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Identifying the Success Factors of Online Sales of Sports Products and Services in Social Media

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Received: 14 April 2023</p> <p>Accepted: 30 April 2023</p> <p>Published online: 30 April 2023</p>	<p>This research was conducted with the aim of identifying and ranking the success factors of online sales of sports products and services on Instagram. The statistical population in this research included experts, professors and researchers in the field of media and marketing in the qualitative part and in the quantitative part it included experts in the field of media, marketing, internet business owners, sellers, service providers and online customers. In the qualitative part, the snowball sampling method was used and theoretical saturation was achieved with 13 interviews, and in the quantitative part, 130 people were indicated by using the Cochran formula. For this purpose, using a hybrid approach, first by using a library study and in-depth interview to identify the components, and then by using a researcher-made questionnaire from the components identified in the previous stage and conducting a survey. The findings have shown that the six components of confidence, ease of use, responsiveness, quality of information, quality of the page and promotion are effective in this matter. Among these components, the quality of the Instagram page, the quality of information and promotion are considered to be the most important factors in the success of online sales of sports products and services on media. It seems that the use of blind factors and research findings can have a special effect in improving online sales of sports products and services.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p>	Instagram, Online sales, Social media, Sports products and services.
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Introduction

In recent years, we have seen a significant increase in the use of social media ([Young, Kolubinski & Frings, 2020](#)) that the development of the Internet has led to the growth and expansion of advertising in these new media, also strongly in the focus of active companies and stores ([Lou & Yuan, 2019](#)). Today, technological advances such as the Internet have created new forms of business models ([Niemimaa et al., 2019](#)) where the use of social media is one of the low-cost tools used in many businesses ([Hassan, Nadzim & Shiratuddin, 2014](#)). The increasing use of social networks has led to the emergence of a field of digital marketing called social network marketing, which uses social media platforms and websites to promote and advertise services and products ([Buzeta, De Pelsmacker & Dens, 2020](#)).

Social networks in Iranian society have many users. The use of sharing photos, videos and live broadcasts, as well as following the pages of different users around the world and interacting with them, are among the services that these social networks provide to their users for free ([Moslehi & Salimi, 2022](#)). These networks are webpages where people can make friends, discuss and exchange opinions, share pictures and movies they like and get the opportunity to tag about their interests and demands ([Amoozadeh et al., 2020](#)). Comment. Social networks in Iranian society have countless users. The use of sharing photos, videos and live broadcasts, as well as following the pages of different users around the world and interacting with them, are among the services that these social networks provide to their users for free. These networks are pages where people can make friends, discuss and exchange opinions, share pictures and movies they like and get the opportunity to tag about their interests and demands. The statistics show that Instagram has been growing in popularity in recent years, and from this point of view, it has surpassed many similar social networks ([Razipour, 2018](#)). The global users of smartphone applications in 2020 are reported to be around 96.3 billion users, which is approximately equal to 51% of the world's population ([Kemp, 2020](#)). Also, at the beginning of 2020, more than 100 million photos are uploaded daily all over the world only on the Instagram social network, and the number of these users has crossed the border of one billion user accounts and 25 million active business accounts ([Aslan, 2020](#)).

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Online shopping is a growing phenomenon that has many advantages such as saving time, 24-hour access from anywhere, variety of products and the possibility of comparing different products and brands, as well as the increasing growth of e-commerce, the main characteristic of the growth of mobile customer behavior. But besides these advantages, the consumer feels the risk of various factors, including the financial loss of the appearance and quality of the product, the risk of shipping and delivery, as well as psychological factors such as the reliability and security of the network and network design ([Salimi, Soltan Hosseini & Naderian Jahromi., 2015](#)). Also, several factors affect the level of sales, including: selling price, products (goods or services) offered, designed advertisements, distribution channels and quality. The existence of social networks, one of which can be used as an intermediary for sellers and buyers to meet online ([Armeyani et al., 2021](#)).

Sports products are very wide and accordingly, the marketing of sports products is done in different ways with the expansion of the Internet and the increasing importance of e-commerce and the development of online stores in the form of websites, Instagram pages, and applications. Customers who are interested in buying from virtual and electronic space have a different desire than traditional shopping customers ([Benesbordi & Nazari Tarshizi, 2019](#)).

