

## Gender Differences and E-shopping Motives in Iran

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**Abstract:** Shopping is a daily affair needing significant time and energy. Researches have shown that shopping motives affect individuals' shopping behaviors. Gender is a factor, which can bring-about different degrees of importance to shopping motives. In this survey, correlation between shopping motives, apparent site attractions, type of goods and gender were investigated. This study tests functional motives as facilitators and socio-emotional motives as barriers to electronic shopping.

**Key words:** Electronic Shopping • Shopping Motives • Functional Motives • Socio-emotional Motives • Identity Motives • Gender

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### INTRODUCTION

Today, application of electronic facilities in daily affairs has turned to a necessity than ever before. This is partly due to full development of Information Technology on one side and metropolitan problems such as traffic, air pollution, population etc. on the other. Shopping is one of those daily affairs. Researches have shown that three shopping motives affect individuals' shopping behaviors. Those motives are similarly defined for "electronic e-shopping" and "physical or conventional shopping". But their different degrees of existence in different people make them to either prefer electronic or physical shopping. Therefore, the present research tries to investigate gender differences and Electronic Shopping Motives in Iranian shoppers and e-commerce sites.

**General Review:** Statistics indicate that women psychologically illustrate more intentions toward shopping than men. This is especially true for shopping non-daily goods [1]. Advertising experts in some countries such as England are considered to be the enemy of men. Furthermore, the shopping behavior of men and women are not similar.

Men shop fast, consider all product substitutes and, in general, purchase higher quality goods. Nevertheless, women are slow and careful shoppers. They have more future-oriented attitude and purchase cheaper goods [2]. But in the case of electronic shopping, researches have shown that there is a contradiction in American shoppers since men prefer internet shopping more than women [3]. Recent researches in Iran also illustrate that most of internet shoppers are young men with academic education

and their electronic shopping is aimed at time-saving [4]. Some reasons for the inclination of men to electronic shopping are Men have more access to computer and use it more [5-7], women have no inclination to use computer [5, 7]. Gender differences in the patterns of Internet usage: Women use internet for interpersonal communications and educational assistance while men use it for entertainment and leisure [5,8-9] and finally Virtual space, A manly space: Most of virtual space rules are made by men and women have weaker role in this case. But the new research believes this trend will improve.

**Improvement of Previous Trend and Attaching Women to IT and Internet:** Today, women use available technology more than before. In the developed societies, they shop electronically more than men and control their lives by means of virtual equipment. Also, women affect electronic shopping in two aspects within their roles:

**Role of Women in Family:** Women have fundamental roles within the family in respect to training children; therefore, they have the biggest impact on increasing the penetration of IT and internet into the families.

**Role of Women in Shopping:** Women are either definite or effective decision-makers in almost all commercial or consumer shopping activities. In addition, men and women do not communicate in the same way and they do not purchase by the same means. Men only think of completing a business while women consider effective communications as well. So they do not form a niche market but a sustainable one [10].

Table 1: Results of earlier researches

Researches	Results
Van slyke <i>et al.</i> (2002)	gender differences in Perceptions of internet shopping
Dittmar <i>et al.</i> (2004)	gender differences in internet shopping Incentives
Garbanio <i>et al.</i> (2004)	gender differences in perceived risk and friend recommendation
UN report (2005)	gender differences in access and usage of computer and internet
Bananni <i>et al.</i> (2005)	gender differences in perceptions of site design and its satisfaction

In fact, it seems business success will be more probable if the target market is defined on the basis of women. Moreover, with a view to the increasing contribution of women in IT and internet and, in general, their shopping inclination, the investigation of gender differences as an effective shopping factor for people and particularly women as a sustainable market seems necessary.

**Gender Differences in Electronic Shopping:** There are many studies about gender, IT and internet. Each of them studies an aspect of technology, especially internet. There are tangible differences between men and women in most of them. For example, in the case of electronic shopping issues such as perceptions toward this innovation, perceived risk of internet shopping [11], website satisfaction and design [12], shopping incentives [13] that are indicated in Table1. Therefore, these differences might bring-about an interpretation on different inclination and electronic shopping behavior of men and women.

