

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND CUSTOMER  
ENGAGEMENT ON ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTIONS FOR SMALL FOOD  
BUSINESS



MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN DIGITAL ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT INNOVATION  
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EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND CUSTOMER  
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BUSINESS



TIANLIANG WANG

A INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION  
IN DIGITAL ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT INNOVATION (INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAM)  
ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MAEJO UNIVERSITY  
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APPROVED BY

Advisory Committee

Chair .....

(Assistant Professor Dr. Sutthikarn Khong-khai)

...../...../ .....

Committee .....

(Associate Professor Dr. Siriporn Kiratikarnkul)

...../...../ .....

Committee .....

(Dr. Prayong Kusirisin)

...../...../ .....

Program Chair, Master of Business .....

Administration

in Digital Economics and Management (Associate Professor Dr. Siriporn Kiratikarnkul)

Innovation

(International Program) .....

CERTIFIED BY THE OFFICE OF  
ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT

.....

(Associate Professor Dr. Chaiyot Sumritsakun)

Acting Vice President

...../...../ .....

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ชื่อผู้เขียน	Mr. Tianliang Wang
ชื่อปริญญา	บริหารธุรกิจมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาเศรษฐศาสตร์ดิจิทัลและนวัตกรรมการ จัดการ (หลักสูตรนานาชาติ)
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### บทคัดย่อ

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โดยใช้แบบสอบถามออนไลน์เป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ใช้สถิติในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล  
ประกอบด้วย สถิติเชิงพรรณนา และการวิเคราะห์การถดถอยเชิงพหุคูณ ผลการวิจัย พบว่า ผู้บริโภค  
ให้ความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับ 1) ปัจจัยของตลาดดิจิทัลโดยรวมอยู่ในระดับมาก โดยด้านความสะดวก อยู่  
ในระดับมากที่สุด และด้านการรับรู้ผลิตภัณฑ์, ข้อเสนอแนะ และการปฏิบัติตาม  
ลูกค้า, ความสัมพันธ์ของลูกค้ากับแบรนด์, และ ข้อมูลความปลอดภัยและความเป็นส่วนตัวของลูกค้า  
อยู่ในระดับ 2) ปัจจัยของการมีส่วนร่วมของลูกค้าโดยรวมอยู่ในระดับมาก โดยด้านการอุทิศตน อยู่  
ในระดับมากที่สุด ส่วนความกระตือรือร้น และความรู้สึกเป็นอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกัน อยู่ในระดับมาก และ  
ผลการทดสอบสมมติฐาน พบว่า การรับรู้ผลิตภัณฑ์ ( $\beta = 0.261$ ), ข้อเสนอแนะและการปฏิบัติตาม  
ลูกค้า ( $\beta = 0.178$ ), ความสะดวก ( $\beta = 0.221$ ), ความสัมพันธ์ของลูกค้ากับแบรนด์ ( $\beta = 0.238$ ),  
ความกระตือรือร้น ( $\beta = 0.384$ ), ระดับการมีส่วนร่วม ( $\beta = 0.321$ ) มีผลในเชิงบวกอย่างมี  
นัยสำคัญต่อความตั้งใจที่จะซื้อออนไลน์ ระดับความสำคัญอยู่ที่ 0.05 การวิจัยนี้ช่วยให้นักวิชาการ  
เข้าใจว่าการตลาดดิจิทัลส่งผลกระทบต่อพฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคของธุรกิจอาหารขนาดเล็กอย่างไร  
โดยเฉพาะในตลาดเมืองที่เติบโตอย่างรวดเร็วของจีน

คำสำคัญ : การตลาดดิจิทัล, การมีส่วนร่วมของลูกค้า, ความตั้งใจในการซื้อ, ความตั้งใจในการซื้อ

ออนไลน์, ธุรกิจอาหารขนาดเล็ก



<b>Title</b>	EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTIONS FOR SMALL FOOD BUSINESS
<b>Author</b>	Mr. Tianliang Wang
<b>Degree</b>	Master of Business Administration in Digital Economics and Management Innovation (International Program)
<b>Advisory Committee Chairperson</b>	Assistant Professor Dr. Sutthikarn Khong-khai

### ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on the online purchase intentions of consumers in small food businesses in Xi'an, China. Data were collected via an online questionnaire from 406 consumers who had engaged with small food businesses through platforms such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis were utilized to analyze the data. The findings indicated that consumers rated the variables within the digital market factor highly. Notably, convenience was identified at the highest level. Other variables, such as product awareness, customer feedback and compliance, consumer-brand relationships, and information security and privacy, also received high ratings. Additionally, the study revealed high levels of overall customer engagement, with dedication ranking at the highest level, and both enthusiasm and a sense of unity observed at significant levels. Hypothesis testing results showed that product awareness ( $\beta = 0.261$ ), feedback and customer compliance ( $\beta = 0.178$ ), convenience ( $\beta = 0.221$ ), consumer-brand relationships ( $\beta = 0.238$ ), absorption ( $\beta = 0.384$ ), and contribution degree ( $\beta = 0.321$ ) significantly and positively influence online purchase intentions, with a significance level of 0.05. This research enhances the academic understanding of how digital marketing influences consumer behavior in small food businesses, particularly

in China's rapidly growing urban markets.

Keywords : Digital Marketing, Customer Engagement, Purchase Intention, Online Purchase Intention, Small Food Business



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Tianliang Wang



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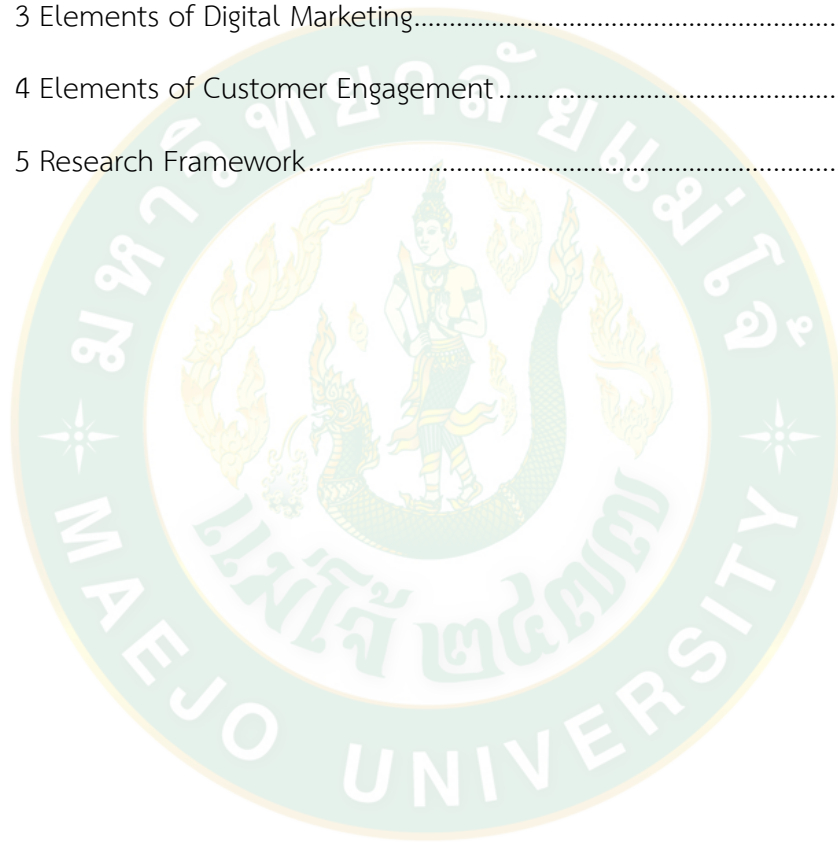
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Digital technologies and innovations are currently reshaping the contemporary business landscape, initiating a revolutionary paradigm shift in corporate operations. It is paramount for organizations to cultivate a novel mindset geared towards consistently delivering value to their customers (ibid). These emerging technologies harbor the potential to disrupt consumer behavior, reshape management methodologies, and redefine organizational strategies (Evans, 2017). The increasing prevalence of internet users is creating new dimensions in the business realm, prominently exemplified by the advent of electronic commerce (e-commerce). The concept of 'digital transformation' encapsulates the strategic leveraging of digital technologies to augment overall business performance (Verhoef et al., 2015). The significance of digital transformation lies in its capacity to instigate industry-wide adaptations (Hanelt et al., 2021; Luo, 2022). Emphasizing the transformative potential, Industry 4.0 and its associated technologies harbor the capability to elevate business competitiveness amid the era of digital transformation through strategic implementation (Baierle et al., 2022). The escalating wave of digital transformation, propelled by technological advancements and dynamic shifts in customer demands, is concomitantly propelling the adoption of digital marketing strategies (Hanelt et al., 2021).