It seems that the lack of comprehensive research regarding the effective factors of online sales in sports products and sports services has led to the concern of paying attention to this issue in the field of sports today; On the other hand, this gap has caused operational solutions to improve and sell sports products online. This is despite the fact that online sales at the global level have taken a huge part of the sales of sports products and services on websites and social media, but in Iran this issue has not been followed seriously and the criteria and factors that It has not been properly identified in the success of selling products and providing sports services on virtual pages and Instagram. According to the mentioned cases, the present

research was carried out with the aim of identifying the success factors of online sales of sports products and services in social media.

Research Methods

The research method in the current study is considered to be a type of survey research in terms of mixed data (qualitative and quantitative), in terms of applied purpose, in terms of descriptive and exploratory type, and in terms of data collection. In the current research, with library studies and searching in authoritative scientific articles and sources and analysis of the theoretical foundations of the research as well as in-depth interviews with professors, the factors affecting the success of online sales of sports products and services in social media were extracted and finally the research questionnaire in the form of 6 “the components of reliability, ease of use, information quality, page quality, responsiveness and promotion” and 37 indicators were collected and organized. In the next step, the Delphi technique was used for theoretical consensus about the discovered components and indicators, which finally confirmed the research questionnaire. Finally, out of 130 questionnaires distributed in person and online, 102 questionnaires were returned and analyzed. The validity of the content and form of the questionnaire designed by prominent professors was confirmed, and also to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, this questionnaire was given to a small sample (25 people) of the sample people. After collecting the questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was equal to 0.81 and reliability was achieved.

The population and the statistical sample of the present study were defined in two parts, qualitative and quantitative. The statistical population included experts, professors and researchers in the field of media and marketing in the qualitative part and experts in the field of media, marketing, internet business owners, sellers, service providers and online customers in the quantitative part. In the qualitative part, the snowball sampling method was used and theoretical saturation was achieved with 13 interviews, and in the quantitative part, using the Cochran sampling method, 130 questionnaires were distributed, of which 102 questionnaires were finally the basis of the research in this part. Table (1) shows the demographic characteristics of the sample group in the qualitative section.

Table 1- Demographic characteristics of interviewees in the qualitative section

Row	Familiarity with social media (Year)	Has a commercial social page	Level of education	Job	How to interview
1	5	Yes	Bachelor	Internet seller	in person
2	7	Yes	M.A	Sports equipment seller	by phone
3	3	No	Ph.D.	Researcher and university professor	by phone
4	2	Yes	Ph.D.	Researcher and university professor	in person
5	4	Yes	M.A	Internet seller	virtual space
6	5	Yes	M.A	Sport board public relations	in person
7	5	Yes	M.A	Sports club public relations	by phone
8	4	Yes	M.A	Public relations of sports and youth department	in person
9	2	Yes	Bachelor	Internet seller	virtual space
10	1	No	Ph.D.	Researcher and university professor	in person
11	4	Yes	M.A	Head of sports association	by phone
12	5	Yes	M.A	Sports and youth department expert	in person
13	9	Yes	M.A	club manager	by phone

According to the predetermined objectives of the research, after identifying the indicators and success factors of online sales of sports products and services in social media and confirming the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, and after performing a confirmatory factor analysis on the data as a result, Friedman's test was used to prioritize factors and components. SPSS and AMOS software were used to analyze the data.

Findings

In this section, in order to determine the effective factors in the success of online sales of sports products and services in social media, first by using the content analysis of in-depth interviews with experts and library studies, the set of effective factors in this field were extracted in Table (2).

