

# Presenting the model of human agency, self-efficacy and self-enhancement in the behavior of consumers of Qom leather products

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## Abstract

The motivations of human agency and various needs that influence behavior and decision-making are introduced as an important topic in behavioral sciences and management. In this field, two important motivations called self-efficacy and self-improvement are known to fulfil individual goals and satisfy human needs. The present research was conducted with the aim of providing a model of human agency, self-efficacy and self-improvement in the behavior of consumers of Qom leather products. In terms of purpose, it is practical, and in terms of the way of collecting information, it is part of qualitative research. The statistical population of the research includes university professors and leather industry experts who were selected using a non-random, purposeful sampling method. The data collection tool was interviews with experts using the Delphi method. This research was conducted in the winter of 2023. The obtained results led to the identification of 9 dimensions and 42 components, which included personality factors, psychological factors, environmental factors, cultural factors, social factors, self-efficacy, self-improvement, positive consequences and negative consequences.

Keywords: consumer behavior, human agency, self-efficacy, self-improvement, Qom leather products  
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## 1 Introduction

Consumer behavior involves more than people buying products and services. Consumer behavior is the final decision of the consumer, according to the processes of procurement, consumption and disposal of goods, services, time and different perspectives in a period of time [11]. Consumer behavior includes the study of purchasing units and exchange processes that include the acquisition, consumption, and disposal of goods, services, experiences, and ideas. Consumer behavior is not only related to the process of buying goods, but also includes the use of services, activities and beliefs [6]. Agency is an important concept in the fields of psychology and sociology, which has a significant impact on psychology and consumer behavior. In the conducted research, two distinct motivations for agency have been considered: self-efficacy and self-improvement. Self-efficacy motivation can lead to positive and negative behaviors, while self-improvement motivation creates other positive and negative outcomes. Marketers should also consider the

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effect of self-efficacy on the effectiveness of their advertisements or products. Agency represents an orientation in which a person puts themselves first and is associated with positive consequences, such as directing people to perform tasks and achieve goals. However, agency is also associated with negative consequences, including fostering materialistic behavior and selfishness [1]. Self-improvement in consumer behavior can help you achieve improvements in financial management, smart purchases, and customer satisfaction [9].

Self-efficacy, a key element in Bandura's cognitive-social theory, refers to an individual's belief and trust in their ability to control thoughts, emotions, activities, as well as their effective performance under stressful conditions. Self-efficacy leads to increased levels of satisfaction, mutual sales, word-of-mouth advertising, and loyalty. Since sellers perceive themselves as capable of setting higher goals and being persistent in achieving them, this result is expected. By linking the influence of leaders to salesperson behavior, it has been predicted that transformational leadership behavior is negative. The literature presents a new dark side and indicates the negative or futile consequences of a transformational leader [10]. Knowing the different motivations of agency allows us to better predict and understand consumer behavior and human behavior. Research shows that agency leads to favorable results in performing tasks, solving problems, and achieving goals. But research also shows that agency may lead to negative outcomes such as materialism, narcissism, and unfavorable social perceptions. While both self-efficacy and self-improvement motivations contribute to agency, each has a specific role in insight and prediction of individual behavior. Considering the importance of the resources and capabilities of the leather industry, it is very important to pay attention to the psychological factors affecting the sellers. This indicates that leather industry managers should, in addition to technical expertise, also pay attention to factors such as self-improvement and self-efficacy of sales forces. Furthermore, due to the lack of research, especially with a psychological approach in this area, conducting more research in this field seems essential [1]. They introduced a psychological tool called the Communicative and agentic motivation scale (CAMS). This scale is a 10-item scale of human agency, with two subscales that measure self-efficacy motives (e.g. self-sufficiency, self-reliance) and self-improvement motives (e.g. power, status). Environmental conditions such as demand and supply, competition, laws and regulations, technology and economic conditions also affect consumer behavior [5].

