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Does Police's Logo Play an Effective Role on Online Customer Choice? A Structural Equation Model

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between electronic police and online shopping concepts in Iran. This study builds a comprehensive theoretical model explaining the effect of electronic police on online shopping. Accordingly, we have scrutinized the body of tradition in order to gather effectual variables and developed a model by which the five exogenous latent variables (information intermediary, dissonance forming factors, trust, electronic police, and product type) which explain online shopping have examined. Finally, the study redirected toward an empirical study to check what will happen if police logo insert on a direct selling website. In this way, we have examined the effect of new concept of "police logo" on online selling and tested its effects on both "objectionable product" and "pleasant product".

KEY WORDS: Online shopping, pleasant products, objectionable products, structural equation model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet is one of the main shopping channels and has a more rapid growth rate in comparison to other channels (Brohan, 2007). It has even acted effectively facing the present economic crisis. In 2009, a study was conducted in Price Grabber Company whose findings revealed that economic crisis in the U.S has made customers more willing to online shopping for cutting the prices. One of the critical concepts developed in this regard is e-commerce that Chaffy (2002) introduces it as selling and buying products through Internet. Application of e-commerce is growing throughout the world. This expansion is due to the advantages of application of Internet networks in commercial and business affairs (Tarafdar & Vaidya, 2004). They believe that the reason for inclination of organizations toward e-commerce is presence of motives such as activities of the competitors directions, customer expectations, change in government policies, development of rules, economic condition, application of e-commerce by customers and suppliers, type of products, and available information about product.

According to the report of Forrester Research, Internet sale has had 13 percent growth in 2008 which is equivalent to 141.3 billion dollars profit. On the basis of the predictions of Forrester, it is expected that the profit resulting from retail in the U.S in 2011 will be percent and in 2012 and 2013 will be 8 percent. In addition, 53 percent of Internet users have got used to Internet shopping. However, despite all these profits, there are barriers for employing e-commerce. According to the studies of Forrester (2008), 47 percent of the customers had low interest in online shopping; 33 percent of them were only searching for information, and 17 percent of them preferred online shopping. In this regard, studies of Forrester (2000) reported that two third of online customers are concerned with protection of their personal information. According to Louis Harris (2000) started that concern about privacy has returned 61 percent of heavy users to traditional shopping methods, that is, it has changed them into offline customers, and has made 78 percent of them to use this technology less. 72 percent of participants of a study conducted in 2007 stated that they are very worried about dispersion of their information after online shopping (Better Business Bureau, 2007).

It must be considered that the first and the most important step for success in electronic world are planning for identification of the barriers of employing e-commerce. Besides, according to Internet World Stats, the number of Iranian users has reached to 33 million visitors in a day (Interentworldstats.com, 2010). This number indicates that more than one third of country population attend cyberspace in a day. Besides, it is necessary for business owners to observe the laws and regulations of business, whether at local or international levels. Laws of commerce, approved by Islamic Consultative Assembly, dominate businesses by controlling institutions such as Inspection Organization, Trade Organization, the Custom Office, and Police, etc. and the violators of these laws are introduced by these institutions to relevant authorities. In e-business environment,

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while observing these rules, the rules defined by the Ministry of Commutation and Information Technology must be observed, as well.

In this situation and with presence of so many users in a new environment, the question is asked that "is there no need to presence of police in this environment?" In addition, most offline industries of the country are being transferred to cyberspace. This growing trend of e-businesses in cyberspace refers to the need to a new concept in the practical areas of police as "security in e-businesses" (Hanafizadeh and Behboudi, 2009). In this respect, the present study intends to develop an appropriate theoretical framework about the performance and activity of police in e-businesses. However, considering the excessive range of products and services offered and sold in cyberspace, this study has defined a research domain. In this study, an operational definition based on a study (Hanafizadeh and Behboudi, 2009) is proposed where products offered in Internet are classified into two groups of pleasant and objectionable products.