Table 2- Identified themes to determine the effective factors in the success of online sales of sports products and services in social media

Central themes identified	Basic themes
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protection of customer internet information ○ Not sharing the customer's personal information with other virtual networks ○ Login to the Instagram page with a password ○ Presenting an electronic certificate to verify the security features of the network (about the security of the payment transaction) and (protecting the customer's credit card information) ○ The level of continuous activity of Instagram pages on customer satisfaction and confidence ○ Commitment and honesty in the quality and equality of photos and films (sports goods or services) with the original sex ○ Ensuring the price offered and the type of product on the page (sports goods or services) with the price of the product or service in the market
Ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ease of access to different parts of the company page (organization or store) ○ Ease of direct communication between admin (responsible) and customers in case of problems ○ Ease of creating a special page (store or organization) on the media ○ Ease of creation through a story (store or organization) on the media ○ The ease of sending the product after ordering the product from the page until the individual accesses the product
Information quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organized items (easy to find what you're looking for) ○ Support through admin and support pages from the media page ○ Existence of comments and suggestions section and viewing the comments of previous customers ○ New posts in customers about (new and customer-favored products or services) ○ Proper functioning of the media page (store or organization) from a technical point of view (the page is not messed up and is consistent with the program) ○ Providing fast service and handling customer orders ○ The speed and accuracy of uploading posts and stories
Page quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attractiveness and up-to-date appearance and coloring of posts and stories in a one-hand format ○ Clarity of graphic forms (emoji) and writings (captions) on the media page (use appropriate hashtags and captions) ○ The effect of the brand name of the page in the decision to buy or provide services ○ View page in the media (store or organization) ○ The number of followers (no fake and real) of the page in deciding to buy or provide services ○ The number of famous people (celebrities) following the page in buying or providing services ○ The number of page followers in buying or providing services ○ The number of page likes followed by buying or providing services ○ The effect of the number of page follower comments on buying or providing services
Answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sufficient knowledge of the administrator (administrator) of the page to answer, help, guide and solve the problems of customers using the page services ○ The existence of an administrator (admin) who understands the needs of the customer ○ The constant readiness and willingness of the page manager (admin) to help the customer ○ Polite behavior of the administrator in case of problems ○ Demand and dissatisfaction with page services (sales or service provision) ○ The speed of online response and the execution of tasks by the operator (admin) in the field of purchase and support ○ Issues related to after-sales service of equipment or providing services in terms of speed and power
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advertising through (story and mention of page name) by other popular pages (celebrities) ○ Media advertising (film loop and sales link in the story)

According to table (2), it is clear that the set of factors affecting the research topic includes reliability, ease of use, information quality, page quality, responsiveness and promotion.

In the following, Figure (1) shows the structural equation model of the success factors of online sales of sports products and services in social media based on factor loadings.

