

IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION: MEDIATION EFFECT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSIVE CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF CHINESE CUSTOMERS

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Abstract: The high growth of internet and the usage of smartphones has transformed consumerism and business approaches in the digital economy of China. This paper examines the impact of digital marketing on online purchase intention focusing on mediating variables Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO). Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a structured questionnaire was sent to the online consumers in Shenzhen and 400 valid responses were obtained. The strength of the measurement model was also proved during reliability and validity tests and multiple regression analysis revealed that digital marketing has a positive impact on both CRM and RCO which positively influence purchase intention. Mediation analysis also showed that CRM has a greater mediating impact than RCO. These results indicate that digital marketing performance is not limited by technological coverage, but it depends on the practices that are customer-centric and can help build trust, responsiveness, and loyalty. The research has added value to TPB applications in digital marketing, offered managerial implications to enhance CRM and responsiveness strategies and has given future research directions on the utilization of a broader sample, longitudinal designs and inclusion of other constructs like brand trust and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Digital marketing, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO), Purchase Intention, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)*

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1. Introduction

Digital marketing is now a major factor in consumer decisions due to the quick development of digital technologies, which has completely changed how businesses interact with their customers. Businesses can engage with customers in real time and customize their communication strategies by utilizing data analytics, social media, and mobile platforms. Empirical research on the impact of digital marketing on purchase intention, however, is still equivocal. While some research indicates that it has a direct positive impact, other studies contend that organizational capabilities and relational mechanisms determine its impact. These contradictory findings suggest that there is still more to learn about the mechanisms by which digital marketing influences behavioral intention. Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

(TPB), which emphasizes personal cognitive factors like attitudes and perceived behavioral control, has been widely used to explain purchase intention. However, earlier TPB-based research in digital settings mostly concentrates on the internal assessments of consumers and gives little consideration to relational tactics at the firm level that could influence these psychological processes. Although their integration into the TPB framework is still poorly understood, organizational capabilities like Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO) are likely to have an impact on how consumers form attitudes and intentions in interactive digital environments.

This study suggests that digital marketing indirectly affects purchase intention through improved responsiveness and strengthened CRM, drawing on relational marketing theory and the CRM perspective presented by Padmavathy et al. This study expands TPB beyond individual cognition and adds an organizational perspective to consumer decision-making processes by integrating CRM and RCO into the TPB framework. By connecting individual-level behavioral theory with firm-level relational capabilities, the study makes a theoretical contribution by providing a more comprehensive explanation of how digital marketing influences purchase intention. The results emphasize that customer-oriented organizational practices and technological tools are both necessary for sustainable competitive advantage, and they offer managers practical advice on how to match digital campaigns with CRM systems and responsive customer strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Underpinning: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The theory upon which this research is based is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Icek Ajzen. TPB assumes that behavioral intention is manifested by three essential psychological elements: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, these variables predict actual behavior. Attitude is the positive or negative evaluation of an individual to perform a behavior; and subjective norm is the perceived social pressure from important others; and perceived behavioral control is the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior based on the available resources and abilities. In the context of digital consumption, TPB has proven to have a great deal of explanatory power. Bosnjak, Ajzen, and Schmidt (2020) demonstrate the link between online platform usability and trust, and their impact on perceived behavioral control, suggesting that environmental and organizational variables could influence cognitive determinants of intention. Conner (2020) additionally confirms that TPB is an effective predictor for volitional and purposive behaviors like online buying driven by the exposure of digital advertising. Worthington (2021) states that TPB connects persuasion theory and consumer behavior in mediated digital environments where advertising stimuli impact cognitive evaluations and social perceptions. Although these studies support the usefulness of TPB in digitally mediated contexts, a major limitation of these studies is that they have largely focused on individual-level cognition and have underappreciated the extent to which firm-level relational mechanisms influence the development of attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control. In high-interactive digital environments organizational practices such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO) can have an impact on these psychological determinants, which can strengthen trust, decrease uncertainty and increase relational engagement. Therefore, extending TPB to include CRM and RCO enables a more detailed explanation of conversion of the marketing strategies applied in the digital context into online purchase intention.