The research is theoretical study in which the bodies at text and key variables are extracted from previous studies, on the one hand, and these variables are localized within the framework of a deductive logic for development of new factors, on the other. This study is a theoretical methodology which forms the concept of security e-businesses through structural equation modeling.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Two key motives for shopping have been mentioned: hedonic and utilitarian (Babin et al., 1994). Another study claims that these two reasons are also true for Internet shopping (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). According to this study two kinds of behavior can be identified in customers; that is, experience-based behavior, when people shop for hedonic and mostly decide on the basis of emotions, and goal-oriented behavior or shopping for utilitarian, when the people act responsibly, efficiently, logically, and rationally, and decide on the basis of knowledge and logic. This group prefers online shopping for three reasons: convenience (Ratchford, et al., 2001), choice and the ability to control the shopping, and informativeness (Evans & Wurster, 1999).

Ha and Stoel (2008) proposed online shopping quality related to privacy, security, website design, customer service, and shopping experience as the key factor contributing to perceptions of ease of use and profit resulting from e-commerce. On the one hand, there are dissonances forming factors in online shopping that are not found in conventional commerce practice. Factors such as security and privacy concerns (Doolin et al., 2005; Salo and Karjaluoto, 2007), absence of salesperson advice, or the inability to touch, smell, taste (Hanafizdeh and Behboudi, 2009), and evaluating the product (Zhou et al., 2008) increase shopping risk. According to empirical studies, Internet shopping risk reduces the willingness of consumers to this kind of shopping (Tan, 1999; Barnes et al., 2007; Bhatnagar et al., 2000). On the other hand, disregarding privacy reduces reputation of e-commerce which in turn increases the concerns of the customers and convinces them that they are victims of this industry (Prabhaker, 2000).

Customer privacy is an important competitive factor for attracting customers in e-business environment. Businesses can respond to this issue in different ways. They might consider privacy as a threat and define a simple defensive response to it, or they may consider it as an opportunity for increasing profit and productivity as well as the number of customers (Prabhaker, 2000). Therefore, companies that match their technology with product value and develop plans and policies for it are more successful in future (Prabhaker, 2000). Since there are many differences between physical and virtual environments, it must be determined whether common police systems are still effective and efficient in such environments. Since according to Chaffy (2002) e-businesses have digital process, and digital products which are exchanged in a digital environment, they require new and unique mechanisms such as unique laws and inspections.

In this regard, two main questions come to the mind that we will address the second one:

1. Do common police systems have enough capability to be effective in cyberspace? and
2. What is the effect of police's logo presence on selling different products from a marketing viewpoint? Does it increase the users' trust as the most important factor of online shopping (Fernback & Papacharissi, 2009) or decreases it and increase users' hesitations?

Trust, as the main reason of users' presence in an e-business (website) results from three factors of privacy, previous negative experience, and attitude toward website. The question is if tangible presence of electronic police in a website affects users intending to do e-shopping. This issue gains importance because one of the main reasons of using Internet by the users is their anonymity. Can presence of police in website or a symbol of police presence damage this very important and motivating factor?

This study has two main approaches. First, it offers a structural equation model (Figure 1) where indicates constructs affecting online shopping. Second, by focusing on the type of products offered in the Internet, it examines the presence of police's logo and its effect on website sales. According to review of literature and conducting exploratory interviews following hypothesizes are designed to examine the concept of police Logo's effect on website sales.

Hypothesis 1: placing an information intermediary logo in website will increase result in online shopping.

Hypothesis 2: Presence of dissonance forming factors in online shopping process will result in decrease online shopping intention.

Hypothesis 3: meeting trust on the part of the website, increase will result in online shopping intention.

Hypothesis 4: placing a kind of police logo on marketer website will result in online shopping process intention of the users.

Hypothesis 5: the type of product (pleasant or objectionable) influence the intention of online shopping.

Also, this study, aiming at empirically testing presence of police in cyberspace, tests two following hypotheses separately:

Hypothesis 6: Placing police logo in the websites which offering pleasant products increases online shopping.

Hypothesis 7: Placing police logo in the websites offering objectionable products increases e-shopping.

