

## DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL FACTORS AND CUSTOMER ATTRACTION IN ELECTRONIC MARKETING OF THE SPORTS INDUSTRY

Zhale Jabbari<sup>1</sup>, Seyyed Mohammad Kashef<sup>2</sup>, and Sara Keshkar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Phd student of Sport Management, Urmia University, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Professor in Physical Education Management, Urmia University, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor in Sport Management, Physical Education and Sport Science Department, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Original scientific paper

### Abstract

*This study aimed to develop a model for demonstrating the relationship between cultural factors and customer attraction in e-marketing in the sports industry. The present study used mixed strategy; it was a fundamental research in qualitative phase and applied research in quantitative phase. The statistical population in the qualitative phase included all sports product vendors selling their products electronically and the professors specialized in the field of sports marketing. The population in the quantitative phase included all online users of sports products and random sampling was done in this phase. Data analysis was done using the grounded theory in the qualitative phase; Pearson correlation test and structural equation modeling were used to analyze the data for inferential statistics. The results showed 10 cultural components including attention to language, traditions, buyer behavior, symbols, economic status, average education of society, age and gender, attention to religions, lifestyle and employment for cultural factors associated with customer attraction in e-marketing of sports industry and purchase intention of online users of sports products. Moreover, there was a positive and significant relationship between all cultural factors and loyalty and trust of online users of sport products as well as attraction of online users of sport products, except that there was no significant relationship between economic status and trust of online users of sports products. Finally, the model fitting confirmed the effect of cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing on attraction of online users of sports products.*

**Key words:** cultural factors, customer attraction, e-marketing, sports industry.

### Introduction

Currently, the Internet is an important commercial factor which has grown faster than any other communication technology and has revolutionized global markets more than other media technologies. Electronic marketing is part of e-commerce (Heydari & Sharifian, 2013). Electronic marketing technologies go beyond internet advertising and include all customer relationship management activities, sales activities, after sales services, and marketing research (Keshkar et al., 2019). Electronic marketing can create value through two ways: first by establishing close links with business processes, second by allowing direct access of customers to resources (El-Gohary, 2012). The digital age has created opportunities and tensions in business relationships. By identifying and evaluating opportunities and tensions in developing business relationships, business performance is improved and value added is created (Ehret et al., 2013). Because effective and efficient implementation of electronic marketing requires attention to various internal and external dimensions of the organization (Šerić & Ljubica, 2018). Electronic marketing is not just the design of a website or the sending of SMS to customers, but also many factors are involved in implementation of electronic marketing process; ignoring each factor leads to failure in attracting customers and meeting the marketing goals of the organization (Stefko et al., 2015; Gerrikagoitia et

al. 2015). Therefore, not only recognizing the obvious needs of customers, but also anticipating, determining and directing the hidden needs of customers, designing and implementing service providing plans to meet these needs to attract customers are the cornerstones of any activity in the organization (Curasi & Kennedy, 2002). In this context, more customer interactions through social media and the Internet can attract more customers, because if social media is properly used, they are effective in marketing and can be effective in attracting customers to an organization (Manoli, 2018). Because social media has a great influence on people's decision making by providing more and better information about products (Hagley et al., 2018). Given that it is essential for every industry to be aware of the needs, attitudes and beliefs of consumers, these contexts help companies to formulate their marketing strategies, in other words, the better the marketers understand consumer behaviour, the better they can formulate marketing strategies (Abbot, 2014). For this reason, marketers tend to design their websites considering customer needs and customer perspectives to attract customers to visit their website and purchase their products (Nisaret al., 2018). Many studies are intended to identify factors which can affect purchase behavior of online users (Shin et al., 2013). Since there are indicators related to belonging to a social class and group,

lifestyle and personality traits, behavioral indicators, expectations of customer groups and their beliefs and norms in the social and cultural environment (Homburg, Wieseke & Bornemann, 2009), thus people in the field of marketing and, more generally, in the field of business, must always be careful that they do not ignore or underestimate the role that culture can play in the behavior of consumers in their activities (Hajli, 2018). It is therefore very important for marketers to pay special attention to persuasive nature of the culture of each region before conducting any marketing activity in the region and to conduct studies in that regard (Aria, 2015). Cultural differences can affect consumer behavior in sports or any other industry. Sport consumer behavior is the behavior of consumers related to products and services provided in a particular sport and heavily influenced by cultural differences. In fact, culture, as one of the most complex concepts in human life, plays a special role in sports marketing (Keshkar et al., 2019). Some scholars believe that the effect of culture on consumer behavior is evident in online shopping. Cultural values are effective on consumer motivation, attitude toward choice, intentions and behavior. In addition, it seems that dimensions of culture also affect consumer willingness to trust in online transactions (al-Qudah & Ahmed, 2013).