2.2. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the use of digital technologies and platforms to market products and communicate with consumers using interactive and personalized approaches. Unlike one-way communication that is traditional, digital marketing allows for real-time interaction and two-way information exchange (Chaffey & Smith, 2022). Within the TPB framework, such interaction may influence attitude in terms of perceived value and satisfaction, influence subjective norms in terms of social media interactions and electronic word-of-mouth, and increase perceived behavioral control in terms of accessibility to information and transparency. Dwivedi et al. (2021) state that social media interactions both create brand-consumer engagement and satisfaction, which are closely related to positive attitudinal development. Laksamana (2018) shows that repeated interaction on the Internet increase purchase intention, which is the evidence that digital engagement is a factor of strengthening behavioral intention. De Pelsmacker et al. (2018) further stress on the integration of digital tools and CRM systems outcomes increasing responsiveness and the quality of the relationship, thereby affecting trust and the risk perceived, which are critical antecedents of intention under TPB. Thus, digital marketing not only has direct psychological evaluations but also enhances the relational infrastructures such as CRM and RCO. Because digital platforms produce customer data and allow for personalized communications, they improve the capability of firms to put in place structured relationship management practices. Therefore, digital marketing is expected to have positive impact on CRM. In addition to enhancing structured relationship systems, digital marketing also improves organizational responsiveness through real-time interaction and feedback mechanisms.

H1: Digital Marketing has a positive effect on Customer Relationship Management.

H2: Digital Marketing has a positive effect on Responsive Customer Orientation.

2.3. Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) can be used to refer to the systems, technologies and strategic processes of managing customer interactions throughout the customer lifecycle. It aims to increase long-term relationships, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty with personalized engagement and data-driven communication. Ngelyaratan and Soediantono (2022) define CRM as a technology-based process that aggregates customer information to enable customised interactions, whereas Berestetska et al. (2023) believe that real-time feedback and personalised offers turn transactional interactions into long-term relationships. Deiss and Henneberry (2020) has gone further to suggest that CRM integration of social media and email platforms leads to increased understanding of consumer behavior and Kingsnorth (2022) points out that advanced segmentation is used to improve targeting accuracy, improved marketing performance.

Within the TPB model, CRM affects behavioral intention by influencing the psychological determinants of intention. Personalized communication and systematic relationship management improve trust and satisfaction which lead to positive attitudes toward purchasing. By making information about the situation structured and reducing uncertainty, CRM also enhances perceived behavioral control. Padmavathy et al. (2012) shows that CRM effectiveness improves the perception of service quality and the trust level of the relationship, which in turn will increase the level of purchase intention. Therefore, CRM is an organizational mechanism of translating the digital interaction into favorable psychological evaluations, which eventually affect behavioral intention.

H3: Customer Relationship Management has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

2.4. Responsive Customer Orientation

Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO) is the capacity of an organization to sense and react to customer needs in a timely manner. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) define responsiveness as transformation market intelligence into strategies for action whereas Narver and Slater (1990) define customer orientation as ongoing learning about target customers in order to develop superior value. In digital environments, responsiveness is more visible and measurable, because of real-time interaction and transparent feedback mechanisms. Dwivedi et al. (2021) believe that digital platforms allow corporations to see the reaction of consumers continuously and can change the communication and offerings as soon as possible.

From a TPB perspective, RCO affects behavioral intention by influencing subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. When consumers perceive that a firm is responsive to consumer needs with speed and flexibility, consumers are more likely to perceive the firm as being reliable and socially endorsed, which reinforces normative beliefs. At the same time, responsive service helps to reduce uncertainty and increase the feeling of control among consumers in making purchasing decisions. Thus, RCO is a dynamic organizational capability that helps implementing intention formation in digital contexts.