According to literature and hypotheses developed, a theoretical causal model of online shopping with involving electronic police in Iran is proposed which involves five exogenous latent variables (information intermediaries, dissonance forming factors, trust, electronic police, and product type) and 1 endogenous latent variable (online shopping).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First, in order to identify factors affecting online shopping, a review of literature was done on previous studies in the areas of e-commerce, e-government, electronic organizations, Internet advertising, online marketing, and e-business. Review the literature and Content analysis are methods confirmed in many studies and is considered as one of the instruments of theoretical frameworks (Kassarjian, 1977; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Okazaki & Rivas, 2002). In this study a combination of, an inductive-deductive method was employed in order to identify influential factors confirmed by international researchers, on the one hand, and to investigate applicability of these indicators from the viewpoint of local researchers and experts, on the other. However, a structural equation model was hypothesized. In order to identify appropriate statistical population, an operational definition of experts was proposed as: 1) To be an instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor in one of the disciplines related to IT, business management, e-commerce, disciplinary management, and computer; 2) To have at least one published research article in the areas of disciplinary management, Internet marketing, e-business, and Internet advertising; 3) To be one of the owners of successful e-businesses in Iran; and 4) To be active in interactive agencies or companies.

A questionnaire was designed in a Likert scale containing five alternatives from most important to least important. Each of the indicators was used as one question of the questionnaire and was offered to university experts and owners of e-business to be confirmed in the area of Iranian businesses. The printed questionnaire was administered to the experts. From among 243 questionnaires sent to experts, 176 were completed and returned and the response rate of the study was 72%.

In order to analyze the data related to the effect of police logo on selling pleasant and objectionable products, Student T-test was utilized. In order to accurately test the correctness of indicators in the area of Iranian e-businesses, a strict test with $\mu \geq 4$ was conducted whose results are reported in Table 3 and 4. To estimate the reliability and validity of the questionnaire pretest method was used. Since most of the main concepts of this study were extracted from previous studies, the study sought to find out if the findings of this study confirm them. Indeed, great reliance upon literature and use of expert views for evaluating the questionnaire, confirm content validity of the questionnaire. First, using pretest method, the initial questionnaire was administered to 30 experts. Some of the respondents faced difficulties in answering 17 questions of the questionnaire due to novelty of the concepts (such as objectionable products) which were disambiguated through operational definitions. Finally, a questionnaire with 14 questions was confirmed and sent to the experts. Using the data obtained from pilot sample, the alpha cronbach reliability was obtained to be 76%. In general, this value shows that the questionnaire enjoyed high reliability. Hence, it was concluded that the questions enjoyed good internal consistency, that is, they all assess a common construct.

This study tests the developed hypotheses through structural equation modeling. To this aim, Lisrel 8.53 was utilized. The following hypotheses are tested in this study:

4. RESULTS

4-1. Measurement model

The key statistics (means, standard deviations, confirmatory factor loadings) are presented in Table 1 for all research variables. Validation of research instrument was done through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of LISREL measurement model. To be valid, each indicator must have at least factor loading of 0.6 with

its assumed construct (Nunnally, 1978). All indicators proposed obtained this value except for two indicators of lack of expert view point with factor loading of 0.56 and attitude toward Internet shopping (0.58). But since the marginal significance number is 0.55 (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Heidarzadeh, *et al.,* 2011; Behboudi, *et al.,* 2011), they were considered as confirmed P-values and retained in the model.

Table 1. key Statistics

Latent variables	Observer variables	N	Mean	SD	CFA	Composite reliability
Information intermediaries	Electronic insurance	176	4.1	0.43	0.86	0.74
	Offering valid information	176	3.9	0.74	0.73	
Dissonance forming factors	Lack of expert view point	175	3.7	0.85	0.56	0.77
	Lack of Security	176	4.3	0.4	0.87	
	Intangibility of products	176	4.1	0.22	0.73	
Trust	privacy	174	4.2	0.27	0.89	0.76
	Prior Negative experience	176	3.9	0.23	0.96	
	Attitude toward online shopping	176	3.4	0.61	0.58	
Electronic police	Placing logo on marketer web site	173	4	0.47	0.91	0.81
	Creation of electronic kiosk	176	4.1	0.31	0.71	
Product type	Pleasant products	176	3.4	0.21	0.65	0.72
	Objectionable products	176	3.8	0.32	0.87	
online shopping	Attitude toward brand	176	3.7	0.44	0.82	0.86
	Attitude toward website	176	3.5	0.25	0.71	