Researchers developed a conceptual framework that links the self-efficacy of salespeople with four customer response variables, including satisfaction, word-of-mouth marketing, loyalty, and mutual sales, moderated by two dimensions of managerial leadership behavior [10]. Incentives and stimulations can be effective in the consumer decision-making process and influence consumer behavior. These motivations can be understood by manufacturers and marketers and used in marketing and advertising strategies to encourage consumers to buy and use certain products and services [2].

Despite the capabilities and potential of the leather industry in the country, unfortunately, the market situation and sales of these products are not favorable. The presence of foreign competitors, lack of market analysis, and neglect of the capabilities and potentials of the sales force, along with other factors, are issues that, unfortunately, officials and stakeholders in the leather industry have not paid attention to. Factors such as human agency, where the level of knowledge of salespeople, the independence of their actions alongside available resources, along with self-improvement and self-efficacy of sales personnel, are issues that have been overlooked by stakeholders in this industry. Attention to psychological human resource factors alongside marketing capabilities and the use of its tools is an issue that should be addressed. Business owners should improve customer relationship management by considering the existence and strengthening of these motivations in salespeople, thereby increasing their willingness to purchase and creating satisfaction and loyalty among them. If currently unaware of the impact of these factors on sales and profitability, they focus solely on improving the quality of their products instead of enhancing and upgrading the sales force. In line with addressing raised issues, we are interested in answering the following question: How does the model of fundamental motivations of human agency, self-efficacy, compare to self-improvement in the consumer behavior of leather product consumers in the city of Qom?

## 2 Theoretical foundations of research

### 2.1 Basic motivations of human agency

Agency is an interdisciplinary concept at the intersection of psychology and sociology, as well as a basic human motivation with a long history in psychology and consumer behavior. However, research on agency has often overlooked the distinct differentiation between human motivations. The fundamental motivations of human agency, as motivations that drive human action and influence their behavior and actions, can be extensively investigated [1].

### 2.1.1 The most primary motivations of human agency

The motives of human agency include factors related to basic human needs, human communication and interaction needs with others, personal development and progress, achieving individual capacities and talents, desire for control over others and influence on their environment, achieving power and control over others. Furthermore, the inclination towards exploring and understanding the world, comprehending the causes and meanings of events through research, learning, and knowledge development, focusing on entrepreneurship, economic efficiency, wealth acquisition, and financial well-being, self-expression and articulation of needs, values, and personal evaluations are also among these factors. At times, efforts to eliminate injustice, imaginary rights, and unfair issues through negative motivations, a sense of belonging to the natural environment, and environmental protection through efforts to preserve natural resources, reduce pollution, inclination to serve others, help the community, and engage in charitable acts and improving the living conditions of others are also among the motivations of human agency. Generally, the main motivations of human agency include the following:

Physiological motivations, social motivations, self-actualization and personal growth motivations, power and control motivations, knowledge and curiosity motivations, financial and economic motivations, self-disclosure and evaluation motivations, anger and tension motivations, environmental and nature motivations, and humanitarian and service to others motivations [1].

## 2.2 The effect of motivation on consumer behavior

Consumer motivation plays a vital role in consumer behavior and can be influential in purchasing and using products and services. This motivation can increase attention to different products and services, influence purchase decisions, influence the choice between different products and services, and determine satisfaction with the purchase and experience. Consumer motivation can have a variety of effects, including increasing purchase intention, influencing product choice, influencing product satisfaction and experience, and fostering brand loyalty. These points show the importance of deep understanding of customers' motivations and needs for companies and brands [4].

## 2.3 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to belief in one's power and abilities to perform and confront tasks and challenges. Creating self-efficacy in consumers plays an important role in establishing sustainable and valuable relationships with products or services. A self-efficacy motivation can generate both positive behaviors (such as saving money, healthy choices) and negative behaviors (such as tunnel vision, excessive risk-taking) [1].

Self-efficacy encompasses an individual's pleasant feeling in performing tasks, which universally relates to motivation and successful task completion in all individuals. Self-efficacy, as an activating, empowering, sustaining, and guiding motivational factor, has been defined to steer behavior towards defined goals [3].