H4: Responsive Customer Orientation has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

2.5. Purchase intention

Purchase intention is a consumer's readiness to perform purchasing behavior or willingness and is the immediate antecedent of actual behavior under TPB. According to Nawaz and Kaldeen (2020), trust, perceived value and online engagement are the important drivers of intention in digital marketing circumstances. Pena-Garcia et al. (2020) highlight that website quality, perceived security and social proof impact intention formation, especially in the field of online retailing. Sohn and Kim (2020) point out the value of interactivity and user-generated content in boosting trust and credibility; and Rausch and Kopplin (2021) find that value congruence between consumers and brands increase purchase intention. Li and Peng (2021) further demonstrate that influencer credibility and expertise have positive effects in the decision-making process, and Yones and Muthaiyah (2023) indicate that short-form video marketing, such as TikTok, boosts the intention through peer suggestion and content virality. Collectively, these studies suggest that purchase intention in digital markets is determined by cognitive, emotional and social stimuli. Within TPB, these stimuli play a role in attitude formation, normative perception, and perceived control. Therefore, relational mechanism like CRM and RCO are expected to enhance the purchase intention since the relationship affect the psychological determinants positively.

2.6. Linking Digital Marketing, CRM, and RCO to Purchase Intention

Although direct effects of digital marketing on awareness and attitude towards behavior can be significant (Yadav & Pathak, 2016), the effect on purchase intention through direct persuasion is unlikely to work. Instead, it depends on relational and organizational mechanisms to be effective. Digital marketing creates interaction, engagement and data that contributes to building robust CRM systems and increases the responsiveness of organizations. CRM builds trust, satisfaction, and relational dedication (Padmavathy et al., 2012; Ngelyaratan & Soediantono, 2022), as well as forming positive attitudes and lowering risk perception. Similarly, RCO is indicative of the reliability and flexibility (Narver and Slater, 1990; Dwivedi et al., 2021), which is associated with subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Thus, in the longer TPB framework framework, CRM and RCO act as mediating variables between

the digital marketing activities and the psychological determinants of intention. Consequently it is expected that the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention will be mediated partially by CRM and RCO.

H5: Customer Relationship Management mediates the positive relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention.

H6: Responsive Customer Orientation mediates the positive relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention.

3. Research Methodology

This study used a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between digital marketing, customer relationship management (CRM), responsive customer orientation (RCO) and purchase intention of online consumers in Shenzhen, China. A structured questionnaire was developed on the basis of established literature and measurement scales were adapted according to the research context. The instrument was in two parts: The first one obtained demographic data (gender, age, income, online shopping frequency and online shopping experience), and the other part measured the perceptions of digital marketing, CRM, RCO and purchase intention by using a five-point Likert scale rated from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Digital marketing items were adapted from Sivasankaran (2013), De Pelsmacker et al. (2018), and Yuvaraj and Indumathi (2018), CRM items were based on Roy et al. (2012), Mukami (2017), and Lee-Kelley et al. (2003), RCO items were based on Blocker et al. (2011), and purchase intention items were based on Laksamana (2018).

The target population included online consumers living in Shenzhen, which is a leading city in China for the digital economy, a city with a high penetration rate of internet and online shopping. According to official statistical reports, Shenzhen's population is over 17 million, and a considerable number of them are actively involved in digital commerce activities, but the actual number of users of digital marketing is not made public. On the basis of a large and indefinite population size, the sample size was calculated by using Yamane's (1967) formula with a margin of error of 5% giving a minimum requirement of 400 respondents. Convenience sampling was used because of accessibility issues and the nature of the study to explore consumer perceptions in a highly digitalized setting. The questionnaire was distributed online through Wenjuanxing.com., and the links of the survey were shared through WeChat, email, and social networking platforms to reach active online consumers. The survey was given in both English and Chinese to enhance its clarity and accuracy of response. A pilot test with 30 individuals was performed to assure content validity, clarity of wording and reliability of the instrument prior to full-scale data collection. After screening the data and removing the incomplete responses, a total of 400 valid questionnaires were reserved for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent profile and reliability analysis to measure internal consistency of the constructs. Correlation analysis was used to see the relationship among the variables, whereas multiple regression analysis using the software package of the Statistical Package and Scientific Solutions (SPSS) was used to test the six hypotheses both in direct effect and mediating roles of CRM and RCO to purchase intention. This was a methodological design that assured systematic and rigorous testing of the proposed model using empirical data based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Results

Online consumers of Shenzhen, China (n=400) were the ones who were sampled and found to have given out good responses. The demographic profile indicates that most of the respondents were aged between 18 and 30 years and there was a balance between gender with a significant proportion being undergraduate degree and the average frequency of online shopping was two to three times a month. Data analysis was done in two steps. First, the measurement model was tested in order to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs. Secondly, the structural model was run to test the hypotheses and mediation effects.