Figure 1 shows Lisrel output and confirmatory factor loadings of each factor. The indicator of electronic insurance with factor loading of (0.86) compared to indicator of offering valid information (0.73) have the highest correlation with the construct "information intermediaries". The indicator of lack of security (0.87) compared to indicators of intangibility (0.73), and lack of expert view point (0.56) has the highest correlation with the construct "dissonance forming factors". In the construct "trust", the indicator of prior negative experience (0.96) compared to indicators privacy (0.89) and attitude toward online shopping (0.58) has the highest correlation with this construct. In the construct "electronic police", the indicator of placing police logo (0.91) compared to police kiosk (0.71) has higher correlation with the construct. The indicator of objectionable products (0.87) has higher correlation with the construct "product type" compared to the indicator pleasant products (0.65). Finally, in the construct "online shopping", the indicator attitude toward brand (0.82) in comparison to attitude toward website (0.71) has higher correlation with this construct.

4-2. Structural Equation Model

The first step in testing the hypothetical model is estimation of goodness of fit (Figure 1). In this study, X^2 test was used for this purpose indicating the model fits with the data but does not yield a good statistic. The reason is that X^2 test is very sensitive to sample size and does not usually yield a good statistic in structural tests (Cho & Cheon, 2004). The statistic obtained in this study was 2.16 (X^2=161.7, df=75). As it is indicated in Figure 1, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.87, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.92, and Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR) was 0.04. Finally, on the basis of these measures, the model was determined to be satisfactory.

4-3. Analysis of causal model

The second step in measuring the model is testing hypotheses through path significance analysis for each construct of research model and variance explanation (R^2) for each path (path coefficient and significance are presented in figure 1 and table 2). As it was expected, all five hypothesized constructs (hypotheses 1 to 5) had significant effect on online shopping ($p<0.05$). In this study, the construct of trust with path coefficient of 0.49 was the most effective factor in comparison to electronic police (0.41), dissonance forming factors (0.33), product type (0.27), and information intermediaries (0.18). Finally, as it was hypothesized, we found that five constructs (information intermediaries, dissonance forming factors, trust, electronic police, and product type) explain the concept of online shopping.

Table 2. Standard Coefficient and Significance Values for 5 Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Path		Standard coefficient	Significance values
Hypothesis 1	Information intermediaries	Online shopping	0.18	3.24
Hypothesis 2	Dissonance forming factors	Online shopping	0.33	4.32
Hypothesis 3	Trust	Online shopping	0.49	5.76
Hypothesis 4	Electronic police	Online shopping	0.41	5.18
Hypothesis 5	Product type	Online shopping	0.27	3.12