Marketing constitutes a dynamic and ever-evolving business function, acknowledged for enhancing a business entity's potential to safeguard its bottom line and attain a competitive advantage. It is indispensable for ensuring the sustained growth and development of any business. Operating within a networked landscape, marketing leverages social media-based platforms, where customer engagement plays a pivotal role in sustaining profits (Kumar, 2015). Similar to other industries, marketing is undergoing a digital transformation, with a myriad of digital marketing techniques now available, all aimed at providing enhanced value to customers (Opreana and Vinerean, 2015). Disruptive technologies have rendered the traditional marketing governance funnel obsolete, given the considerable gap between businesses and customers. Embracing the latest technologies serves to augment the value of marketing, delivering more engaging experiences for tomorrow's consumers. At its core, marketing involves the promotion of individuals or businesses to garner

popularity for various purposes. While traditional mediums like newspapers, television, radio, and posters have historically been central to marketing strategies, the convergence of electronic technology through the internet has given rise to the contemporary concept known as digital marketing (Dodson, 2016).

Digital marketing, as explained by Novitasari et al. (2021), entails promoting products through digital media connected to the internet. This marketing approach streamlines the monitoring process for business operators, allowing them to address the specific needs of potential customers, as highlighted by Heri Erlangga (2021).underscore the pivotal role of digital marketing in providing access to product information through internet channels (Erlangga, 2021). This accessibility not only simplifies the process of obtaining information but also contributes to an accelerated search for desired products. In essence, digital marketing acts as a dynamic conduit for businesses to efficiently reach and engage with their target audience in the digital realm. This transformation is also experienced by business professionals in the field of the food industry. In recent years, business procedures have evolved, particularly in the food industry, which involves various stakeholders, ranging from farmers to food manufacturing and processing companies (Erlangga, 2021). The convergence of digital marketing and the food industry is clearly evident in the thriving global online food delivery market. Valued at \$343.7 billion in 2022, this market is expected to surge to \$1.3 trillion by 2032, boasting a significant Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 14.3% from 2023 to 2032 (source: Allied Market Research, 2023). This sector represents a contemporary culinary paradigm, where digital platforms empower consumers to seamlessly engage with their preferred eateries, navigating virtual menus and completing transactions electronically. This transformative shift, characterized by a streamlined ordering process and the convenience of home delivery, not only broadens gastronomic choices but also underscores the symbiotic relationship between technology and dining preferences. Collaborations with third-party delivery aggregators further enhance industry accessibility (Amit J 2023; Grut, 2020; Mohd K 2022).

In this fiercely competitive market, where visibility is as crucial as culinary excellence, the imperative for the food sector to embrace digitization is unmistakable. No longer reliant on traditional word-of-mouth, digital marketing becomes paramount for brands aiming to establish and communicate their unique value propositions convincingly. The projected growth in online food delivery, estimated to reach \$365 billion by 2026 with a 10.7% CAGR from 2019 to 2016, underscores the transformative role of digitization trends in shaping the industry's

trajectory (Grut, 2020). This academic exploration seeks to elucidate the intricate dynamics between digital marketing strategies and the evolving landscape of the food sector, with a specific focus on small food businesses in Xian, Shaanxi Province, China. Additionally, the China food service market, sized at \$454.80 billion in 2022 and projected to grow to \$1,061.16 billion by 2030, as reported by Fortune Business Insights, provides a comprehensive overview, segmented by type and structure, with market forecasts for each segment's value in USD Million, detailed in the report by Mordor Intelligence (Insights, 2023; Intelligence, 2023). The interplay between customer engagement and purchase intention remains a critical facet of consumer behavior and business strategy, despite the ubiquity of digital marketing. When customers perceive a product as viable, their willingness to pay more is not solely influenced by digital channels; rather, their interaction with the company emerges as pivotal. This engagement carries significance, as it aligns with heightened customer satisfaction, subsequently amplifying the intent to purchase specific products or brands. Businesses, recognizing the limitations of digital platforms, deploy various strategies to convey the superiority of their offerings in comparison to competitors (Elvarina and Murhadi, 2023; Kaveh et al., 2021). In 2021, Kaveh et al.'s research extensively explores this dynamic, particularly delving into the impact of customer engagement in sales promotion on purchase intention. Drawing from value co-creation and customer engagement theories, the study introduces a model that elucidates the influence of customer engagement in sales promotion. This influence operates through its effects on perceived value and customer satisfaction (Kaveh et al., 2021). Building upon the work of Elinda Elvarina and Werner R. Murhadi in 2023, it is evident that an increase in perceived value, indicating the customer's recognition of benefits and the product's ability to meet their needs, significantly and positively impacts purchase intention. This underscores the intricate interplay between customer engagement, perceived value, satisfaction, and purchase intention, forming a crucial paradigm within the realm of consumer decision-making, irrespective of the pervasive nature of digital marketing (Elvarina and Murhadi, 2023).

The business landscape is currently experiencing a significant transformation driven by digital technologies, prompting a reevaluation of traditional approaches to creating customer value. The surge in internet users has given rise to new opportunities, particularly with the emergence of electronic commerce (e-commerce), fundamentally reshaping conventional business paradigms. Businesses are actively undergoing digital transformation to enhance operational efficiency, leading to substantial impacts on consumer behavior, management processes, and

organizational strategy. This transformative process, fueled by technological advancements and evolving customer requirements, has spurred the widespread adoption of digital marketing strategies. Xi'an city, situated in Shanxi Province, China, renowned for its culinary heritage, is experiencing a notable digital renaissance within its food industry. The adoption of innovative retail models, such as fresh food e-commerce experience stores, signals a significant shift towards digitalization among food businesses (Xu et al., 2020). In 2022, Xi'an's digital economy reached 524.9 billion yuan, with a targeted growth of 700 billion yuan by 2025, driven by its strategic involvement in the "Belt and Road" initiative and robust scientific and educational capabilities (Bing, 2023; Service, 2023; Yihe, 2022).

However, even amid these promising prospects, small food businesses in Shanxi Xian face challenges, particularly exacerbated by events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues such as food shortages underscore the critical need for improved supply chain management and delivery systems, areas where digital technologies can play a pivotal role (Hashmicro, 2022; Mapchise). This research endeavors to deepen our understanding of how digital marketing and customer engagement shape the purchase intentions of small food businesses in Xian City, Shanxi Province. By analyzing the levels of digital marketing, customer engagement, and purchase intention, the study aims to unveil their intricate interplay and assess their collective impact on the competitive advantage of these businesses. The research questions, objectives, and hypotheses outlined will guide the investigation, providing valuable insights for small food businesses not only in Xian City, Shanxi Province but also in other regions grappling with analogous challenges.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What levels of digital marketing, customer engagement, and purchase intention are evident among small food businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China?
2. Which factors influence on purchase intentions of small food businesses?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

This research is underpinned by several pivotal objectives:

1. To examine the levels of digital marketing, customer engagement, and online purchase intention among small food businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China.