In this regard, Durmaz (2014) examined the effect of cultural factors on consumer purchase behavior in Turkey and showed that the most important effective factors are culture and tradition, followed by occupation and occupational social groups, the environment and friends. Moreover, Schnalke et al. (2014) examined the effect of culture on marketing communications and showed that vital factors for marketing communications include language, value system, religion, education level, attitude towards time, as well as marketing communication styles and marketing messages.

Culture has an influential and changing effect on each of the national and international markets (Habibi, 2013). One of the functions of culture is to provide a large selective display screen between the individual and the outside world. In fact, culture determines what we can be attracted to and what to ignore (Komlodi&Karoly, 2010). One of the important features of the habit and type of people's attitude is to choose a style and lifestyle; social classes formed in a country are influenced by habits of the people of that country and each of these habits can influence the choice of the type of products and services (Hosseini, 2012). Moreover, assessment of consumer culture has a great effect on quality of Internet services. For example, individualism and collectivism can be seen as a significant adjustment between the quality of service and customer satisfaction in their online shopping (Hsuet al., 2014). On the other hand, electronic marketing research has focused on customer purchasing decisions; the results indicate that understanding the different modes of online advertising and product sales skills directly affects buyer purchasing intention, which can potentially

transform potential customers to loyal customers. Finally, it can be argued that the main purpose of websites is to attract online users, to communicate with target markets, and also to represent brand of the organization or company. Moreover, online sales of sports products is an introduction to selling products and services and making money is another achievement of the Internet and its content (Kriemadis et al., 2010). It is very important to understand the factors which encourage sports customers to buy from a channel versus another channel and cultural factors can also play an important role in this (al-Qudah & Ahmed, 2013). Accordingly, it is essential to consider cultural factors in e-marketing of sports products; hence, the present study tends to highlight culture and determine its factors and develop a proper model to show the relationship between cultural factors and customer attraction in e-marketing in the sports industry. The main question is: how is the relationship between cultural factors and customer attraction in e-marketing in the sports industry?

### Materials and methods

The present study was fundamental in terms of objective. The present study had an exploratory nature, since it tended to identify and develop a model of the relationship between cultural factors and customer attraction in e-marketing in the sports industry. In terms of strategy, it was a hybrid research (qualitative and quantitative). Qualitative data was obtained by grounded theory. The data was coded using Strauss and Corbin technique. Output of the qualitative phase was a conceptual model of the relationship between cultural factors and customer attraction in electronic marketing in the sports industry. In the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was first developed based on the conceptual model derived from the qualitative phase. Formal validity, content validity and validity of the constructs were confirmed by experts and factor analysis was done. Moreover, its reliability was examined by a pilot study and by calculating Cronbach's alpha and then it was studied and tested for the population. This study was a fundamental research in the qualitative phase and applied research in the quantitative phase.

Statistical population of this study involved two phases; the qualitative phase included sports product vendors who sold their products electronically, and sports marketing experts who were the same as professors specializing in sports marketing. For sampling at this phase, interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The statistical population in the quantitative phase included all online users of sports products who completed a researcher-made questionnaire developed in the qualitative phase. Based on the Morgan table for an infinite population and higher than 100 thousand people, at least 384 people were selected as statistical sample. By studying the theoretical background and reviewing the literature, primary questions of the interview were developed.