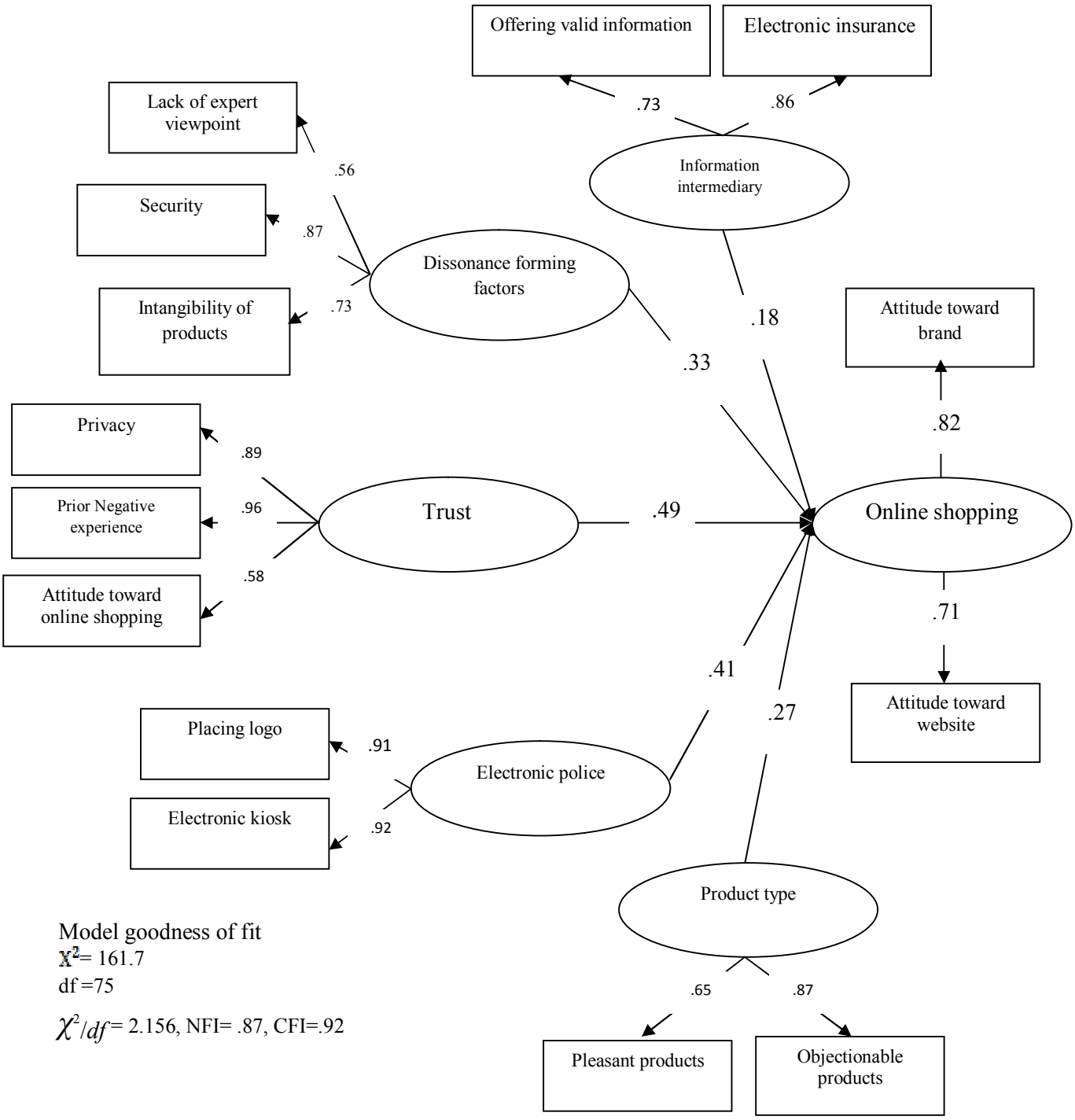

Figure 1. Structural equation model of online shopping in presence of electronic police

5. Implementing the results

Since having prior negative experience with factor loading of 0.96 and placing police logo in online shopping websites were respectively identified as the most important indicators, this study will focus on this indictor. Thus, the effect of police logo on pleasant and objectionable products was tested whose results are reported in Table 3 and 4.

The critical value of this test with degree of freedom of $\alpha - 1$ was determined to be -1.65; the examination statistics larger than this critical value, that is, close to zero are acceptable. As table 3 indicates, the sixth hypothesis, "Placing police logo increases selling pleasant products", was identified as an influential indicator

with critical value of -0.51. Also, the hypothesis, "placing police logo increases selling objectionable products" was not confirmed with critical value of -1.75.

Table 3. Student t-test results of the effect of police logo on selling pleasant products

	x	f	fx	$(x-\bar{x})^2$	$f(x-\bar{x})^2$	Statistics
Pleasant products	1	6	6	19.36	13493.14	**M= 5.4**
	2	36	72	11.56	173189.15	**Critical value = -1.65**
	3	34	102	5.76	38353.3	**T= -0.51**
	4	56	224	1.96	12047.25	**S_x= 36.81**
	5	44	220	0.16	49.56	
		176	624		237132.42	

Table 4. Student t-test results of the effect of police logo on selling objectionable products.

	x	f	fx	$(x-\bar{x})^2$	$f(x-\bar{x})^2$	Statistics
Objectionable products	1	122	122	1.44	30863.46	**M= 2.21**
	2	34	68	0.04	1.84	**Critical value = -1.65**
	3	8	24	0.64	26.2144	**T= -1.75**
	4	11	0	3.24	1270.2	**S_x= 13.56**
	5	1	5	7.84	61.46	
		176	219		32223.2	

6. DISCUSSION

The contribution of this study have three main aspects. First, this is the first study offering a structural model of online shopping taking electronic police into consideration. Second, this is the first attempt to identify the effect of police on e-businesses. The way this presence affects selling different products has not been addressed so far. Third, this study suggests a methodology for researcher seeking to study the issue of police from an economic and marketing perspective in cyberspace rather than a legal and criminal view.