2.To examine the influences of digital marketing and customer engagement factors on the online purchase intentions of small food businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

### **1.4.1 Scope of Demography**

The population under examination in this research consists of consumers who have made purchases from small food businesses through various online channels, such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, and who reside in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China. This constitutes a sizable population for which the precise numerical figure is unknown.

### **1.4.2 Scope of Area**

This research investigates the role of digital marketing and customer engagement in shaping purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China. The study takes into account several elements:

This includes the extent and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies employed for small food businesses.

The research will analyze the level of customer engagement, considering factors such as vigor, absorption, and dedication.

The study will assess the purchase intentions of customers, influenced by digital marketing and customer engagement.

These elements collectively contribute to understanding how digital marketing and customer engagement shape the purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

### **1.4.4 Scope of Time**

The research is set to proceed over a carefully structured period, from November 2023 to March 2024. This strategic timeframe is designed to enable an in-depth examination of the role of digital marketing and customer engagement in shaping purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian, Shaanxi Province, China.

## 1.5 Research Significances

The research on "Examining the Role of Digital Marketing and Customer Engagement in Shaping Purchase Intentions for Small Food Businesses in Xian, Shaanxi Province, China" holds significant implications for both academia and the business landscape. The unique characteristics of the study contribute to its broader research significance, shaping its relevance and impact.

### 1.5.1 Tailoring Strategies for Local Success

Investigating the levels of digital marketing, customer engagement, and purchase intention specific to small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China, is crucial for developing strategies tailored to the local context. The research will provide actionable insights that empower businesses to navigate the unique market dynamics, cultural nuances, and consumer preferences of the region.

### 1.5.2 Optimizing Digital Marketing Impact

The analysis of the influence of digital marketing on purchase intentions addresses a vital aspect of business success. Understanding how digital marketing elements such as product awareness, feedback, convenience, and brand relationships impact purchase decisions equips small food enterprises with the knowledge to optimize their digital strategies, ensuring maximum effectiveness in engaging and converting customers.

### 1.5.3 Enhancing Customer Relationships

By delving into the influence of customer engagement on purchase intentions, the study offers businesses a roadmap for fostering stronger connections with their customer base. Insights into the factors of engagement like vigor, absorption, and dedication will guide small food businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China towards practices that enhance customer loyalty, satisfaction, and, ultimately, purchase intent.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

### 1.6.1 Digital marketing

Digital marketing is defined as the strategic promotion of products or services through internet-based technologies, leading to a transformative impact on global

markets, shaping consumer purchasing power, and utilizing digital advancements to achieve targeted outreach and enhance user experiences.

#### 1.6.2 Customer Engagement

Customer Engagement entails the comprehensive involvement of consumers with small food businesses in Xian City, shaped by mental resilience, immersive experiences, and profound dedication, all fostered by digital marketing efforts and crucially influencing their online purchase intentions.

#### 1.6.3 Online Purchase Intention

Online Purchase Intention signifies the consumer's expressed enthusiasm and strong intention to actively engage in online shopping for small food businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China reflecting a willingness to embrace the role of an online shopper during web browsing.

#### 1.6.4 Small Food Business

Small food businesses, such as restaurants and food stalls, are typically defined by their size, often employing fewer than 50 individuals. They operate under constraints like limited resources and access to markets. Despite these challenges, they demonstrate innovation in their products and processes. This thesis focuses on these businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The landscape of small food businesses in the digital age is evolving rapidly, driven by advancements in technology and changing consumer behaviors. This chapter delves into a comprehensive exploration of the existing body of literature relevant to the role of digital marketing and customer engagement in shaping online purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China. As digital platforms become integral to business strategies, understanding the intricate dynamics between digital marketing strategies, customer engagement initiatives, and consumer behaviors is paramount. The literature review endeavors to synthesize and critically analyze key research findings, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies pertaining to digital marketing and customer engagement within the context of small food businesses. By synthesizing diverse perspectives, this chapter aims to provide a solid foundation for the current study and identify gaps in the existing knowledge, paving the way for the subsequent chapters that contribute to the burgeoning field of digital marketing and consumer behavior in the realm of small-scale enterprises.

In navigating this review, particular attention will be given to studies conducted in similar cultural and business contexts, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing online purchase intentions. The ultimate goal is to distill insights that contribute to both academic discourse and practical implications for small food businesses seeking to thrive in the competitive digital marketplace. As we embark on this scholarly journey through the literature, the significance of unraveling the complexities of digital marketing and customer engagement in the specific locale of Xian City becomes evident. This review serves as a critical juncture in the research process, bridging the theoretical underpinnings with the empirical investigation that follows, and elucidating the interconnected tapestry of factors that influence online consumer behavior in the dynamic landscape of small food businesses. These sections offer in-depth insights into these facets:

- 2.1 Summary of the Small Food Business Landscape in China
- 2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
- 2.3 Concept and Theory Related to Digital Marketing
  - 2.3.1 Concept of Digital Marketing
  - 2.3.2 Elements of Digital Marketing



- 2.3.3 Product Awareness
- 2.3.4 Feedback and Customer Compliance
- 2.3.5 Convenience
- 2.3.6 Consumer Brand Relationship
- 2.3.7 Information Security and Personal Privacy
- 2.4 Concept and Theory Related to Customer Engagement
  - 2.4.1 Concept of Customer Engagement
  - 2.4.2 Absorption
  - 2.4.3 Dedication
  - 2.4.4 Vigor
- 2.5 Concept and Theory Related to Purchase Intention
  - 2.5.1 Buying Decision Process
  - 2.5.2 Purchase Intention in the Online Context
- 2.6 Related Research
  - 2.6.1 Research Related to Digital Marketing
  - 2.6.2 Research Related to Customer Engagement
  - 2.6.3 Research Related to Purchase Intention
- 2.7 Research Framework
- 2.8 Research Hypotheses

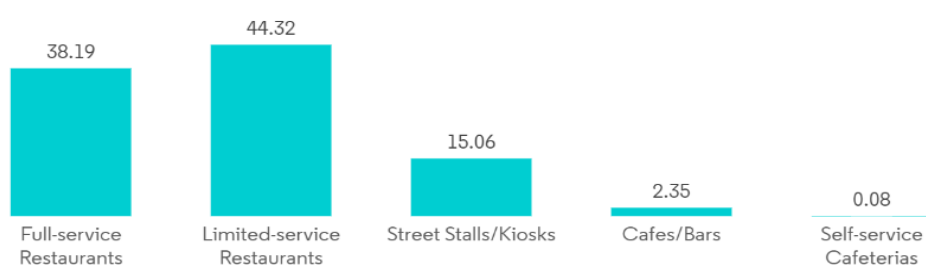
## **2.1 Summary of the Small Food Business Landscape in China**

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the small food business landscape in China, with a specific focus on Shanxi Xian. Small food businesses, encompassing restaurants, cafes, food stalls, and food trucks, constitute integral components of the broader small business sector. Characterized by their modest size, independent ownership, and active engagement in the food industry (Johnston, 2013; Mazzarol, 2012), these establishments play a crucial role in the economic landscape. Operating within the category of small-scale food producers, entities such as farmers or entrepreneurs grapple with challenges such as limited access to resources, technology, and markets. These challenges, in turn, contribute to broader societal issues such as poverty, hunger, and low competitiveness (Sergaki and Michailidis, 2020). The governance structures of these small-scale food producers hold significant importance, influencing their contributions to food and nutritional security. Despite resource limitations, these businesses demonstrate innovation in products, processes, and distribution channels (Burns, 2019; Zhang and Wen, 2022).