Initial information was obtained by visiting the websites selling sports products and conducting interviews with online vendors and sports marketing experts in this regard. Finally, the results of these interviews were used to develop a questionnaire. Validity and reliability of the questionnaire were confirmed by using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

By determining the variables and developing the conceptual model derived from the qualitative phase, the model was examined in the quantitative phase and the questionnaire was developed based on axial encoding. To determine content validity, the questionnaires were distributed among 15 faculty members and experts in order to present their comments regarding: formulation of questions, the number of questions, coordination of choices with questions, coordination of questions with objectives of the study, removal or addition of questions and other issues. After the return of questionnaires, comments and suggestions, the questionnaire was modified and eventually, the final questionnaire was developed according to supervisors and consultants. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine construct validity of the questionnaire. In the quantitative phase, 30 questionnaires were distributed and collected to calculate reliability of the instrument; then,

reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha. Statistical descriptive methods such as tables of frequency and mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and skewness and elongation were used to evaluate normal distribution of data. Structural equations modelling was used to test hypotheses by using LISREL and SPSS software.

**Results**

Data derived from the interviews was encoded by grounded theory through open encoding, axial encoding and selective encoding. Open encoding of all interviews resulted in 132 open codes; the common codes were removed and the number of open codes was reduced to 45 unique codes. Axial encoding led to groups and categories; all similar codes were placed in their special group. At this stage, 738 open codes extracted from interviews were transformed to 50 axial codes. The axial codes were analysed and reviewed; then, 12 codes related to female management barriers were identified. The conceptual model was developed by determining and grouping axial codes based on theoretical studies and field notes and interviews conducted and their relationship with axial phenomenon. The model is shown in the figure.

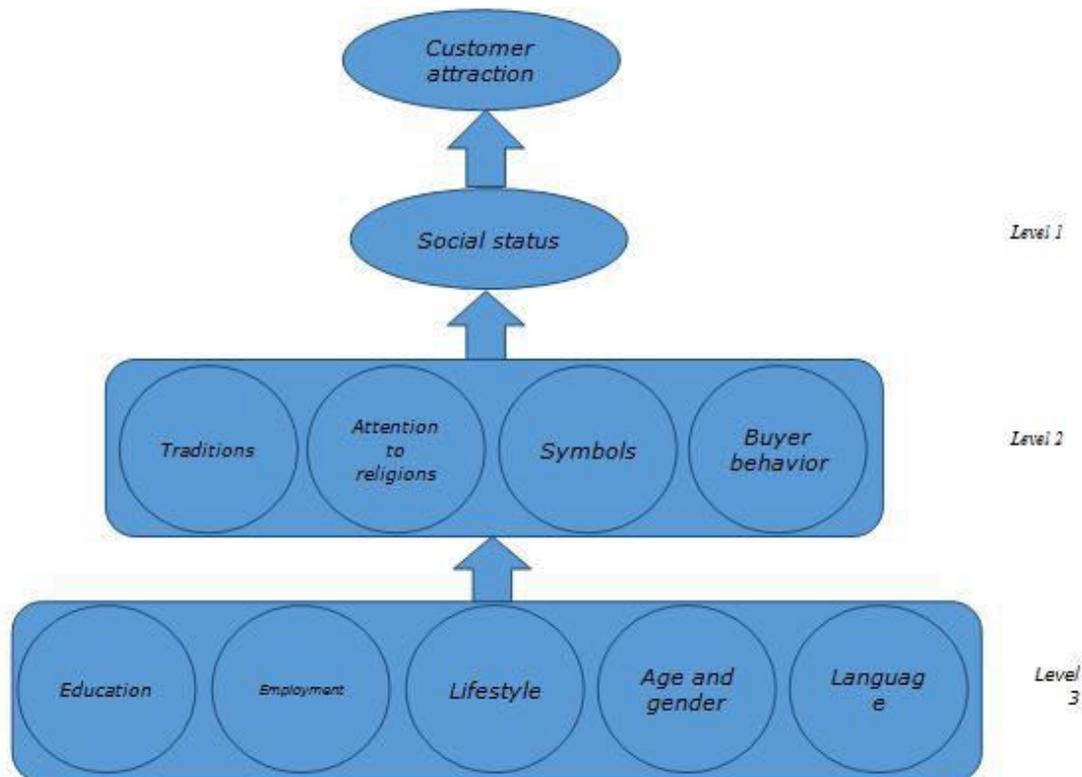


Figure 1. Model of effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing.