Information intermediaries: E-commerce has taken a disintermediation removal and reinter mediation approach (Turban, *et al.,* 2006). Intermediaries play differing roles in cyberspace; such as offering valid information regarding websites which have previously shown a safe behavior and have observed consumer rights. Since reputation in cyberspace has a different meaning from that in offline environment, recording and presenting the behavior of online sellers is considered as an important criteria. One of the very successful intermediaries is VeriSign institute. Also, these intermediaries are able to insure the transactions. If the opportunity is provided for the intermediaries to cooperate with police and join their databases, many reasons of avoidance of online consumers will be removed.

Dissonance forming factors: lack of Security, as the main indicator of the construct of dissonance forming factors, is mostly influenced by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and companies offering Internet services. The main defect observed in the respect is lack of companies offering security service to websites. Regarding intangibilities of products and lack of expert view point, the websites are recommended to offer products needing the lowest level of smell, taste, and touch.

Trust: Prior Negative experience, as the main indicator of the construct trust, indicates that Internet is a new shopping channel in customer behavior. As the learning curve rule reveals, the concerns of the customer will be reduced as he is trying this new channel. Regarding privacy, as the second main indicator, the role of police is very significant. Placing police logo in the websites confirmed by police can ensure the users that the information they provide the website with will not be misused. Attitude toward Internet is realized as an influential factor which exerts effect through gender differences in such a way that males have more positive attitude toward Internet and Internet shopping than females (Korgankar & Wolin, 2001).

Electronic police: Placing police logo in the website, as the main indicator of this construct, is important in the sense that it is considered as a barrier both for the seller and buyer, particularly, if it is linked to websites which are called electronic kiosk. By electronic kiosk a kind of police posts are meant by referring to which users can reduce their concerns, obtain valid information, get confirms about some websites, and report violating website. It is suggested that these electronic kiosk change into electronic police stations in a broader sense to be considered as electronic security bases.

Product type: The shopping pattern of pleasant products is very different from that of objectionable ones (Kotler, 2001, 98). Hence, their buying in the Internet would be very different from each other. If definition of objectionable products is regarded as the opposite of pleasant ones, it must be considered that the

embarrassment of selling and buying these products is very different in different cultures. In addition, if lack of required quality and standard is considered as the criterion of objectionable products, those products are grouped in this category that are considered objectionable throughout the world. Therefore, removing the faults and getting necessary standard and quality licenses will make the product unobjectionable. In this respect, many websites offering this kind of products need getting necessary licenses to be classified among secure websites having confirmed safety logo.

According to the results of this study, presence of police logo, that is, inspection of the websites of commercial and economic agencies offering pleasant products by the police, results in the increase in security level of the websites thereby promoting their validity. Consequently, they get the trust of the users for offering and selling pleasant products. Therefore, equipping cyberspace with Internet police, not only realizes presence of police for providing security as the philosophy of police in this environment in line with growing advances of IT, but also facilitates the progress of market of pleasant products.

On the other hand, according to the findings of the study concerning negative effect of police logo as the symbol of police inspection of the websites offering objectionable products, it prevents cooperation of these sites with police. This hampers realization of the goals of police for provision of security in line with consumer interests. Besides, considering the social responsibility of disciplinary forces for regulating activities and preventing computer crimes such as offering fake products, or not delivering the product in due time, etc. the necessity of inspection of websites offering objectionable products cannot be overlooked. Therefore, this study considering the high rate of using these products in the country, especially in the field of cosmetics, suggests that police must be present intangibly as a supervisory instrument in these websites. It, in addition to the security of cyberspace, purging business environments, and protecting consumer rights, will facilitate accessing accurate, documented statistics and information regarding the exchange volume of these products, their market fluctuations, and their consumer behavior by economic, social, and cultural planners. At the end, also the sample of the present study were the experts in online business field, future studies needs to validate other presence of police and it's role on cyberspace finally. This study has been conducted in Iran and needed intelligence must be kept in mind for generalizing of its findings.

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