Understanding their role is imperative due to variations across regional and national contexts, diverse agricultural sectors, and different types of small farms.

The consumer behavior landscape within China's food industry is characterized by generational differences, with the substantial market potential underscored by retail sales reaching 44 trillion RMB in 2021 (Linguerra, 2023; PWC, 2022). The enduring impact of pandemic-induced shifts in consumer behavior continues to mold long-term trends.

Foodservice Market: Share of Home Delivery in Consumer Foodservice, China, 2021



Source: Agriculture Canada



**Figure 1** Food service market - share of home delivery in consumer food service in China (Intelligence, 2023)

The foodservice sector in China encompasses the preparation, distribution, and sale of food in various settings, including restaurants and cafeterias. Market categorizations consider factors such as type, structure, location, and cuisine, resulting in segments that range from full-service restaurants to quick-service restaurants and cloud kitchens. These establishments can operate independently or as part of chains, situated in standalone settings or within contexts such as leisure, retail, lodging, or travel. The culinary landscape is diverse, spanning Asian, European, Latin American, Middle Eastern, North American, and other cuisines, contributing to a dynamic market (Intelligence, 2023). An examination of the small food business landscape in Xi'an unveils a dynamic and diverse scenario, with approximately 94,400 catering operators recorded in 2018. Often family-owned, these businesses play a significant role in the local economy by offering a diverse range of culinary experiences. Despite facing challenges like low entry barriers, around 30% of catering enterprises engaged in online sales in 2019, experiencing substantial growth in online turnover. As urbanization transforms Xi'an, small food businesses are integrating digital strategies, including online delivery services, to broaden their reach (Department, 2021).

The snack food industry in China epitomizes a dynamic landscape tailored to a youthful consumer base endowed with substantial economic capacity. By 2022, market growth had surged to 1,165.4 billion yuan, characterized by diverse consumption scenarios. The market's decentralized nature, coupled with specialization, creates avenues for businesses to address varied consumer demands. Key industry players, including Want Want and Dali Food Group, navigate revenue fluctuations influenced by factors such as the pandemic (Institute, 2023). In the first quarter of 2023, Xi'an witnessed robust economic growth, marked by a 7.83% increase in registered market entities, predominantly driven by private enterprises in the service industry. Core districts and counties emerged as focal points, indicating a thriving private economy and setting the stage for high-quality development (Bureau, 2023). The report "Xi'an Consumer Goods Market Continues to Rebound from January to October" underscores positive momentum in Xi'an's consumer goods sector. Despite a year-on-year decrease in catering revenue from January to October 2020, the sector exhibited a significant positive turnaround in October 2020, signifying marked improvement in the food business sector and contributing to Xi'an's overall economic recovery (Bureau, 2020).

The competitive landscape among small food businesses in China is diverse, encompassing local firms competing on pricing, larger higher-quality local players, and international companies. For instance, Starbucks leads with a 36.4% market share in China's specialist coffee and tea shop market (Cheng, 2021; SIS, 2021). Technological advancements play a pivotal role in shaping the operations of small food businesses in China, streamlining production processes from planting and harvesting to manufacturing and packaging. Artificial intelligence technologies and real-time analytics contribute to rapid responses to market trends, fostering growth and minimizing food waste (Mercer, 2021; Muscad, 2022). Challenges faced for small food businesses in China, including those in Shanxi Xian, span economic shocks due to the COVID-19 pandemic to surging commodity prices and regulatory hurdles. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) encounter challenges such as limited access to finance, low R&D expenditures, undeveloped sales channels, and low levels of financial inclusion (Ma, 2021; Yoshino, 2016). In the broader context of China's food industry, the snack food sector reflects a dynamic landscape catering to a young consumer base. The industry witnessed robust growth, reaching a market size of 1,165.4 billion yuan in 2022, driven by multifaceted consumption scenarios. The market, decentralized with diverse consumer demands, offers opportunities for businesses. The regulatory environment for food businesses in China is primarily

governed by the PRC Food Safety Law, with new rules on import and export food safety coming into effect in 2022, potentially impacting small food businesses.

Technological advancements play a pivotal role in shaping the operations of small food businesses in China, facilitating streamlined production processes. These businesses encounter various challenges, including economic shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating commodity prices, regulatory hurdles, and limited access to finance. Despite these challenges, the competitive landscape remains diverse, encompassing small local firms competing on pricing and larger players vying for lucrative opportunities (Mercer, 2021; Muscad, 2022). In the first quarter of 2023, Xi'an witnessed robust economic growth, marked by a 7.83% increase in registered market entities, totaling 2.9411 million. Private market entities played a pivotal role, contributing to 97.93% of new registrations, particularly in the service industry. Core districts and counties emerged as focal points for market entity increment, indicating a thriving private economy and setting the stage for high-quality development in 2023 (Bureau, 2023).

The small food business landscape in Xi'an City reflects resilience, adaptability, and innovation in the face of challenges, making significant contributions to the local and national economy. Within the context of Xi'an's rich culinary tradition and the evolving Chinese consumer landscape, this sector highlights the intricate interplay of tradition and modernization (Jinhui, 2019; Textor, 2023a). China boasts a rich culinary tradition, with 38 million SMEs in 2019. The food culture of Xi'an has gained popularity, especially among young people, through online media platforms (Textor, 2023a). The total retail sales of consumer goods in the first half of the year recorded approximately 231 billion yuan (US\$32.3 billion), with an income of around 5.33 billion yuan. This vibrant context provides significant opportunities for small food businesses operating in Xi'an city, Shaanxi Province, China (Jinhui, 2019).

This section is essential as it establishes the groundwork for comprehending the nuanced dynamics of small food businesses in China, particularly in Xian city. It offers crucial insights into the challenges, substantial economic contributions, and innovative capacities of these businesses. The examination of Xi'an's small food business landscape contributes a valuable dimension by highlighting their adaptability. This comprehensive overview serves as a backdrop for the upcoming exploration of digital marketing and customer engagement, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the distinctive challenges and opportunities within this specific market context.

## 2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) expands on reasoned action theory by incorporating perceived behavioral control as a crucial influencer of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Purchasing behavior is influenced by external conditions, encompassing factors such as physical, financial, legal, or social aspects (Guagnano et al., 1995; Larios-Gómez et al., 2021). A quantitative research model, tested with a sample of 2,065 online consumers in Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia during the COVID-19 crisis, indicates changes in purchasing behavior. Cultural differences are not the primary influencers; instead, adaptations to online and home delivery are driven by social factors and consumer attitudes. Practical implications include the adoption of online channels and the formulation of effective sales strategies (Larios-Gómez et al., 2021). The TPB aims to predict and explain human behavior in specific situations (Fortes and Rita, 2016) and posits that a person's attitudes can predict their intention to perform a behavior. Strong intentions correlate with a higher likelihood of behavior (Chetioui et al., 2021). Widely used in predicting behavior, including technology adoption (Kim et al., 2016), TPB is a popular model for studying consumer behavior, particularly in e-commerce (Fortes and Rita, 2016; Lim and Dubinsky, 2005). In Brazil, the theory of planned behavior is employed to investigate factors influencing consumer purchase intentions and behavior for organic vegetables. Beyond standard TPB relationships, perceived health, sustainability benefits, and perceived price are considered. Attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms significantly influence organic vegetable purchase behavior, with attitude exerting the strongest impact (Dorce et al., 2021). Predicting attitudes and purchases of organic products in Italy, a study extends the TPB, incorporating trust and self-identity. Trust in farmers significantly influences organic milk purchase behavior, suggesting campaigns fostering trust could enhance the standing of this food category (Carfora et al., 2019). In Taiwan, a study explores trust factors for organic foods, buying attitudes, and influences on consumer purchase behavior. Trust in organic foods significantly impacts practical buying attitudes and behavior, providing new marketing opportunities for local farmers. While the certified organic label affects purchase intention, trust in the label has the smallest influence on purchase behavior, indicating a need for a review of the existing organic standard certification system (Lee et al., 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a study on online consumer behavior develops a methodological approach, revealing changes and emphasizing the growing importance of decision-making speed. It identifies the most influential factors