Considering the main objective of this study which is to model effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing, the model was developed and extracted based on data analysis results and literature review. This model was developed in three levels. The first level involved effective

individual factors on customer attraction, the second level involved effective social factors and the third level involved economic status. Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics related to effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics related to effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing.

Statistics Variable	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
Language	3.35	0.62	1.00	5.00
Traditions	3.27	0.45	1.00	5.00
Buyer behavior	3.94	0.46	1.00	5.00
Symbols	3.33	0.51	1.00	5.00
Economic status	3.89	0.38	1.00	5.00
Education	3.30	0.41	1.00	5.00
Age and gender	3.73	0.55	1.00	5.00
Attention to religions	3.26	0.53	1.00	5.00
Lifestyle	3.18	0.61	1.00	5.00
Employment	3.89	0.47	1.00	5.00

According to Table 1, among components of effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing, the highest mean was related to buyer behaviour (3.94±0.46).

Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics related to customer attraction.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics related to customer attraction.

Statistics Variable	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
Purchase intention	3.35	0.62	1.00	5.00
Loyalty	3.27	0.45	1.00	5.00
Trust	3.94	0.46	1.00	5.00
Attraction	3.33	0.51	1.00	5.00

According to Table 2, among components of effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing, the highest mean was related to buyer behaviour (3.94±0.46).

To determine normal distribution of variables, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S) was used; all distributions were normal statistically (P≥0.05).

Since the variables were normal, Pearson test was used to examine effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing and attraction of internet users of sports products. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient.

	Attraction of online users of sports products		
	N	r	p-value
Language	468	0.57	0.01
Traditions	468	0.46	0.01
Buyer behaviors	468	0.38	0.01
Symbols	468	0.34	0.01
Economic status	468	0.28	0.01
Education	468	0.31	0.01
Age and gender	468	0.53	0.01
Attention to religions	468	0.49	0.01
Lifestyle	468	0.23	0.01
Employment	468	0.21	0.01

According to Table 6, a positive and significant relationship was found between language and online user attraction (r468=0.57; p=0.01), traditions and online user attraction (r468=0.46; p=0.01), buyer behaviour and online user attraction (r468=0.38; p=0.01), symbols and online user attraction (r468=0.34; p=0.01), economic status and online user attraction (r468=0.28; p=0.01), education and online user

attraction (r468=0.31; p=0.01), age and gender and online user attraction (r468=0.53; p=0.01), attention to religions and online user attraction (r468=0.49; p=0.01), lifestyle and online user attraction (r468=0.23; p=0.01), employment and online user attraction (r468=0.21; p=0.01). Structural equations modelling was used to examine the effect of cultural factors on customer attraction.

Table 4. Standardized regression coefficients and t-values of the model.

	Path	Factor load	t-value	p-value
Cultural factors	→ Language	0.584	-	-
	→ Traditions	0.652	6.389	0.001
	→ Buyer behavior	0.662	6.663	0.001
	→ Symbols	0.569	5.978	0.001
	→ Economic status	0.789	7.526	0.001
	→ Education	0.699	6.919	0.001
	→ Age and gender	0.706	6.966	0.001
	→ Attention to religion	0.782	7.433	0.001
	→ Lifestyle	0.647	6.551	0.001
	→ Employment	0.636	6.475	0.001
Customer attraction	→ Purchase intention	0.767	-	-
	→ Loyalty	0.805	9.968	0.001
	→ Trust	0.858	10.315	0.001

Table 5. Effect of cultural factors on customer attraction.

	Path		Factor load	t-value	p-value
Cultural factors	→	Customer attraction	0.554	5.179	0.001