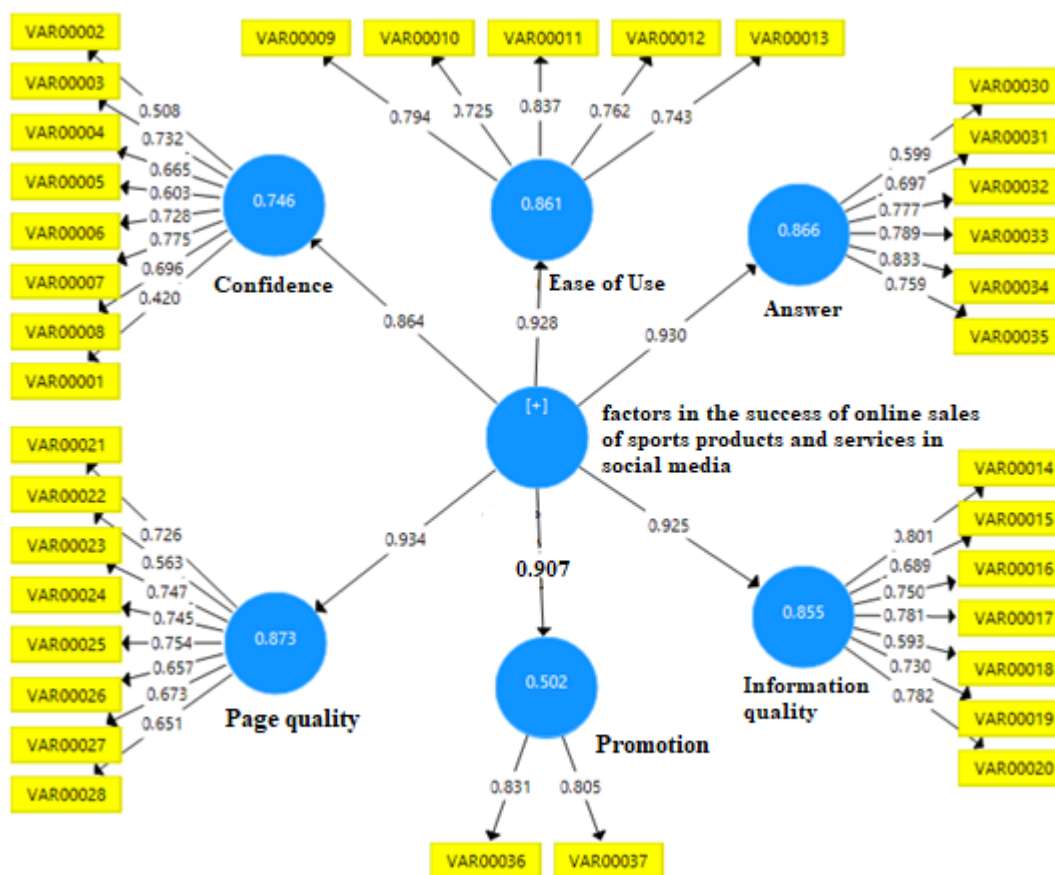


Figure 1. Structural equation model of success factors of online sales of sports products and services in social media (factors)

As can be seen, Figure 1, which specifies the factor loadings, all have factor loadings greater than 0.5 in the observed and latent variables, and as a result, all variables and factors remain in the model. The t statistic in each variable shows that considering that all values are higher than 1.96, their presence in the model is significant. Table (3) shows the estimation of the values of the generality evaluation indicators of the structural equation model.

Table 3- Estimating the values of the evaluation indicators of the structural equation model

Indicator	Amount
SRMR	0.101
Chi-Square	28.362
NFI	0.128

The overall evaluation indices of the structural equation model indicate that the hypothesized model developed by the research data is supported, in other words, the fit of the data to the established model and the fit indices indicate the desirability of the structural equation model.

Table 4- Estimating the effect of success factors of online sales of sports products and services in social media

	Amount	Sd	t	P values
Confidence	0.864	0.029	29.285	0.001
Ease of use	0.928	0.017	56.070	0.001
Answer	0.930	0.019	48.387	0.001
Information quality	0.925	0.21	44.738	0.001
Page quality	0.934	0.017	53.532	0.001
Promotion	0.709	0.126	5.639	0.001

According to table (4), all the components have a factor load greater than 0.5 and the appropriate standard deviation, t values are greater than 1.96 and the significance level is less than 0.05, and as a result, considering that the fit of the model is also suitable (according to table (5)), therefore, the model is suitable.

Table 5- The amount of coefficient of determination

	The coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination
Confidence	0.746	0.743
Ease of use	0.861	0.860
Answer	0.866	0.864
Information quality	0.855	0.854
Page quality	0.873	0.872
Promotion	0.502	0.497

According to table (5), all the coefficient of determination values are close to 0.5 and greater than that. This means that all these components have a proper relationship to determine the factors affecting the success of online sales of sports products and services in social media. In other words, in the defined model, reliability can be up to 74%, ease of use up to 86%, responsiveness up to 87%, information quality up to 86%, page quality up to 87% and promotion up to 50%.

Now, according to the identified main factors, in this part, they are prioritized over each other using Friedman's test. Table (6) shows the Friedman test related to the main factors.

Table 6- Friedman's test for ranking the main factors

Number	102
Chi score statistic	22.576
df	4
Sig.	0.001

As can be seen, the significance value is less than 0.05, and as a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, and therefore the indicators have priority over each other. Table (7) shows the ranks of each.

Table 7- Ranking of the main factors

	Average	Rank
Confidence	2.49	6
Ease of use	3.13	2
Answer	2.98	5
Information quality	3.13	2
Page quality	3.28	1
Promotion	3.03	4

Based on table (7), as can be seen, the most important main factors in the success of online sales of sports products and services in social media are page quality, ease of use, and promotion, respectively. Responsiveness and reliability are of lower importance in the eyes of users.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to identify success factors in online sales of sports products and services in social media. The first factor discovered is security. In this secure component, there are specifics including the uncertainty of the customer's internet information, not sharing the customer's personal information with other virtual networks, entering the network page with a password, providing an electronic certificate to confirm the features of the security network (regarding the security of the payment transaction) and (from customer credit card information), The level of continuous activity of the pages depends on the satisfaction and confidence of customers, commitment and honesty in the quality and equality of photos and films (sports goods or services) with the original quality and assurance of the price provided and the type of product on the page (sports goods or services) with the price of the quality or services are available in the market. This component is consistent with the research of [Safaie and AtefYekta \(2019\)](#) in terms of the amount of continuous activity.