in online consumer purchasing behavior, emphasizing the increased impact of consumer awareness and experience (Gu et al., 2021). Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on consumer buying behavior for fresh vegetables directly from local producers, a study conducted in Suceava, Romania, relies on interpretations from the quarantined area (N = 257) through an online nationwide questionnaire. Analysis of sociodemographic factors before the state of emergency (16 March 2020) serves as the baseline, with further research interpreting changes triggered by the crisis on purchasing intentions. The investigation aims to identify how these behavioral changes can influence the digital transformation of short food supply chains (Butu et al., 2020). The COVID-19 crisis prompted a shift in online food ordering, and a U.S.-based study extends the Stimulus-Organism-Response model to predict purchase intentions. The study identifies indirect effects of the menu's appeal and informativeness, mediated by consumer desire for food and perceived convenience of online ordering. Implications include strategies for adapting to remain competitive post-COVID-19 (Brewer and Sebby, 2021). In Malaysia, a study based on the Theory of Planned Behavior examines consumer behavior toward organic food. Safety, health, environmental, and animal welfare factors significantly influence purchase intentions, providing useful insights for marketers (Wee et al., 2014). Finally, a compilation of facts on consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights hoarding, improvisation, accumulated demand, embracing digital technology, adjustments to the working day, school meetings, and the discovery of talent as observed effects (Larios-Gómez et al., 2021; Sheth, 2020).

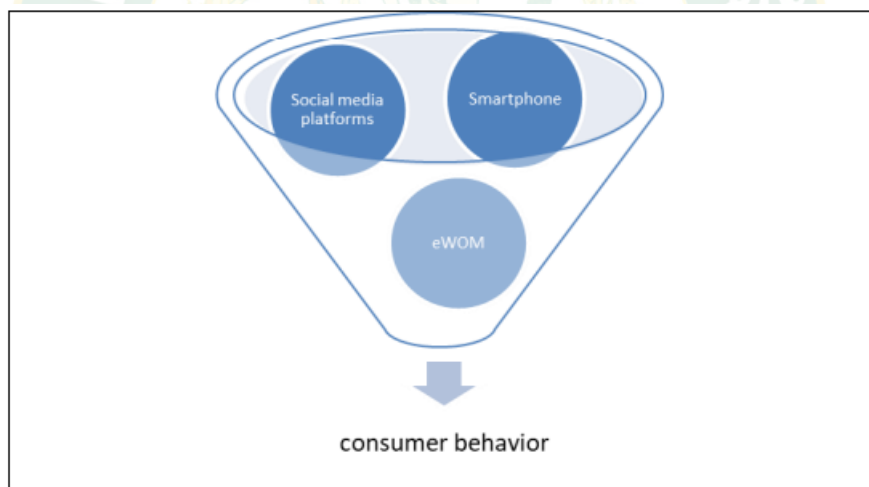
The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) serves as a foundational framework in this research, offering valuable insights into understanding and predicting consumer behavior related to online purchases from small food businesses. Developed by Ajzen, TPB extends reasoned action theory by incorporating perceived behavioral control, encompassing external factors such as physical, financial, legal, or social aspects. The versatility of TPB is evident in its global application across diverse studies in Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Italy, Taiwan, the U.S., and Malaysia. This theory guides the exploration of digital marketing and customer engagement by providing a comprehensive understanding of consumer attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms. Emphasizing the role of intention as a precursor to behavior, TPB aligns seamlessly with the research's focus on the purchase intentions of consumers for online offerings from small food businesses in Xian City. By leveraging the insights provided by TPB, this study aims to unravel the

complex interplay of factors influencing online purchase intentions in the specific context of small food businesses.

## 2.3 Concept and Theory Related to Digital Marketing

### 2.3.1 Concept of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing, the practice of promoting products or services through digital technologies, has undergone significant evolution since the 1990s and 2000s. This transformation has reshaped the landscape of marketing, with digital platforms becoming integral components of marketing strategies. As people increasingly favor digital interactions, digital marketing campaigns are gaining prevalence and efficiency (Desai and Vidyapeeth, 2019). The impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior is explored through three key dimensions: mobile apps, social media platforms, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). In the realm of the tourism sector, a study delves into the influence of digital marketing, emphasizing its importance in enhancing tourism competitiveness, shaping eWOM, influencing tourists' behavior, and determining their use of social media and mobile applications (Alghizzawi, 2019).



**Figure 2** The effect of digital marketing on consumer behavior (Alghizzawi, 2019)

Digital marketing, primarily utilizing digital technologies on the internet, has induced a substantial transformation in global markets, augmenting the influence of consumer purchasing power (Korkpoe and Nyarku, 2013). This paradigm shift is attributed to the adoption of new technologies, intensifying business competition. The ascendancy of digital marketing is intricately linked to the proliferation of digital technologies, such as smartphones, smart products, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI). These technologies have revolutionized consumer behaviors and are shaping the trajectory of future marketing strategies. Notably, mobile

commerce brings added value to consumers compared to traditional or electronic commerce, significantly impacting online purchase intentions (Dastane et al., 2020). The ubiquitous nature of digital marketing enables consumer outreach anytime, anywhere, surpassing traditional channels with enhanced user experiences through rich web page content comprising informative text, graphics, and audio (Jenyo et al., 2015). While digital interaction creates opportunities for integrating social media into marketing, reducing costs relative to traditional methods, marketers grapple with the challenge of selecting the optimal digital marketing blend to effectively connect with a diverse audience, establish brand awareness, and convert sales through continual consumer engagement (Tamrakar et al., 2018). Despite the challenges, digital marketing proves instrumental in attracting a diverse consumer base, facilitating effective communication via online media, and guiding consumers through the purchase journey (Lodhi and Shoaib, 2017). Notably, social network and email marketing have been found to positively influence consumer purchase intentions in the fast-food industry (Pathan et al., 2021). Moreover, digital marketing plays a pivotal role in strengthening brand value by fostering transparent consumer exchanges of ideas, opinions, and experiences, ultimately enhancing purchase intentions (Wai et al., 2019).

