Internet Lifestyle of Iranian Users

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ABSTRACT

One distinguishing factor of individuals is their lifestyles. In the internet, every individual shows a different behavior while some groups have rather similar behaviors. By identifying these groups and their interests and preferences, it becomes possible to offer a product or advertising which is compatible with their wants. This leads to conveying the value presented by the producer to the consumer with high effectiveness. One source of identifying target customers or internet users is their lifestyle in internet space. The present study aims at describing and explaining internet lifestyle (e-lifestyle) of Iranian users. In particular, this study tries to find out the most common e-lifestyle of Iranian users. To this aim, 412 students involved with internet were surveyed. After estimating the construct validity of the study through confirmatory factor analysis, the mean scores of each e-lifestyle were compared by student t-test. The results revealed that Iranian users have mostly entertainment-driven e-lifestyles. The perceived importance-driven, sociability-driven, interest-driven, novelty-driven, need-driven, and uninterested or concern-driven e-lifestyles were respectively identified after that. This is the first study investigating the most common e-lifestyle among Internet users.

Keywords: E-lifestyle, E-lifestyle.Internet, Entertainment-driven, Lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

Segmentation of consumers has been emphasized as one of the main and essential advantages of studies in the area of e-commerce (Chang, 1998). According to American Marketing Association (AMA), lifestyle in the area of consumer behavior refers to set of behaviors individuals show in the physical and mental environment of their daily lives. Specifically, some scholars of theoretical sciences use the word “lifestyle” as a term describing the values, attitudes, opinions, and behavioral patterns of consumers. The basic assumption of lifestyle research is that the more marketers know and understand their customers, their more effectively they can communicate with them, and offer them their services (Kaynak & Kara, 2001). Lifestyle segmentation identifies the important and useful segments so that the advertisers can target appropriate consumers and provide more efficient internet ads. Also, awareness from lifestyle enables advertisers to perceive the differences of users’ attitudes (Yang, 2004). Hence, advertisers must be aware of different groups of internet users. Also, they must gain information about the different attitudes toward internet advertising based on differences of lifestyles to be able to present more

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purposeful ads (Yang, 2004). Segmentation is a useful tool for advertising planning (Kaynak & Kara, 1996). In order to better understand the psychological issues of online shopping, Smith and Swinyard (2001) developed a scale for measuring the “lifestyle of internet shoppers”. This scale was the segmentation basis for American online shoppers and those who did not shop online. The features of lifestyle provide marketers and advertisers with accurate and practical information about consumers. This enables them to meet the needs of consumers in complex and competitive markets (Kamakura & Wedel, 1995). This issue gains more importance since internet is increasingly penetrating different layers of society and is facing a variety of lifestyles (Schiffman et al., 2003; Weiss, 2001). Bellman, et al. (1999) emphasize that the basic information for predicting shopping behaviors (whether online or offline) is the lifestyle of consumers rather than demographical factors. In other words, to effectively manage a shopping website, online retailers must be familiar with characteristics and lifestyles of consumers (Chu & Lee, 2007). Thus, e-lifestyle is considered as a stronger variable compared to demographical variables in marketers’ investigations, and it is very efficient in developing user-oriented strategies. Considering the limited number of studies on this important variable in the area of internet, and regarding the increase of different companies’ activities in internet, investigating individuals’ behavior and lifestyle in internet seems necessary. Therefore, the present study aims at investigating the lifestyles of internet users in Iran. In this respect, this study attempts at answering the following question:

**Research Question:** From among lifestyles identified by Yu (2001), which ones are common among Iranian internet users?

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Based upon a survey conducted on over 5000 internet users, Assael (2005) suggested that heavy internet users are rather young, have grown in the era of information and technology and have benefited from it, love to use internet, and work with it more than 50 hours a week. In addition, Assael showed that heavy internet users are multi-work groups who tend to do more activities and like to work more than they do at present. They probably suffer from time shortage and constantly seek ways to shorten the time of doing things to complete various tasks for managing their schedule (Vijayasarathy, 2004). Therefore, it is clear that lack of time and willingness to do multiple tasks lead to remarkable changes in shopping. According to the study “searching for global consumer: a European study of changing lifestyles and shopping behavior” by Cap Gemini Ernst and Young (2002), nowadays, consumers do not remain in one section of the market; rather, they move among different sections of the market during a week or even a day.

Studies on AIO reveal the differences between lifestyles and activities of heavy users and occasional users (Berkman & Gilson, 1974). What people do in their free time, what their interests and preferences are in their environment (Plummer, 1974), to what things they pay attention, and what their demographical characteristics are (Berkman & Gilson, 1974) are the main concerns of measuring the features of individuals’ lifestyles. Activities are the behavioral part of lifestyle. In the beginning, lifestyles had been explained using the basic set of AIO (Vyncke, 2002), whereas the measurement approach of lifestyle according to AIO classification framework offered by Wells and Tigert (1971) is very common. Wells and Tigert (1971) developed a questionnaire with 300 items related to AIO which involved 4 dimensions and covered different subjects such as daily activities, interests in media, arts, clothes, make-ups, household chores, and opinions about issues related to major interests (Lee, 2005). The AIO items have been used in many research studies, particularly for profiling male innovators (Darden and Reynolds, 1974), measuring the relationship between time orientation and lifestyle patterns (Settle et al., 1978), understanding food shopping behavior of
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