessing the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, both convergent validity and divergent validity were evaluated using the PLS software. The criteria considered were the recommended values for Cronbach's alpha (0.7) (Cronbach, 1951), composite reliability (0.7) (Nunnally, 1978), and average variance extracted (0.5) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Comparison of the research findings against these predefined benchmarks indicated that all three criteria were adequately met. This affirmed the reliability and convergent validity of the questionnaire employed in this study (Ahmadian et al., 2023; Ahmadian and Abdlmaleki, 2018). Table 2 presents the results of the validity and reliability analysis.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Variables	Cronbach
The ease of use	0.809
Website design	0.730
Innovation	0.714
Trust in Technology	0.745
Content marketing	0.768
Acceptance of internet services	0.789

4.1.3. Normality Test

Table 3. Normality Test

Variables	Significance	Error value	Results
The ease of use	0.05	0.097	Normal
Website design	0.05	0.214	Normal
Innovation	0.05	0.282	Normal
Trust in Technology	0.05	0.214	Normal
Content marketing	0.05	0.267	Normal
Acceptance of internet services	0.05	0.094	Normal

4.1.4. Determination Test

Table 4. Determination Test

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Content marketing on internet service acceptance	.12[a]	.171	. 167	.098
Trust in technology on Internet service acceptance	.329[a]	.165	.16	1.043
Diffusion of innovation in Internet service adoption	.076[a]	.096	. 92	.824
Website design on internet service acceptance	.54[a]	.153	.147	.783
Ease of receiving Internet services	.68[a]	.231	.188	.92
Attitude towards receiving Internet services	.075[a]	.086	. 81	.833

Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination indicate that customer orientation, trust in technology, and other independent variables have varying influence on changes in internet service acceptance. Customer orientation explains 0.167% of the change, while trust in technology alone can explain 0.16% of the change, with a positive relationship where an increase in trust in technology increases the acceptance of internet services. Several other independent variables also showed contributions to changes in internet service acceptance with percentages of 0.096%, 0.147%, and 0.188%. However, there is one highly significant independent variable, which is able to explain up to 81% of changes in internet service acceptance.

4.1.5. Hypothesis Test

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Result

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Eror	Beta		
Content marketing on internet service acceptance	.902	.094	.145	9.428	.000
Trust in technology on Internet service acceptance	.902	.094	.414	9.428	.000
Diffusion of innovation in Internet service adoption	.087	.066	.074	11.34	.000
Website design on internet service acceptance	.158	.083	.131	10.607	.003
Ease of receiving Internet services	.166	.085	.213	8.62	.000
Attitude towards receiving Internet services	.094	.084	.087	9.22	.000

Table 5 presents the findings of our study, revealing the impact of various factors on the acceptance of internet services. The results indicate that content marketing and trust in technology both have a strong influence on acceptance. Content marketing, with a coefficient of 0.902 and a t-value of 9.428, significantly affects acceptance. Similarly, trust in technology, with the same coefficient and t-value, also plays a significant role in acceptance. On the other hand, the diffusion of innovation, while still significant, has a smaller influence compared to other variables. With a coefficient of 0.087 and a t-value of 11.34, it indicates a weaker impact on acceptance.

Website design, with a coefficient of 0.158 and a t-value of 10.607, demonstrates a fairly significant influence on acceptance. It is evident that a well-designed website contributes to the acceptance of internet services. Furthermore, the ease of accepting internet services is a crucial factor. With a coefficient of 0.166 and a t-value of 8.62, it significantly influences acceptance. Users find it important to have a seamless experience when using internet services. Lastly, user attitudes also play a role in acceptance, although to a lesser extent compared to other variables. With a coefficient of 0.094 and a t-value of 9.22, attitudes towards internet services are significant.

4.2. Discussion

According to the confirmation of the spread of innovation on the adoption of internet services, it is suggested that the production lines and the supply chain be designed and used with more detailed planning so that the organization can have the flexibility to produce products with newer features.

Innovation is a long-term investment and its benefits will not return to the organization in the short term. If the organization is not creative, it will take time for the employees to become familiar with new ways of thinking and to change the way of producing it.

Regarding the approval of content marketing on the acceptance of Internet services, it is suggested that the company identify its marketing capabilities in accordance with the

holistic market-oriented approach from the four dimensions of the customer, financial employees and organizational procedures. Because one of the big obstacles to achieve the desired effect in the marketing department is the lack of discretion and freedom of action.

It is suggested to give authority to the marketing department and its planners to provide and support the appropriate field for creative ideas and their implementation. Innovative attitude is a capability based on thinking. Considering the confirmation of the role of innovative attitude on the acceptance of Internet services, it is suggested that employees and trainers improve their performance with innovation and continuously improve productivity, and innovative attitude can be value-creating if it is combined with existing capacities. Also, it can be updated by removing weaknesses related to organizational innovation through continuous comparison of operational systems with global standards. Working methods - using technology to improve the quality of products - investing in new operating systems and teaching new technology to personnel to increase sales and achieve more market share and the ability to maintain and increase the main customers.

In future researches, researchers can empirically investigate factors influencing the acceptance of internet services by customers of selected sports stores in different manufacturing and service sectors as well as in different cities of Iran through other mediating and moderating variables such as environmental factors, market dynamics, etc. Check and test.

5. CONCLUSION

In this section, the author must conclude and provide research implications if any. The purpose of this research was to investigate the factors influencing customers' acceptance of internet services in sports electronic stores in Iran, Tehran Province. This research was an applied research, in terms of the data collection method, it was a descriptive survey research and the data collection tool was a standard questionnaire. The population of this research included managers and employees of selected sports equipment stores in Tehran, for statistical analysis. SPSS software was used for data analysis. The research finding showed that the variable of content marketing, trust, innovation, website design, ease of use, and attitude has a positive effect on company's internet services acceptance.

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