Investing in the digital marketing industry necessitates a substantial budget, often inviting comparisons with traditional marketing channels with proven return on investment (ROI) records (Teixeira et al., 2019). While digital marketing offers customers a multifaceted platform to control the purchase process through testing and reviewing products (Świeczak and Łukowski, 2016), the conversion of sales leads to actual sales remains intricate without compelling marketing content that convinces customers and encourages repeat purchases (Epstein and Yuthas, 2007). In the realm of small businesses, characterized by factors like employee count or annual revenue, limited resources and technology access pose challenges. However, these businesses exhibit innovation in products, processes, and markets. For small food businesses, digital marketing emerges as a cost-effective avenue to reach a broader audience, engage with customers, and bolster sales. The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a transformative era, disrupting the economy and the food industry, compelling an accelerated adoption of digital innovations. This digitalization trend is steering the food industry toward leveraging innovations for safer and sustainable operations. Post-pandemic data comparisons underscore a significant industry shift towards e-commerce (Salim Zanzana, 2023). An exploration of the perceptions of Portuguese restaurant entrepreneurs post-mandatory lockdown reveals shared

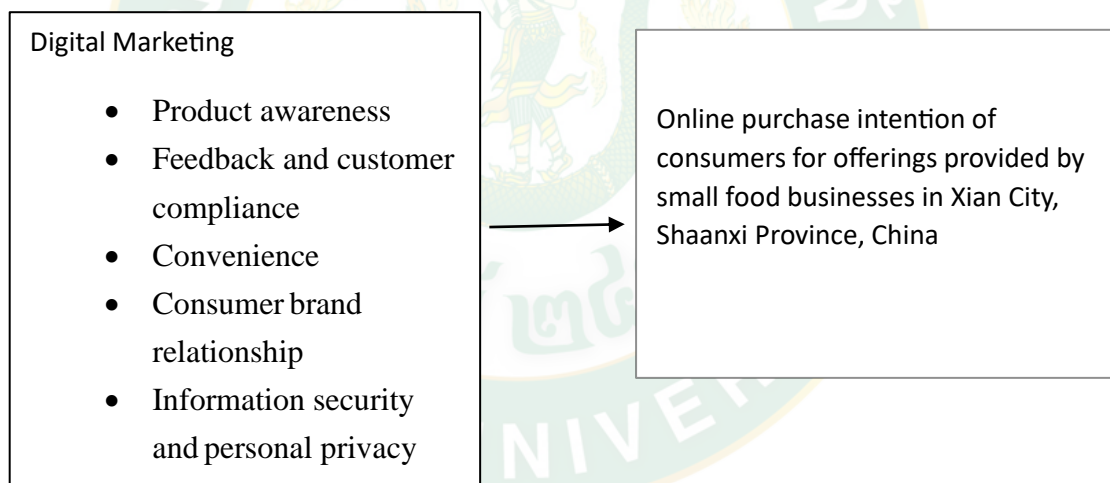


concerns about the post-pandemic period, including government measures, strategies tailored to markets with immediate availability, and building resilience for the future (Madeira et al., 2021).

In this research, digital marketing is defined as the strategic promotion of products or services through internet-based technologies, leading to a transformative impact on global markets, shaping consumer purchasing power, and utilizing digital advancements to achieve targeted outreach and enhance user experiences.

### 2.3.2 Elements of Digital Marketing

From the literature review on digital marketing factors influencing online purchase intention among consumers for offerings from small food businesses, this study identifies five key factors: product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationships, and information security and personal privacy. These factors are illustrated in Figure 1 and further explained by the researcher as follows.



**Figure 3** Elements of Digital Marketing

### 2.3.3 Product Awareness

Product awareness, as defined by Kopp (2022), pertains to the extent to which consumers can identify a product by its name, representing a crucial step in the promotion of new products or the revitalization of established brands. In the realm of digital marketing, strategies such as social media campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing are frequently employed to achieve heightened product awareness (Shuteyev, 2023). Technological advancements have significantly improved advertising capabilities, allowing businesses to precisely target

consumers and elevate product awareness. This progress has resulted in a reduction of customer misallocation as networks expand and sorting processes become more efficient. The digital advertising surge in the US showcased the positive outcomes of improved targeting technology, leading to enhanced matches between consumers and firms. However, Cavenaile et al. (2023) argue that without advancements in targeting technology, there would have been a trade-off with lower markups and higher welfare, notwithstanding the decrease in sorting efficiency.

In this study, product awareness is a pivotal component of digital marketing, encompasses consumers' ability to identify a product by its name, proving instrumental in influencing online purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province, China.

#### 2.3.4 Feedback and Customer Compliance

Feedback in digital marketing is the process that enables customers to provide transparent details about their experiences with a product or service, offering companies valuable insights to address shortcomings and understand consumer behavior for more effective marketing strategies (Digital, 2022). On the other hand, customer compliance involves adhering to marketing standards designed to protect consumers from being misled by businesses (Team, 2018). In the restaurant industry, a fundamental principle for productivity and quality is to establish excellence from the outset. Given the intense competition today, it is imperative for restaurants to actively seek customer feedback to enhance their offerings. This can be achieved by promoting a straightforward complaint process, allowing dissatisfied customers to communicate with management, share experiences with friends, or choose not to take any action. In cases of service failure, customers may also expect appropriate compensation (Chan et al., 2016).

Live chat interfaces, often powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), are increasingly employed for real-time customer service in e-commerce. Despite their cost and time efficiency, these chatbots sometimes fall short of meeting customer expectations, impacting user compliance with chatbot requests. Our study demonstrates that anthropomorphic design cues and consistency significantly enhance user compliance with a chatbot's feedback request. This underscores the critical role of feedback in digital marketing and the importance of customer compliance in adhering to marketing standards. Similarly, in the restaurant industry, customer feedback is indispensable for refining offerings and ensuring high-quality

service. In instances of service failure, customers may expect compensation, underscoring the significance of getting it right the first time (Adam et al., 2021).

In this study, feedback and customer compliance are vital tools for refining strategies and understanding consumer behavior, ensuring adherence to marketing standards, collectively influencing online purchasing decisions in a competitive market.

### 2.3.5 Convenience

In the realm of digital marketing, convenience is defined as the ease of purchasing items at the consumer's preferred time and location, using their chosen payment method, and receiving the item through a preferred delivery method. This aspect plays a pivotal role in influencing customers' decisions regarding product selection, service utilization, choice of destination, and engagement partners. The desire for making a purchase is heightened by customer satisfaction and the overall shopping experience, with satisfaction acting as a crucial link in these relationships. The study emphasizes that the convenience of online shopping is significantly influenced by both search and post-possession aspects. However, certain factors such as access, transaction, and possession convenience indirectly impact future purchase intentions negatively. These findings offer valuable insights for online retailers, particularly those operating or planning to enter the Chinese market, aiming to elevate customer satisfaction and stimulate repeat purchases. The study further provides recommendations for enhancing online satisfaction, thereby bolstering the effectiveness of e-commerce strategies (Saha et al., 2023).

### 2.3.6 Consumer Brand Relationship

This concept delves into the emotional connection between consumers and brands, emphasizing that, in the social age, brands are synonymous with relationships. Mark Bonchek (2016) suggests that by precisely defining a brand's unique relationship, companies can cultivate increased engagement, differentiation, and loyalty.

In a study by Ho et al. (2015), the management of digital customer relationships within social media communities, particularly on Facebook brand fan-pages, was explored, with a focus on influencing post-purchase intentions. The study revealed that improving four types of customer-community relationships (relationship with the brand, other customers, the product, and the company) could enhance post-purchase behaviors by encouraging greater community participation or

identification. These insights, valuable for both academics and practitioners, contribute to understanding how to effectively manage digital customer relationships within social media brand communities. This research aligns with the broader concept of fostering emotional connections between consumers and brands in the social age, emphasizing that, by precisely defining a brand's specific relationship type, companies can foster increased engagement, differentiation, and loyalty (Ho and Wang, 2015).

### 2.3.7 Information Security and Personal Privacy

In digital marketing, information security entails safeguarding against unauthorized access to data, often involving protection against hackers or cybercriminals, while personal privacy denotes the consumers' right to determine how third-party organizations utilize their personal information. Specifically, data privacy in digital marketing involves shielding individuals' personal information collected by companies during their marketing activities.

Crucially, privacy and security concerns, coupled with trust beliefs, play a significant role in shaping risk perception. Trust beliefs exert the most substantial impact, followed by privacy and security concerns. Additionally, both risk perception and trust beliefs influence attitudes, with trust beliefs having a more pronounced effect than risk perception. Similarly, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes directly and positively influence the intention to engage in e-commerce activities (Gurung and Raja, 2016).