Measurement Model

Cronbach alpha was used to test reliability. It was also seen that, in the pretest (N = 30), Cronbach alpha values ranged between 0.860 and 0.867 (resulting in a sensitivity of 0.867) whereas in the main survey (N = 400) the values were between 0.852 and 0.889 (sensitivity of 0.889). This established the fact that the constructs, namely Digital Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Responsive Customer Orientation, and Purchase Intention have internal consistency.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients indicated that there were significant and positive coefficients among all the core variables. The Customer Relationship Management and Responsive Customer Orientation were both strongly and moderately correlated with Digital Marketing ($r = 0.475, p < 0.01$ and $r = 0.345, p < 0.01$, respectively). Customer Relationship Management ($r = 0.460, p < 0.01$) and Responsive Customer Orientation ($r = 0.291, p < 0.01$) were both positively related to Purchase Intention. These results present initial intrinsic evidence of the hypotheses.

Hypotheses Testing and Structural Model

All six hypotheses were validated by the results of the structural model. Digital marketing significantly improved responsive customer orientation ($\beta = 0.345, p < 0.001$) and customer relationship management ($\beta = 0.475, p < 0.001$). Additionally, Purchase Intention was significantly predicted by both Responsive Customer Orientation ($\beta = 0.291, p < 0.001$) and Customer Relationship Management ($\beta = 0.460, p < 0.001$).

4.2. Discussion

This study examined the mediating role of customer relationship management (CRM), responsive customer orientation (RCO) in the link between digital marketing and purchase intention. The results show that CRM and RCO are significantly influenced by the digital marketing and both variables are also significant in predicting purchase intention. However, variations in the strength of the effect do tell us more.

CRM showed greater direct impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.460$) than did RCO ($\beta = 0.291$), indicating that structured relationship management systems may have a more stable and long lasting impact on consumer behavioural intention than general responsiveness alone. While responsiveness improves customer's perception of attentiveness and quality of interactions, systematic CRM mechanisms seem to promote greater trust, continuity of relationship and long-term commitment, which more effectively translates into purchase decisions.

Similarly, the indirect influence of digital marketing on the purchase intention via CRM ($\beta = 0.159$) was significantly stronger than the indirect influence via RCO ($\beta = 0.057$). Although the two mediating paths were statistically significant, the relative weakness of the RCO pathway indicates that responsiveness in isolation may not be sufficient to translate digital engagement into concrete behavioral intention in the absence of being embedded in structured systems of relationship. However, this finding is partially counterintuitive to previous studies that focus on the predominance of real-time interaction and responsiveness in influencing purchase intention in digital spaces. Previous studies have argued that interactive communication and fast social media response can directly stimulate buy intentions of consumers without formalized relationship structures. The fact that divergence is observed in this study may be attributed to contextual difference. In extremely competitive and information-saturated markets like Shenzhen, consumers are often exposed to intensive digital stimuli. Under such conditions, mere responsiveness may not distinguish firms well. Instead, data-driven, institutionalized CRM systems to provide personalized and consistent relationship management may become more important in reinforcing behavioral intention.

This implies that the effectiveness of digital marketing may be dependent on how much responsiveness is built into formal CRM infrastructures rather than being implemented as a stand-alone operational capacity. When responsiveness can be supported by systematic data management, customer profiling and long-term tracking of interactions, more powerful psychological commitment and behavioral outcomes can be created.

Theoretically, this study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by adding the Organizational-Level relational mechanisms as mediating variables between the digital marketing stimuli and behavioral intention. By doing this, it spans the gap between individual level cognitive theory and firm level strategic practices. Managerially, the findings suggest that companies need to go beyond short-term reactive engagement strategies and invest in broader, comprehensive CRM infrastructures, with integrated customer databases, personalized communication systems and ongoing feedback monitoring mechanisms, in order to increase the long-term effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives.