**Research Model:** The prepared research model has been acquired from the research model based on Dittmar *et al.* [13] that 3 groups of Shopping Motives categorized as following:

- Functional Motives: Include economic concerns, saving time and efficient goal of shopping.
- Socio-Emotional Motives: Include emotional involvement and social interaction. They illustrate that people consider shopping as a "Social Activity" and pay attention to its "Social Involvement" aspect.
- Identity Motives: Includes search for ideal self and social image. Every person has an ideal image of him/herself that tries to reach it during him/her life. By purchasing luxurious goods, they feel they are not that much far from their ideal self and others see them just like they want.

Paying attention to this model reveals that "Gender" is studied as a major factor affecting "Shopping Motives" and it is predicted that it will lead to a partial difference of

the three types of motives including functional, socio-emotional and identity for men and women. Moreover people may select one type of shopping (either electronic or traditional) based on this difference. It is necessary to mention that "Age", "Educations", "Computer knowledge" and "Access to Internet" are moderating Variables of this correlation (shown by dotted arrows).

### Research Assumptions and Question

- Functional motives are more important to men than women.
- Socio-emotional motives are more important to women than men.
- Identity motives are more important to women than men.
- Functional motives are facilitator of internet shopping.
- Socio-emotional motives are the barrier of the internet shopping.
- Apparent Site Attractions are more important to women than men.

The research tries to find an answer to a secondary question: Is there any correlation between type of goods and Gender in internet shopping?

### Research Methodology and Data Collecting Tools:

Research methodology includes two parts of qualitative and quantitative. In qualitative part, researchers have found the names and addresses of 53 Iranian E-commerce sites by electronic searching. Then, they have sent them emails and described the subject and usage of prepared research.

After interviewing with their managers, researchers found that women shopped more than men in some cases which is not compatible with earlier research results. In quantitative part, data collecting tool was a questionnaire, which included two sections that are 1.Demographic information (Gender, Age, Education, Computer knowledge and internet access), whether respondents have ever shopped electronically? If so, which type of

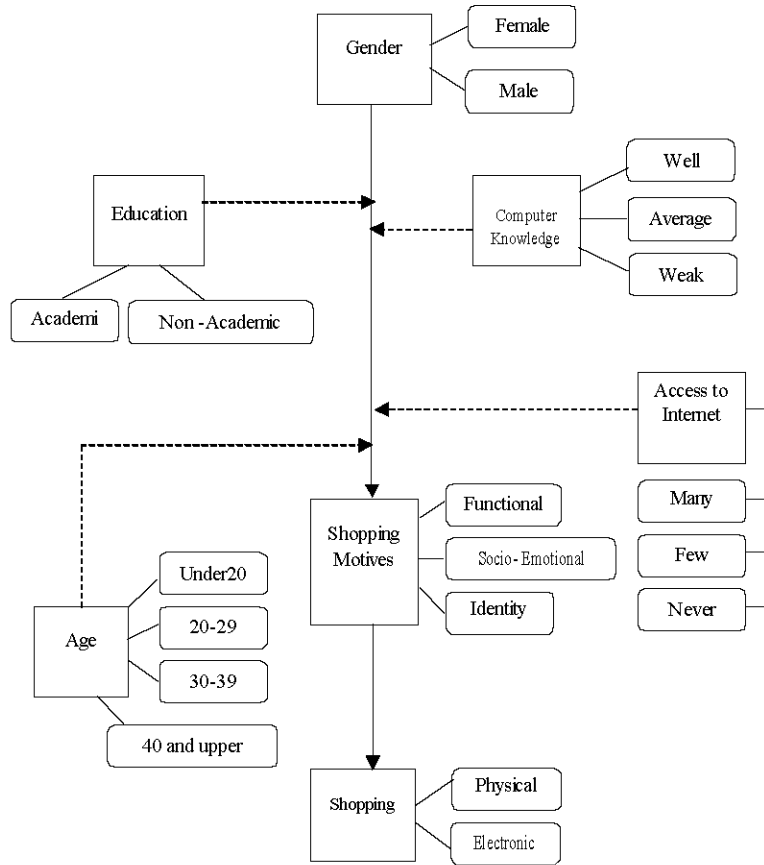
Fig. 1: Research Model (Acquiring Dittmar *et al.* Model, 2004)