## 2.4 Concept, Theory and Research Related to Customer Engagement

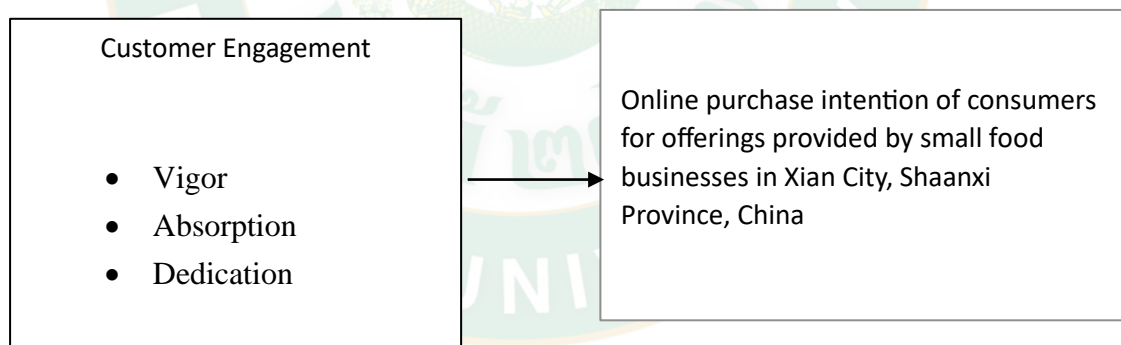
### 2.4.1 Concept of Customer Engagement

Customer engagement (CE) stands out as an interactive process deeply rooted in relationship marketing theory and service-dominant logic, distinguishing itself from related concepts such as "participation" and "involvement." Emphasizing the centrality of interactive experiences and the cocreation of value, CE has become a focal point in marketing, organizational behaviors, customer behaviors, and service management research (Brodie et al., 2011). The impact of CE on firms is substantial, influencing key metrics such as firm performance, behavioral intention, and word-of-mouth. Particularly noteworthy is the role of hedonic consumption, which demonstrates nearly three times the impact on firm performance compared to utilitarian consumption. Contrary to common belief, word-of-mouth does not enhance firm performance or serve as a mediator for the impact of customer

engagement on firm performance, challenging traditional assumptions (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020).

The evolution of customer engagement is closely tied to the emergence of the Internet and new technologies, prompting a transformation in the roles of both customers and firms in the engagement process. This shift is identified as reaching the transformational level, as highlighted by Barari et al. (2020). To keep pace with the dynamic landscape, there is a pressing need to conceptualize and operationalize customer engagement in alignment with contemporary marketing trends. Pansari and Kumar (2017) provide a comprehensive perspective, defining customer engagement as the mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm, whether through direct or indirect contribution. This definition positions customer engagement as a vital outcome measure reflecting the impact of firm activities, emphasizing its strategic significance in the evolving landscape of marketing and customer relations.

Upon reviewing the literature regarding the factors of Customer Engagement that affect the online purchase intentions of consumers towards offerings for small food businesses in this study, the researcher identified three critical factors influencing Customer Engagement: Vigor, Absorption, and Dedication, as depicted in Figure 1. The researcher elucidates these factors as follows.



**Figure 4** Elements of Customer Engagement

#### 2.4.2 Absorption

In the realm of customer engagement, absorption is characterized by complete engrossment and immersion in one's work, involving the integration of organization members' selves into their roles, with physical, cognitive, and emotional expressions (Michelli, 2021). Companies strive to emphasize the superiority of their products over competitors to differentiate their offerings. Customer engagement plays a crucial role in this process, as interactions with a company can heighten

customer satisfaction, subsequently increasing the intent to purchase products or brands (Danao, 2023).

The foundation of customers' purchasing decisions lies in the perceived value of items (Kopp, 2020). Customers tend to choose products that align with their needs and desires, emphasizing the importance of perceived value. Even if a product is deemed exceptional by its manufacturer, it may not sell well if customers do not perceive it as valuable (Liza, 2022). Research indicates a significant positive correlation between customer engagement and perceived value (Kaveh et al., 2021). As customer engagement rises, it enhances the perceived value of a product or service's benefits to customers. Furthermore, customer engagement positively influences customer satisfaction (Franklin, 2023), demonstrating its potency in shaping customer behavior and contributing to overall business success.

#### 2.4.3 Dedication

In the domain of customer engagement, dedication is a crucial element characterized by a profound sense of significance, inspiration, pride, enthusiasm, and challenge (Michelli, 2021). This dedication propels individuals to contribute more to the organization, its mission, and broader objectives fueled by their enthusiasm for the organization's values and goals (Robinson, 2020). Customers' purchasing decisions hinge on the perceived value of products or services (Kopp, 2020), as they are willing to pay a premium for items they deem valuable. Conversely, if a product is perceived as unworthy, customers may refrain from purchasing or only be willing to pay a lower price (Liza, 2022). The perceived value should align with the effort and cost incurred to obtain it; otherwise, customers may seek more satisfactory alternatives.

Customer engagement significantly and positively influences purchase intention, indicating that customers with a strong attachment to manufacturers are more likely to exhibit increased buying interest. Moreover, perceived value has a substantial positive impact on customer satisfaction (Franklin, 2023), as an increase in the perceived value of a product or service's benefits and its ability to meet needs and expectations correlates with elevated customer satisfaction (ASQ). Similarly, perceived value positively affects purchase intention, meaning that an increase in a customer's perceived value of a product or service's benefits and its ability to meet needs and expectations leads to heightened buying interest in the goods and services (Kaveh et al., 2021). Maintaining customer satisfaction requires effective customer relationship management (Tomas, 2023), fostering an emotional connection

between customers and the company and its products, thereby enhancing the overall customer experience.

#### 2.4.4 Vigor

In the realm of customer engagement, vigor denotes elevated levels of energy, mental resilience, a willingness to invest effort, and persistence in the face of challenges (Michelli, 2021). It encapsulates the essence of an engaged and proactive individual – someone not only willing but possessing the physical energy to go the extra mile (Robinson, 2020). In the contemporary competitive market, companies must transition from a product and sales-oriented philosophy to a customer and marketing-centered approach for success. A company's ability to comprehend marketing concepts and excel in engaging and satisfying customers positions it to outperform competitors and secure customer loyalty.

Customer engagement, defined as the manifestation of customer behavior beyond purchasing activities, is influenced by individual motivations such as word of mouth, recommendations, consumer interactions, blogging, reviews, and similar activities. Satisfaction significantly impacts purchase intention, with an increase in customer satisfaction correlating with heightened buying interest. Thus, it is imperative for companies to strategically ensure customer satisfaction aligns with their needs. Customer engagement, mediated by perceived value, distinctly influences purchase intention. Strong customer attachment to manufacturers enhances the perceived value of products or services, driving positive customer behavior outside purchasing activities, such as word of mouth, consumer interactions, product information sharing, reviews, and recommendations, which must be actively fostered by the company for a multiplier effect (Kaveh et al., 2021). Establishing solid relationships between consumers and producers can effectively engage consumer interest, fostering regular use of the company's products or services. An effective customer engagement strategy significantly impacts a company's outcomes, leading to an enhanced customer experience, increased customer retention rates, and the attraction of more potential customers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010).

### 2.5 Concept, Theory, and Research Related to Purchase Intention

Purchase intention, defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1977), represents an individual's likelihood to buy a specific product and is pivotal for comprehending consumer behavior. It gauges the desire to make a purchase, with a stronger intention indicative of a greater inclination to buy. Evanschitzky and Wunderlich

(2006) categorize purchase intention as unintended (impulsive), partially intended (deciding on brands in-store), or fully intended (deciding on products and brands before entering the store). Influential factors encompass awareness, brand strength, personal feelings, and impulsive situations (Kotler, 2003; Lee, J. E. et al., 2019).