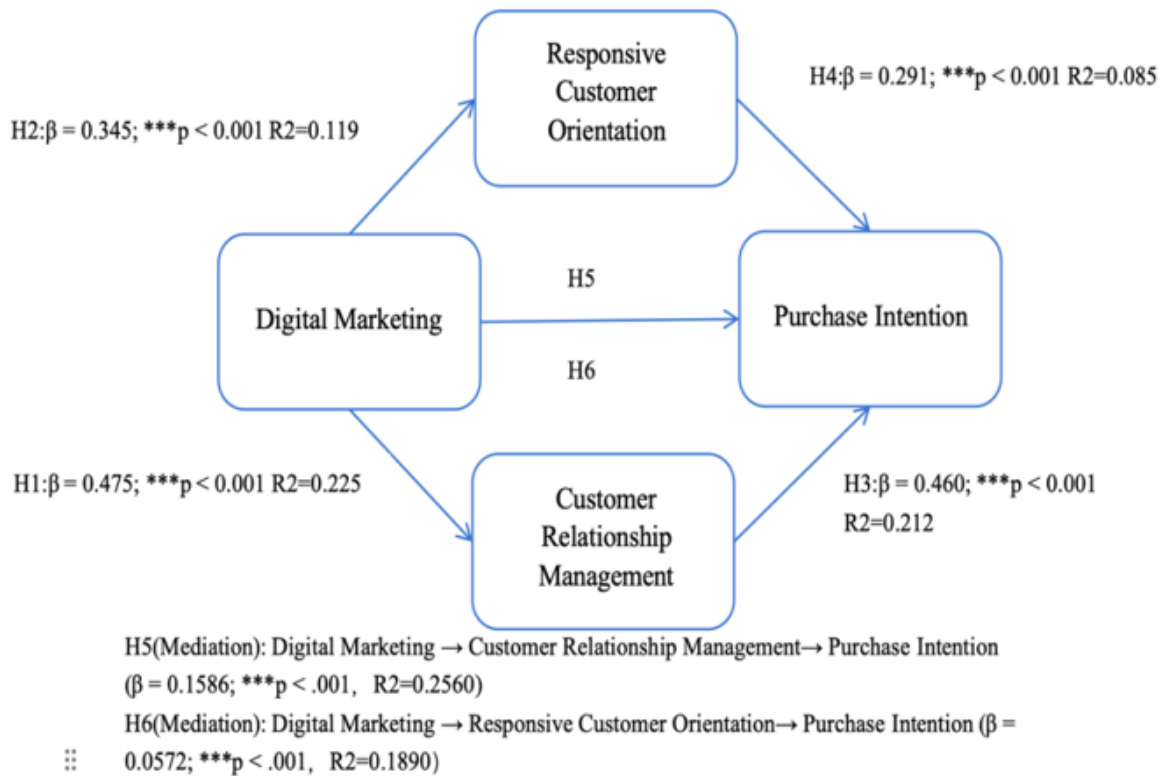
Table 1. Hypothesis testing result (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis Path	β	t-value	Conclusion
H1 Digital Marketing → Customer Relationship Management	0.475	9.84	Supported
H2 Digital Marketing → Responsive Customer Orientation	0.345	7.12	Supported
H3 Customer Relationship Management → Purchase Intention	0.460	9.21	Supported
H4 Responsive Customer Orientation → Purchase Intention	0.291	5.86	Supported

Table 2. Hypothesis testing result (Mediating Effects)

Hypothesis Path	β	t-value	Conclusion
H5 Digital Marketing → Purchase Intention (Indirect via CRM)	0.159	4.37	Supported
H6 Digital Marketing → Purchase Intention (Indirect via RCO)	0.057	2.94	Supported

Figure 1. Structural Mode



5. Conclusion

This study offers a thorough examination of how digital marketing affects online purchase intention using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO). The results show several important conclusions. This study theoretically expands the use of the TPB model to the context of digital consumers by showing that organizational practices like CRM and RCO are important antecedents that affect consumer attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and ultimately purchase intention. The findings of Padmavathy et al. (2012) and Dwivedi et al. (2021) are further supported by the results, which show that digital marketing strategies improve the efficacy of CRM in influencing consumer decision-making and value creation. Furthermore, rather than just serving as communication tools, the study emphasizes how important social media technologies are for improving CRM performance through real-time interaction and responsiveness.

