Determinants of Online Purchase Intention of Apparel Products in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates factors (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, privacy concerns, trust, innovativeness, and perceived benefits) affecting Lebanese consumers' attitudes toward online purchasing and their intention to purchase online. Data collected from 416 online shoppers were analyzed using regression analysis. All the factors affect attitude towards online purchasing except trust and privacy concerns which were not supported. In addition, results show that attitude toward online purchasing affect online purchase intention. This study is the first to empirically examine factors influencing online purchase intention towards apparel products in Lebanon. The study provides insight from an overlooked emerging country, Lebanon.

KEYWORDS

Apparel Products, Attitude Toward Online Purchasing, Lebanon, Online Purchase Intention

1 INTRODUCTION

The acceptance and usage of advanced technologies became a universal practice as people are keener to adopt a novel technology in their everyday lives (Natrajan, Balasubramanian, & Kasilingam, 2018). As a consequence of the technological advances in the marketplace during the past decades, online shopping has recorded enormous growth (Rubin, et al., 2020). This spectacular change in the consumer purchasing landscape has marked the naissance of online shopping (Faqih, 2016). The growth of online shopping has increased as businesses prefer to have an online presence (Rahman, et al., 2018). This act supports them to gain a competitive advantage relative to other companies in the market (Adnan, 2014). The new method of shopping helps consumers to purchase at any time, and wherever, to save money, and to search and access more information about the product (Al-Debei, et al., 2015).

Despite the benefits of online shopping, transactions over the internet are followed by some concerns which could discourage people and result in their unwillingness to engage in any form of online transactions (Beldad, et al., 2010). The perceived lack of human contact, lack of financial security and privacy, intangible products, failure of technology, and unfamiliar service encounters are some of the main reasons why consumers do not use online shopping (Aldhmour, 2016). When companies increasingly rely on the internet to deliver their goods and services, they should know how to maintain and develop their online presence (Beldad, et al., 2010). The key drivers that motivate customers to make an online transaction should be identified by the companies so that they can formulate strategies to enhance purchase intention (Adnan, 2014). A full understanding of the factors that motivate and deter consumers to buy online may provide novel insights that result in the growth of B2C e-commerce (Rahman, et al., 2018).

For years, many businesses in Lebanon have started to operate online by offering several kinds of products via websites or social media pages as the online environment is cheaper. The popularity of online shopping in Lebanon as a developing country has not received much acceptance from local consumers. The new format of business conducted over the internet has not received much reputation and acceptance because perhaps consumers in developing countries are not quite set yet to admit this technology as it seems risky and insecure (Faqih, 2016). Moreover, since it is crucial to comprehend how consumers react to online shopping based on determining factors; consumers' attitude should be explored as it helps in the formation of a favorable direction, or not, toward online shopping. Based on this, our study aims to develop an apprehension of the factors that affect Lebanese consumers' attitude and to detect the influence of that attitude toward online purchase intention of Lebanese consumers to broaden the knowledge of companies in order to better develop their marketing strategies and secure their online presence from failure. Accordingly, there is a need to analyze the factors behind the shift of consumers' behavior toward using online markets (Aref & Okasha, 2020).

Our study draws on the commonly applied Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), originally introduced in the organizational behavior domain, and applied widely in the online behavior (Aldhmour, 2016; Ben Mansour, 2016; Chiu, et al., 2005; Faqih, 2016). The two central elements of the TAM, namely perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are included in our research model to study their influence on Lebanese consumers' attitudes. The modification of the TAM is mandatory because the model was established for a broad description of the factors influencing computer acceptance rather than for the peculiar behavioral intentions of online purchasing (Chiu, et al., 2005). Many information systems researchers have agreed on the validity of TAM in predicting the person's acceptance of several corporate information technologies but the constructs of TAM do not entirely represent the particular effects of technological and usage aspects that could shape the user acceptance of such technology (Ben Mansour, 2016). Consequently, we also employed the IDT by studying the influence of innovativeness on consumers' attitudes as suggested by previous research (Chiu, et al., 2005; Crespo & Del Bosque, 2008b; Huseynov & Yildirim, 2015). The compatibility between the TAM and the IDT helps to better explain the adoption of users for a specific information system because such a combination may be proficient to offer a stronger model rather than standing alone (Cheng, 2013). The research model includes also privacy concerns, trust, and perceived benefits to study their impact on consumers' attitudes. Previous literature asserts the importance of the impact of those elements on consumers' attitudes (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Al-Debei, et al., 2015; Anic, et al., 2019; Faqih, 2016; Rahman, et al., 2018). These aforementioned factors are vital in influencing consumers' attitudes towards online purchasing. However, there is a lack of research applied on the Lebanese virtual market concerning this topic. Also, the effect of Lebanese consumers' attitude on Lebanese consumers' purchase intention is examined in our study to uncover the importance of attitude in affecting purchase intention over the internet.

Finally, apparel products are selected for the scope of this study. The attitude toward online shopping for sensory experiential products, such as apparel, is less strong than cognitive products, such as books and computer software (Kim & Kim, 2004). Most apparel shoppers are reluctant to make purchases online and prefer to shop in physical stores (Kim & Forsythe, 2007). By identifying which attributes are essential to online shoppers, retailers can develop better effective strategies for apparel products that make customers highly rate them better against not only competitors but also physical stores with no online presence (Kim & Kim, 2004). Accordingly, the current study is conducted in Lebanon and a model is developed to test factors affecting Lebanese consumer's attitudes and their effect on online purchase intention in the case of apparel products, specifically, clothes and footwear. Those factors are perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, privacy concerns, trust, innovativeness, and perceived benefits.

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