The second component is ease of use, which includes elements such as: ease of access to different parts of the company's page (organization or store), ease of direct communication between the administrator (responsible) and customers in case of problems, ease of creating a special page (store) or organization) on the media, the ease of creating through a story (store or organization) on the media and the ease of sending the product after ordering the product from the page until the individual accesses the product. This component is also emphasized in the research of [Esmailpour and Kabiri Fard \(2018\)](#) and in this sense it is in line with the related research.

The third component is the quality of information, which includes subcomponents such as: categorizing items in an orderly and orderly manner (easy to find what you are looking for), support through admin and

support pages from the media page, the presence of comments and suggestions section and viewing Comments from previous customers, new posts by customers about (new and customer-favored products or services), correct operation of the page (store or organization) from a technical point of view (the page is not cluttered and is regular with the program), providing fast services and handling customer orders and the speed and accuracy of uploading posts and stories. This component is mentioned in the research of [Carlson, \(2018\)](#) under the title of content quality of the page, and from this point of view, it is in line with this research. Also, the research of [Jung et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Ashley and Tuten \(2015\)](#) is consistent with this research from the point of view that entertainment and differentiation can be created by providing appropriate content. The fourth component is the quality of the page, which includes these items: the attractiveness and up-to-datedness of the appearance and coloring of posts and stories in a one-hand format, the clarity of graphic forms (emoji) and writings (captions) on the media page (use of hashtags and suitable caption), the effect of the brand name of the page on the decision to buy or provide services, the view of the page (store or organization), the number of followers (without fake and real) of the page on the decision to buy or provide services, the number of famous people (celebrities) following the page media in buying or providing services, The number of followers of a page follower in buying or providing services, the number of likes of a page follower in buying or providing services and the effect of the number of comments of a page follower in buying or providing services. In terms of hedonic value, the present research is consistent with the research of [Carlson \(2018\)](#). It should be noted that the quality of the page is important in the ranking of the main components. This case has been emphasized in the research of [Safaie and AtefYekta \(2018\)](#) and the quality of information and promotion are ranked second and third.

The fifth component is accountability. This component consists of elements such as: sufficient knowledge of the page administrator (administrator) to answer, help, guide and solve the problems of customers using the page services, the existence of an administrator (administrator) who understands the customer's needs, the constant readiness and willingness of the page administrator (Admin) in helping the customer, the polite behavior of the operator (admin) in case of problems, requests and dissatisfaction with the services of the page (sales or service provision), The speed of online response and performance of tasks by the operator (admin) in the field of purchase and support and issues related to after-sales services of equipment or service provision is speed and power. This component is consistent with the researches of [Esmailpour and Kabiri Fard \(2018\)](#) in terms of appropriate interaction, [Carlson \(2018\)](#) in terms of interaction and Jung et al. (2018) in terms of sociality.

The sixth component is promotion, which includes advertising through (story and mentioning the name of the page) by other popular pages (celebrities) and media advertising (film loop and sales link in the story). This result is consistent with the research of [Ashley and Tuten \(2015\)](#) due to the consideration of the audience.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research, the following suggestions can be made:

The results of the research are in order to improve the sales situation of Instagram products through marketing, it is necessary to ensure the results in terms of product coordination, price and recognition in the market and are presented in a development plan to promote and advertise them.

It is recommended that the pages with customers are answered regularly by the admin online and through direct, so that they have easier access.

It is recommended to introduce new posts regularly and daily to provide services and to introduce products using short-term rails.

To promote the posts by using advertisement and sending them as a private message to the contacts. Followers are also asked to cooperate in promoting it so that the posts get more views.

It is suggested to use different channels in order to respond better and speed up this issue. In this work, use commonly used applications and contact numbers in this process.

Famous pages with real followers should be used for advertising and promotion. Also, celebrities and influencers should be used to prepare short films and advertisements.

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Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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