From a managerial standpoint, the results indicate that in order to provide individualized customer experiences and cultivate enduring loyalty, businesses should go beyond conventional digital outreach and completely integrate CRM systems. The development of consumer trust in digital marketplaces is greatly aided by proactive engagement and social listening, which are recognized as crucial elements of responsive customer orientation. By coordinating digital marketing efforts with the three main TPB components—attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—managers can attain more positive behavioral outcomes. In summary, this study provides a structured framework for academics

and practitioners navigating the changing digital landscape by bridging the gap between consumer psychology and digital marketing practice. To further confirm and broaden the findings' generalizability, future studies are urged to investigate the relationships' cross-cultural and geographic applicability.

Limitation

Despite the fact this research offers useful information about the impact of digital marketing on purchase intention using the mediating variables responsive customer orientation and customer relationship management, it has a number of limitations that are worth mentioning. To begin with, the data were gathered through one particular platform (WENJUANXING.COM) and 400 participants of a particular demographic and geographic environment, which could restrict the ability to consider the results in terms of bigger or global populations. Secondly, the research design used is cross-sectional, which is only used to capture the responses at a single point in time, not allowing any causal inference of the responses; hence, longitudinal studies are required in the future in order to establish the changes in behaviour with time. Third, self-reported data can lead to the possibility of having biases like social desirability or misinterpretation of the questions in the surveys which can influence the reliability of the findings. Fourth, it centered on four major constructs namely: digital marketing, customer relationship management, responsive customer orientation and purchase intention only and prevented possibly important variables such as brand trust, perceived risk, or emotional engagement that can further be added in the model. Lastly, the quantitative methods only reduce the depth of interpretation, and future study can be enhanced by adopting mixed-method techniques to obtain a deeper insight into the consumer attitudes and behavior.

Research Recommendations

Further studies should also use a mixed method approach with the combination of both methods to bring out more profound research. Although this research was based on quantitative survey only, the inclusion of open-ended questions, focus group or in-depth interviews would have given an insight into consumer motivations, attitudes and emotional reactions which cannot be readily quantified by mere numerical data. Longitudinal research design would also be suggested in order to monitor the changing influence of digital marketing strategies, customer relationship management practices, and responsive customer orientation on purchase intention especially in fast changing digital settings. In order to make the results more general and applicable in real life, the sample size of future researchers should be increased to cover working professionals, older customers, and individuals with different income levels to expand the scope of applicability. Multinational or cross-cultural studies may also help clarify the presence of variations in digital marketing performance and consumer expectations in different settings, which future multinational companies may take action on. Also, future research can further expand the model by analyzing other possible mediating or moderating variables like trust, brand experience, or customer satisfaction and thus give a more detailed picture of the effectiveness of digital marketing.

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Appendix

Digital Marketing (DM)

DM01: The digital marketing helps me in searching right product while shopping online.

DM02: Digital marketing provides me quality information.

DM03: Detailed information is available in E-media while online shopping.

DM04: It's easy to do comparison with other products on website while shopping online.

DM05: Opinion exchange with others is possible through brand social networking site.

DM06: Digital marketing facilitates 24/7 shopping.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM01: Company attends my complaints promptly.

CRM02: Company pays constant attention to maintain highly appealing products.

CRM03: Company periodically send email updates about new services and products.

CRM04: Company periodically contacts for personalized services.

CRM05: Company places important on developing on going relations.

Responsive Customer Orientation (RCO)

RCO01: Always responds effectively when we ask them to make changes.

RCO02: Takes immediate action when we tell them we've changed what we want from the relationship.

RCO03: Reacts quickly to our requests for changes.

RCO04: Is always flexible to adapt to changes we ask for.

RCO05: Never stops short of fully accommodating our requests for changes.

RCO06: Is always willing to accommodate our requests for changes.

Purchase Intention (PI)

PI01: I would intend to become an online shopper.

PI02: My willingness to become an online shopper is great.

PI03: I am willing to become an online shopper.

PI04: I have a high intention to become an online shopper.

PI05: The next time I browse online for a product, I plan to purchase online.