### 2.3.1 Self-efficacy in consumer behavior

Self-efficacy in consumer behavior refers to an individual's belief and feeling about their power and abilities in performing consumer behaviors. Increasing consumer self-efficacy can have a very positive impact on their purchasing decisions and consumption behaviors. This increase can be achieved through providing information and awareness, successful experiences, simple and understandable options, encouragement and rewards, education and counselling, and effective communication with the consumer. These strategies make the consumer feel capable and empowered to perform desirable consumption behaviors and motivate them to continuously use your product or service [1].

## 2.4 Self-improvement

Self-improvement means trying to improve and develop personality, skills, performance and quality of life. This concept is usually considered in the field of psychology and personal development. The goal of self-improvement is to improve the quality of life, increase personal satisfaction and improve performance in life. This process may require effort, persistence, and commitment, but it can lead to tremendous personal and professional growth. Self-improvement can produce positive (e.g., status and power symbols) and negative (e.g., materialism, negative psychological well-being) outcomes. Self-improvement can include:

Personal growth, developing skills, improving health, continuous learning, setting goals and self-care [1, 7].

### 2.4.1 Self-improvement in consumer behavior

Self-improvement in consumer behavior can help you improve financial management, make smart purchases, and improve customer satisfaction [1, 9].

### 2.4.2 Principles and strategies of self-improvement in consumer behavior

Self-improvement strategies in consumer behavior include setting financial goals, smart shopping planning, budget management, pre-purchase evaluation, consumer information enhancement, reducing the impact of advertising, responsible purchasing, conscious consumption, financial empowerment, long-term consequences assessment, value-based purchasing importance, resource allocation, awareness of new technologies, and interaction with the consumer community. These strategies help individuals make their purchases and consumption more carefully and consciously [1, 9].

### 2.4.3 The importance of self-improvement in the analysis of consumer behavior

Self-improvement is very important in the analysis of consumer behavior. This feature helps people to make better decisions in their purchases and consumption. With increased awareness of various products and services, individuals can make smarter choices. Additionally, self-improvement can help with more precise analysis of purchase risks and, by improving decision-making skills and financial capabilities, minimize financial risks. Awareness of the environmental and social impacts of purchases also enables individuals to make parallel choices that benefit the environment, local communities, and society. Self-improvement also aids in analyzing advertisements, identifying weaknesses and illegal practices, strengthening negotiation skills, and empowering individuals with greater power in purchases. This feature also plays a significant role in understanding and predicting the needs, preferences, and behaviors of consumers and helps in strategic marketing planning by analyzing consumer behavior patterns and trends [8].

## 2.5 Research questions

### 2.5.1 Main question

How is the model of fundamental motivations of human agency, self-efficacy, and self-improvement in the consumer behavior of leather products in Qom?

### 2.5.2 Sub-question

1. What are the dimensions and components of the basic motivational models of human agency?
2. How is the relationship between self-efficacy and self-improvement with consumer behavior?
3. How is the validation of the basic motives model of human agency?

## 3 Research methodology

The present study is applied in terms of its objective. In terms of data type, this research is exploratory, which, while considering the experts in this field, has initiated an investigation into the dimensions, components, and indicators of the model of human agency, self-efficacy, and self-improvement in the consumer behavior of leather products in Qom. In terms of the implementation method, the present study was a descriptive survey.

### 3.1 Data collection method

The method of data collection has been done in two parts: in the library part, the available theoretical resources have been studied and collected, and concepts, variables and main and secondary components have been identified with the Delphi method, and then the conceptual framework of the research has been formed. Therefore, it can be said that the tool of this research was a researcher-made questionnaire, and the resulting data were analyzed using the Delphi method.

### 3.2 Statistical population and sampling method

The statistical population of the research included experts, specialists, and informed individuals in the field of human agency, self-efficacy, and self-improvement in the behavior of consumers of Qom leather products. Using non-random purposeful sampling, the sample led to theoretical saturation by selecting 21 people.