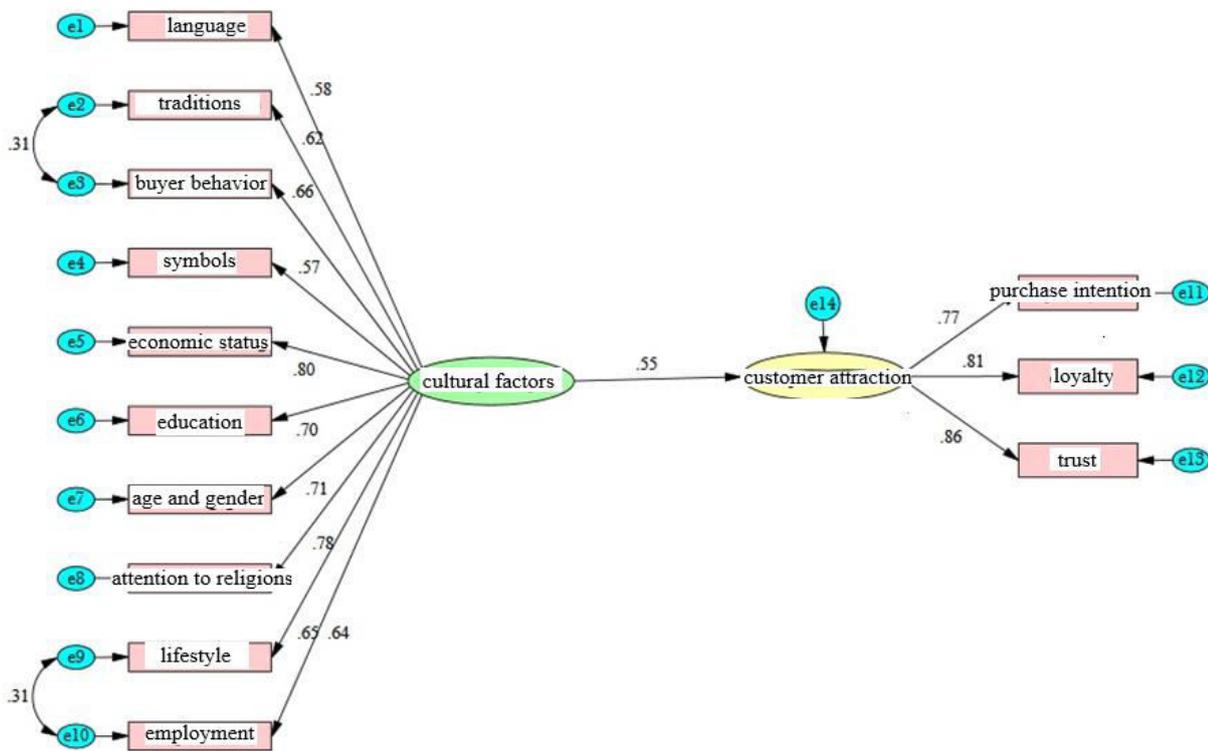


Figure 2. The model based on standardized regression coefficients.

Based on findings of structural equation modelling listed in Table 5, all factor loads (standardized regression coefficients) and t-values were acceptable ( $p < 0.05$ ); these indexes show that the observed variables well reflect the latent variables (cultural factors and customer attraction).

The effect of cultural factors was measured on customer attraction.

Based on the findings listed in Table 5, cultural factors have a positive and significant effect on customer attraction ( $p = 0.001$ ;  $t = 5.179$ ;  $\beta = 0.554$ ).

Table 6. fit indexes of the model (effect of cultural factors on customer attraction).

Fit index	Acceptable	Value	Description
Chi-square	-	160.564	-
Degree of freedom	-	62	-
$\chi^2/df$	<5	2.590	Acceptable
GFI	>0.9	0.901	Acceptable
AGFI	>0.8	0.843	Acceptable
RMSEA	<0.1	0.081	Acceptable
RMR	<0.05	0.027	Acceptable
CFI	>0.9	0.941	Acceptable
NFI	>0.9	0.903	Acceptable
IFI	>0.9	0.742	Acceptable

Table 6 reports the fit indexes. Goodness of fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) as the main indexes of fit were higher than 0.9, which indicate good fit of the model. Moreover, other fit indexes (IFI, NFI and AGFI) were acceptable.

Based on root mean squared residuals (RMR=0.027) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA=0.081), the model was well fitted.

### Discussion and conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and theoretical literature, the suggested model of effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing in the sports industry was developed in three levels. The first level involved effective individual factors on customer attraction, the second level involved effective social factors and the third level involved economic status. In fact, it seems that individual, social and economic factors are involved in purchasing a product. For individual factors, the factors such as language, age and gender, lifestyle, employment and education are considered to which planners should pay attention. Social level involves buyer behaviour, symbols, attention to religion and traditions, which are actually common among people of a society and should be considered by marketers.