Table 2: Shopping motives importance comparison between Iranian and English internet shoppers

Researches	Gender	Motives		
		Functional	Socio-emotional	Identity
current research: (Iran, 2007)	Women	No differences	More important	No differences
	Men	No differences	Less important	No differences
Dittmar et al.[13], England, 2004	Women	Less important	More important	More important
	Men	More important	Less important	Less important

products and from which type of sites? Electronic Shopping advantages and disadvantage from the view of respondents and the second is 22 statements have been translated from Dittmar *et al.* quantitative questionnaire. These statements investigate the importance of shopping motives for respondents who were asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement (on a 6- point scales, from 1: disagree strongly to 6: agree strongly).

**Respondents:** In this research respondents are different universities students in different levels. As we know, doing Electronic Shopping needs an average computer knowledge and Internet access. It is more probable to

reach this condition among the university students. For defining sample number regards to Morgan table (defining sample number by relation), maximum number was chosen which was 384 individuals.

**Validity and Reliability Testing:** To testing validity, the questionnaire was given to some management experts and professors and they have confirmed it. To test reliability, Cronbach's alpha was used. Alpha was calculated for all twenty two statements of second section which included three groups of Electronic Shopping Motives; the figure amounted to 0.843. Then for each group of functional, socio-emotional and identity motives alphas were evaluated, which were 0.742, 0.846 and 0.438 respectively.

**Assumptions Testing:** For testing assumptions, SPSS12 statistics software was used. Additionally assumptions tests were T test for 2 independent groups, assumptions 1, 2 and 3 and Chi-square test, assumptions 4, 5, 6 and secondary question.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After testing assumptions, only assumption 2 was accepted and others were denied. Indeed, results of this research indicated that socio-emotional motives are more important to women. Other findings didn't show any significant correlation between functional and identity motives and gender factor.

In explanation of assumptions 4 and 5, in this society, functional motives are not facilitator and socio-emotional motives are not barrier to electronic shopping. In the same way, there were no tangible gender differences in Apparent Site Attractions. In response to secondary question, no gender differences in 4 groups of goods and services shopping (book, flower, clothing and website design and maintenance services) were seen in this research.

As we could see in the above table, only in the case of socio-emotional motives, the research results are compatible to the earlier relative results [13]. Interpreting this incompatibility, following reasons would be mentioned:

- Different cultures, different time concepts: Cultural differences caused by different nationalities, affect individuals behavior patterns, like time concept which is efficient in behavior patterns of shopping specially Electronic Shopping [14-15]. For different cultures people, Functional Motives efficiency aspects which related to time saving, is not the same. There is no doubt if Iranian shoppers approach is differ from the other countries such as England.
- No sufficient individual information about the electronic shopping process and no confidence of its security, affect on efficiency aspect of Functional Motives.
- Earlier results indicate that efficiency aspect of Functional Motives (time saving) is more important to men; they do shopping faster than women. But its economical aspect (economies) is more important to women; they prefer cheaper products. As each aspect of these motives is more important to each group, gender differences in importance of these motives are not definite.

- Electronic shopping process is new and attractive, so the individuals think that by doing this process, they would be more prestigious. Also they could satisfy their needs to search ideal self and Identity Motives. Therefore, no evident gender difference would be found in this group of Motives for Iranian Electronic Shopping: as it could be predictable that Electronic Shopping is attractive for both Iranian male and female.

## CONCLUSIONS

Results of the research indicate that socio-emotional motives are more important to women while these differences are not significant in the other motives including functional and identity. Therefore, paying attention to socio-emotional motives particularly for women-customer targeted websites is very important. It could probable by offering community facilities, amusements, online consultations and recommendations, interesting website design and so on. These findings will help E-commerce owners (even physical business owners) to recognize their target market. Additionally they have a considerable role in the improvement of recognition process, target customer determination and the activity field of new comers in E-commerce.

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