### 3.3 Descriptive statistics

The type, gender, and work experience of the experts are categorized separately in Table 1.

Table 1: Type, gender and experience of experts

Experts	Gender		Experience			
	Female	Male	up to 5 years	10-15	15-25	More than 25 years
Knowledgeable professors in the field under study	4	10	0	5	4	5
Leather industry specialists	5	2	0	6	0	1
Total	9	12	0	11	4	6

### 3.4 Data analysis method

The present research aims to provide a model of human agency, self-efficacy and self-improvement in the behavior of consumers of Qom leather products by conducting interviews in a statistical sample, including university professors and leather industry experts, using the Delphi method. First, a questionnaire including factors affecting consumer behavior, human agency, and consequences was provided to 21 experts to rate each index based on a 5-point Likert scale. Furthermore, experts were asked to express any additional factors if they had considerations beyond the mentioned ones. The Delphi process goes through several rounds of iteration until the experts' opinions reach finality and stability. Ultimately, the variables, dimensions, and final components are extracted, and the conceptual model of the research is presented. The equations used in this context are as follows:

Mean (Average):

$$Mean = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n} \quad (3.1)$$

Median (Middle Value):

- For an odd number of observations:

$$Median = x_{(\frac{n+1}{2})} \quad (3.2)$$

- For an even number of observations:

$$Median = \frac{x_{(\frac{n}{2})} + x_{(\frac{n}{2}+1)}}{2} \quad (3.3)$$

Standard Deviation:

$$S.D. = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n - 1}} \quad (3.4)$$

where,  $x_i$  represents individual data points,  $\bar{x}$  represents the mean, and  $n$  represents the total number of observations.

#### 3.4.1 Delphi results

In the first step, a questionnaire consisting of factors related to presenting the model of fundamental motivators in human agency: self-efficacy compared to self-improvement in consumer behavior was designed. This questionnaire comprises 9 dimensions and 48 components and was provided to 21 experts to rate each index based on a 5-point Likert scale spectrum. The experts were also asked to express whether they have any factors other than the mentioned ones in mind. In the first round of the Delphi method, initially, the factors that obtained an average score of less than 3 in the first stage of Delphi were eliminated. The results indicated that 4 factors had an average score of less than 3, so they were removed. The reliability of the questionnaire in the first stage has also reached 0.889, which is acceptable as it is higher than 0.70. In this round, no new factor was proposed by the experts. In the second round of the Delphi method, initially, the factors that obtained an average score of less than 3 in the first stage of the Delphi were eliminated. The results showed that 2 factors had an average score of less than 3, so they were removed. In the second round of the Delphi method, the confirmed factors from the first stage were again presented to the experts through a questionnaire for them to score each indicator, similar to the first stage. Additionally, in this round, the average scores from the first round of Delphi were also provided to help individuals make decisions based on the overall