Finally, note that economic status of the society can play a more deterministic role, because a product cannot be purchased if economic status does not allow even if individual and social factors agree with a special product. Therefore, it is better to have price diversity in sports products in terms of economics and income to cover all social levels of the society.

The results showed a positive and significant relationship between language ( $r_{468}=0.57$ ), traditions ( $r_{468}=0.46$ ), buyer behaviour ( $r_{468}=0.38$ ), symbols ( $r_{468}=0.34$ ), economic status ( $r_{468}=0.28$ ), education ( $r_{468}=0.31$ ), age and gender ( $r_{468}=0.53$ ), attention to religions ( $r_{468}=0.49$ ), lifestyle ( $r_{468}=0.23$ ), and employment ( $r_{468}=0.21$ ) and online user attraction ( $p=0.01$ ). This is consistent with Moradnejad (2016), Haghghi et al (2016), Rahimnia and Goldust (2015), Karimian (2012) and Durmaz (2014). Moradinejad (2016) found that cultural factors are one of the effective factors on business recession of cooperations located in the industrial town of Ilam. Haghghi et al (2016) also found a significant relationship between cultural values and impulse buying behavior of customers. Also, Rahimnia and Goldust (2015) also found that culture and cultural factors such as the level of life and consumption patterns of society, needs, customs and beliefs, social and cultural values of advertising programs and views of consumers about them have an unparalleled role in consumer behavior. Karimian (2012) also showed the effect of cultural factors, particularly the Islamic rules governing consumption patterns. Durmaz (2014) also considers culture and tradition as the most important effective factors on behavior of Turkish consumers. Successful organizations in the world do not just focus on advertising about excelling in the field of competition, but they focus on pragmatism to achieve full customer satisfaction.

Success in providing customer service requires full commitment to the customer. Research shows that satisfied customers spread their satisfaction among four to seven people, but dissatisfied customers spread their dissatisfaction among nine and eleven people. Therefore, when dealing with a customer,

organizations should try to collect and record information about the customer. This information will be useful for assessing customer needs. With this interpretation, it seems that acquisition of information about the kind of customer culture can be very valuable to marketers, because they can predict some consumer behaviors and direct those behaviors to the behaviour desired by marketers, which is to buy products and services. According to the results of structural equation modelling, cultural factors have a positive and significant effect on customer attraction ( $p=0.001$ ;  $t=5.179$ ;  $\beta=0.554$ ). Moreover, all factor loads (standardized regression coefficients) and t-values were acceptable and the observed variables well reflected the latent variables (cultural factors and customer attraction). Finally, goodness of fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) as the main indexes of fit were higher than 0.9, which indicate good fit of the model. According to the result regarding the effectiveness of cultural factors on online user attraction, it is required to determine the extent and type of the effect of each factor, which can be easily found in the model developed. In fact, this has been studied clearly in the model of the effective cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing of sports products. Studies have shown the effects of cultural factors on customer attraction in e-marketing of sports products. For example in the model developed, economic factors and attention to religion have the highest factor load; in general, cultural factors can have 55% effect on customer attraction. Since the model developed is fitted enough, it can provide proper explanations for e-marketers of sports products and help them succeed in their workplace. Thus, e-marketers of sports products are recommended to focus on effective cultural factors on customer attraction and take advantage of them.