Variable	Dimensions	Component	First round				Second round				Third round			
			The lowest score	The highest score	Mean	S.D.	The lowest score	The highest score	Mean	S.D.	The lowest score	The highest score	Mean	S.D.
Factors affecting consumer behavior	Personality factors	Stress	1.0	5.0	4.2	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.5	0.6	4.0	5.0	4.5	0.5
		Level of cooperation	2.0	5.0	4.1	1.0	2.0	5.0	4.2	0.8	2.0	5.0	4.4	0.7
		Compatibility	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6	4.0	5.0	4.4	0.5
		Seriousness	4.0	5.0	4.6	0.5	3.0	5.0	4.4	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.5	0.6
	Psychological factors	Motivation	3.0	5.0	4.6	0.8	4.0	5.0	4.6	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.6	0.5
		Cognition	2.0	5.0	4.0	1.0	2.0	5.0	4.2	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6
		Feelings	2.0	5.0	4.2	1.1	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.4	0.8
	Environmental factors	Supply and Demand	2.0	5.0	3.7	1.0	3.0	5.0	3.8	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.6
		Competition	2.0	5.0	4.0	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.5	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.6
		Terms and Conditions	2.0	5.0	3.9	1.0	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.7
		Economic conditions	2.0	5.0	3.9	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.5
		Technology	2.0	5.0	3.9	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.6
	Cultural factors	Beliefs	2.0	5.0	4.2	1.0	4.0	5.0	4.4	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.4	0.5
		Life style	2.0	5.0	4.4	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.4	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.4	0.6
		Values	2.0	5.0	4.1	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.7
		Attitudes	4.0	5.0	4.4	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.3	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.3	0.5
Social factors	Family	2.0	5.0	4.1	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.5	
	Social influences	2.0	5.0	4.0	1.0	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.6	
	Social class	2.0	5.0	4.4	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.4	0.7	
Human agency	Self-efficacy	Self Confidence	4.0	5.0	4.6	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.6	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.6	0.5
		Belief in power	1.0	5.0	3.6	1.0	2.0	5.0	3.8	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.7
		Facing challenges	2.0	5.0	4.1	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6
		Reasonable financial savings	2.0	5.0	3.6	0.9				eliminated				
		Healthy choices	2.0	5.0	3.2	1.0	3.0	5.0	3.7	0.8	3.0	5.0	3.7	0.8
		Pleasant feeling	2.0	5.0	3.9	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.6

Consequences	Self-improvement	Personal growth	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.7	4.0	5.0	4.4	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.4	0.5
		Development of skills	3.0	5.0	4.4	0.7	4.0	5.0	4.5	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.5	0.5
		Improve health	2.0	5.0	3.6	0.9			eliminated					
		Continuous learning	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.7
		Setting goals	2.0	5.0	3.9	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6
		Self-care	2.0	5.0	4.1	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.8
		Mastery of emotions	2.0	5.0	3.8	1.0	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.8
	Positive consequences	Increased willingness to buy	2.0	5.0	4.1	0.9	2.0	5.0	4.0	0.8	4.0	5.0	4.1	0.7
		Influence on product choice	2.0	5.0	4.0	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.7
		Satisfaction with the product	2.0	5.0	3.6	0.9	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.8
		Brand loyalty	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.5	4.0	5.0	4.2	0.4	4.0	5.0	4.2	0.4
		Introducing the brand to others	1.0	5.0	4.1	1.0	3.0	5.0	4.2	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.3	0.6
		Smart shopping	1.0	5.0	3.9	1.1	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.8	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.8
		Responsible shopping	1.0	5.0	3.8	1.1	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.6
	Negative consequences	Tunnel vision	1.0	5.0	3.5	1.1	3.0	5.0	3.9	0.8	3.0	5.0	3.9	0.8
		Excessive risk taking	1.0	5.0	3.7	1.0	3.0	5.0	3.9	0.6	3.0	5.0	4.0	0.6
		Materialism	1.0	5.0	3.9	1.1	2.0	5.0	4.0	0.9	2.0	5.0	4.0	0.8
		Negative psychological well-being	1.0	4.0	3.2	0.9	3.0	5.0	3.7	0.6	3.0	5.0	3.8	0.6
		Reducing the impact of advertising	1.0	5.0	3.8	1.1	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.7	3.0	5.0	4.1	0.7

4 Research findings

According to the three Delphi steps, variables, dimensions and final components were obtained as described in Table 3.

Table 3: Variables, dimensions and final components		
Variable	Dimensions	Component
Factors affecting consumer behavior	Personality factors	Stress
		Level of cooperation
		Compatibility
		Seriousness
	Psychological factors	Motivation
		Cognition
		Feelings
	Environmental factors	Supply and Demand
		Competition
		Terms and Conditions
		Economic conditions
		Technology
	Cultural factors	Beliefs
		Life style
		Values
		Attitudes
	Social factors	Family
		Social influences
		Social class

Human agency	Self-efficacy	Self Confidence
		Belief in power
		Facing challenges
		Healthy choices
		Pleasant feeling
	Self-improvement	Personal growth
		Development of skills
		Continuous learning
		Setting goals
		Self-care
Consequences	Positive consequences	Mastery of emotions
		Increased willingness to buy
		Influence on product choice
		Satisfaction with the product
		Brand loyalty
	Negative consequences	Introducing the brand to others
		Smart shopping
		Responsible shopping
		Tunnel vision
		Excessive risk taking
		Materialism
		Negative psychological well-being
		Reducing the impact of advertising

## 5 Conceptual model of research

Considering the Delphi stages, the final variables, dimensions, and components include factors influencing consumer behavior (personality factors, psychological factors, environmental factors, cultural factors, social factors), human agency (self-efficacy and self-improvement), and consequences (positive consequences and negative consequences). Therefore, the conceptual model of the research is illustrated in Figure 1.

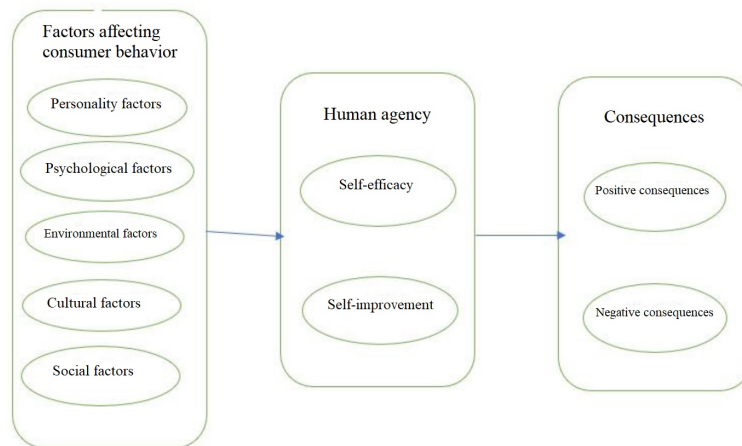


Figure 1: Conceptual model of research

## 6 Conclusion and suggestion

This study aims to provide a model of the fundamental motivations of human agency, especially self-efficacy and self-improvement, and their impact on the behavior of consumers of domestic leather products in the city of Qom. In this research, a model for analyzing and explaining the behavior of consumers of Qom leather products was presented using expert opinions and the Delphi method. This model includes various dimensions of factors influencing consumer behavior (personality, psychological, environmental, cultural, and social factors), human agency (self-efficacy and



self-improvement), and consequences (positive and negative consequences) that can elucidate consumer behavior in purchasing Qom leather products. The key finding of this research revolves around the central concept of human agency (self-efficacy and self-improvement), which is intricately linked to the other concepts in some way. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that self-efficacy and self-improvement have a significant impact on consumer behavior in purchasing Qom leather products. The positive outcomes of self-efficacy and self-improvement in leather consumer behavior include increased willingness to purchase, influence on product selection, product satisfaction, brand loyalty, introducing the brand to others, and smart and responsible buying. Negative outcomes include tunnel vision, excessive risk-taking, materialism, negative psychological well-being, and reducing the impact of advertising.

Self-efficacy and self-improvement, and their impact on consumer behavior have been studied sporadically, and comprehensive studies in this area are limited. This research contributes significantly to the development of marketing knowledge and consumer behavior and helps bridge the research gap in this field. Considering the presented model and the obtained results, the following practical suggestions are proposed for businesses that offer Qom leather products: Salespersons with stronger communication skills and better stress management can establish better communication with consumers and gain their trust. Informing about environmental factors such as supply and demand, laws and regulations, and economic conditions can help consumers make better decisions when purchasing Qom leather products. Connecting with the cultural and social values of consumers can foster brand loyalty and establish positive relationships with other consumers. Educational programs for developing skills and self-improvement of consumers, along with research programs to explore their needs and preferences, can help improve consumer behavior and increase their satisfaction. Advertising tailored to the needs and preferences of consumers and using appropriate tools can have a positive impact on their purchasing behavior. By implementing these practical suggestions, positive effects on the behavior of consumers of Qom leather products can be achieved, enhancing the performance of related trades and businesses.

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