---

## References

- Abbott, A. (2014). Incorporating New Areas of Business into Business Language Studies: Social Media Marketing. *Global Business Languages*, 19(1), 6.
- Al-Qudah, O.M.A., & Ahmad, K. (2013). A review of cultural values impact on consumers' intention in the context of online shopping. *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology*, 6(23), 4438-4444.
- Aria, A. (2015). Effect of culture on marketing. *Marketing, branding, advertising and sales consulting and training center*, 4(5), 45-60.
- Durmaz, A.P. (2014). The Influence of cultural factors on consumer buying behaviour and an application in Turkey. *Global Journal of Management And Business Research*.
- Ehret, M., Kashyap, V. & Wirtz, J. (2013). Business model impact on business markets and opportunities for marketing research. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 42(5), 649-655.
- El-Gohary, H. (2012). Factors affecting E-Marketing adoption and implementation in tourism firms: An empirical investigation of Egyptian small tourism organisations. *Tourism management*, 33(5), 1256-1269.
- Folkman Curasi, C., & Norman Kennedy, K. (2002). From prisoners to apostles: a typology of repeat buyers and loyal customers in service businesses. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 16(4), 322-341.
- Gerrikagoitia, J.K., Castander, I., Rebón, F., & Alzua-Sorzabal, A. (2015). New trends of Intelligent E-Marketing based on Web Mining for e-shops. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 75-83.
- Hajli, N. (2018). Ethical environment in the online communities by information credibility: a social media perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149(4), 799-810.
- Haghghi, M., Karami, M., Hamidi Koulai, A., & Maleki, M.M. (2016). The relationship between cultural values and impulse buying behavior of iranian consumers. *Business Management*, 11(28), 301-316.
- Hagley, G.W., Mills, P.D., Shiner, B., & Hemphill, R.R. (2018). An analysis of adverse events in the rehabilitation department: Using the Veterans Affairs root cause analysis system. *Physical therapy*, 98(4),

223-230.

- Heydari, L., & Sharifian, I. (2013). Comparison of web-based marketing of Iranian, British and Greek soccer clubs. *sports management studies*, 22(6), 131-146.
- Homburg, C., Wieseke, J., & Bornemann, T. (2009). Implementing the marketing concept at the employee-customer interface: the role of customer need knowledge. *Journal of marketing*, 73(4), 64-81.
- Hosseini, M. (2012). *International marketing*. Tehran: Payam Nour University.
- Hsu, M.H., Chuang, L.W., & Hsu, C.S. (2014). Understanding online shopping intention: the roles of four types of trust and their antecedents. *Internet Research*, 24(3), 332-352.
- Karimian, M. T. (2012). The role of culture in the field of international marketing activities. *Management and entrepreneurship 1st international conference*. Tehran: Development Conference Center of Iran.
- Keshkar, S., Lawrence, I., Dodds, M., et al. (2018). The Role of Culture in Sports Sponsorship: an Update. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 7(1).
- Komlodi, A., & Hercegfi, K. (2010, April). Exploring cultural differences in information behavior applying psychophysiological methods. *CHI'10 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, 4153-4158.
- Kriemadis, T., Terzoudis, C., & Kartakoullis, N. (2010). Internet marketing in football clubs: A comparison between English and Greek websites. *Soccer & Society*, 11(3), 291-307.
- Manoli, A.E. (2018). Sport marketing's past, present and future; an introduction to the special issue on contemporary issues in sports marketing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 26(1), 1-5.
- Moradnejad, H. (2016). Identifying and prioritizing the effective factors on recession of cooperative businesses located in industrial town of Ilam. *Cooperation and agriculture*, 19(5), 87-113.
- Nisar, T.M., Prabhakar, G., & Patil, P.P. (2018). Sports clubs' use of social media to increase spectator interest. *International Journal of Information Management*, 43, 188-195.
- Rahimnia, F., & Goldust Souraki, S. (2015). Effect of culture on international marketing through consumer behavior. *Management and entrepreneurship 1st international conference*. Tehran: Development Conference Center of Iran.
- Schnalke, M., & Mason, R.B. (2014). The influence of culture marketing communications: critical cultural factors influencing South African and German businesses. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 12(1), 172-180.
- Šerić, N., & Ljubica, J. (2018). *Market Research Methods in the Sports Industry*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Shin, J.I., Chung, K.H., Oh, J.S., & Lee, C.W. (2013). The effect of site quality on repurchase intention in Internet shopping through mediating variables: The case of university students in South Korea. *International Journal of Information Management*, 33(3), 453-463.
- Štefko, R., Fedorko, R., & Bačík, R. (2015). The role of e-marketing tools in constructing the image of a higher education institution. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 431-438.

---

Received: October 10, 2019

Accepted: December 24, 2019

Corresponding Author:

Seyyed Mohammad Kashef

Professor in Physical Education Management

School of Physical Education Urmia University, Iran

E-mail: sm.kashef@iran.ir