Within the purchase decision context, Schiffman and Kanuk (2007: 485), Suryoko and Putra et al. (2021), converge on the notion that consumers require at least one or more choices to make a decision, expressing a strong belief in the rightness of their choice. When influenced by internal or external factors, consumers actively seek information to review and evaluate products. Social media marketing has been identified as a positive influencer of purchase decisions, with Erlangga (2021) and Erlangga et al. (2021) emphasizing the significant impact of social media marketing through online communities, interaction, content sharing, accessibility, and credibility. While social media groups provide value in terms of product information, interaction, and content updates, trust in the information varies among consumers. The roles consumers play in purchase decisions, including initiator, influencer, decider, buyer, and user, have been underscored by Novitasari et al. (2021), highlighting their substantial influence on product design, message targeting, promotional budget planning, and marketing methods. Brand equity emerges as a significant moderator in the relationship between digital marketing exposure, especially through social media and electronic word-of-mouth, and consumers' purchasing intentions. The crucial role of brand feedback and the informative quality of digital marketing content contribute to browsing and influence buying decisions. In the context of the surge in online commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic, a study in Pakistan underscores the escalating importance of digital marketing. It enriches theoretical understanding by elucidating the impact of digital marketing on purchase intent and the moderating role of brand equity, specifically within the Pakistani context (Khan et al., 2023).

### 2.5.1 Buying decision process

The buying decision process is a key concept in marketing that outlines the journey a consumer takes before purchasing a product or service. It consists of five stages:

**Problem Recognition:** This is the initial stage where a consumer identifies a need or problem, which could be triggered by internal stimuli (like hunger or thirst) or external stimuli (like advertising or word of mouth). The recognition of this



problem prompts the consumer to seek a solution, often involving purchasing a product or service.

**Information Search:** Once the problem is recognized, the consumer begins to search for information about possible solutions. This could involve online research, asking friends or family for recommendations, or visiting physical stores. The goal is to gather as much relevant information as possible to make an informed decision.

**Evaluation of Alternatives:** After gathering information, the consumer evaluates the different options available. They compare the features, benefits, prices, and other aspects of each product or service to determine which one best fits their needs and preferences.

**Purchase Decision:** Based on the evaluation, the consumer makes a decision to purchase a particular product or service. However, this stage can be influenced by other factors such as the terms of sale, return policy, or the salesperson's attitude.

**Post-Purchase Behavior:** After the purchase, the consumer reflects on their decision. If the product or service meets or exceeds their expectations, they may feel satisfied and become a repeat customer. If not, they may experience buyer's remorse and seek to return the product or avoid the brand in the future.

Social media significantly impacts the buying decision process, playing a crucial role in the information search phase, where consumers actively seek information from marketers through platforms like Facebook and Instagram (Kotler and Lee, 2008). Many companies leverage social media to market products and cultivate customer relationships, effectively influencing purchasing decisions. Appealing images, persuasive captions, and posts inviting product purchases contribute to this persuasive process. Electronic Word of Mouth, identified by Wintang and Pasharibu (2021), is a digital evolution of traditional Word of Mouth communication, harnessing the persuasive power of consumers regarding a product. Approximately 95% of buyers review products or services on mobile phones before making purchases, often seeking user reviews or testimonials (Rachman and Abadi, 2017). Lifestyle, encompassing desires, opinions, and interests, significantly influences purchasing decisions, particularly in urban societies like Jakarta and Tangerang City (Noviyana et al., 2022). Recognizing lifestyle as a key factor is essential, especially among teenagers and students.

In conclusion, the purchase decision is the ultimate step in the act of purchasing or consuming an item or service. Novitasari et al. (2021) delineate five roles of potential consumers in making buying decisions: Initiator, Influencer, Decider,

Buyer, and User. Understanding these roles is imperative for companies, influencing product design, targeted messaging, promotional budget planning, and marketing methods tailored for specific consumer segments. Acknowledging this buying decision process and the impact of social media allows businesses to develop effective marketing strategies, targeting consumers at each stage with tailored messages and offers.

### 2.5.2 Purchase Intention in the Online Context

In the realm of online commerce, purchase intentions denote a consumer's plan to acquire a product or service via the internet, serving as a cornerstone in e-commerce and digital marketing for comprehending and forecasting consumer behavior in the digital marketplace (Fang et al., 2014). Various factors influence online purchase intentions, including the quality of the website or online platform, where a user-friendly interface, easy navigation, and clear product descriptions augment the shopping experience, bolstering intentions to purchase (Hsu et al., 2012; Qalati et al., 2021; Saleem et al., 2022).

Online reviews and ratings constitute another significant factor, as consumers rely on feedback to inform their decisions. Positive reviews heighten confidence in a product or service, leading to elevated purchase intentions (Ali et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022; Navitha Sulthana and Vasantha, 2023; Zhang et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2020). Trust plays a pivotal role, cultivated through secure payment methods, transparent return policies, and excellent customer service (Chen and Barnes, 2007; Fang et al., 2014; Halim and Karsen, 2020; Harris and Goode, 2010; Sombultawee and Wattanatorn, 2022). Social media impacts online purchase intentions, with effective strategies amplifying brand awareness and enhancing purchase intentions (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022; Leong et al., 2022; Li, 2023; Yuen et al., 2022). Personalized online experiences, such as tailored recommendations based on browsing history or preferences, can also influence heightened interest and increased purchase intentions (Ha and Janda, 2014; Pappas, 2018).

Understanding online purchase intentions is vital for businesses thriving in the digital marketplace. By considering factors like website quality, online reviews, trust, social media influence, and personalization, businesses can devise strategies to enhance consumer purchase intentions and boost online sales.

## 2.6 Related Research

### 2.6.1 Research Related to Digital Marketing

The landscape of digital marketing has evolved significantly, encompassing diverse strategies such as website marketing, PPC, content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, affiliate marketing, video marketing, and text messaging (Barone, 2023). The increasing significance of digital marketing is driven by technological advancements, evolving customer needs, and global competition. Despite this, there exists an implementation gap between SMEs and large enterprises, posing a challenge to SMEs' effective adoption of digital marketing tools. To address this gap, a literature review offers insights into essential tools, presenting potential areas for further research (Peter and Dalla Vecchia, 2021). In Banten Province, a study with 380 respondents reveals the significant impact of social media marketing on product purchases for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) (Salazar, 2017). Another project with S & K Foods Oy underscores the importance of digital exposure for business success, recommending tools such as Google, mobile applications, and SEO (Gurung, 2018). In the context of small restaurants, a study explores social media adoption, proposing strategies to move beyond advertising and effectively tackle challenges (Lepkowska-White, 2017).

Qualitative interviews with restaurant owners in India and the UK unveil a gap in the adoption of digital marketing tools, suggesting potential avenues for further research (Dabas et al., 2021). A study on consumer purchase decisions highlights a preference for digital channels, albeit within a specific geographical area (Mahalaxmi and Ranjith, 2016). In the youth-oriented market, digital marketing poses challenges for the retail sector, influencing the buying behavior of the youth demographic (Sivasankaran, 2013). As global trends shift, digital marketing plays a transformative role, contributing to the retail sector's move from traditional malls to mobile platforms (Gujrati and Uygun, 2020). A Malaysian study during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests the potential of digital marketing in fortifying new business practices among small entrepreneurs (Rashid et al., 2021). Exploring the retail sector, the use of RFID in combination with SVM improves forecasting accuracy for purchasing behavior (Zuo et al., 2014). Additionally, a study on an on-demand food-delivery app, integrating TAM and AIDA models, emphasizes the crucial role of marketing communication in fostering consumer acceptance (Song et al., 2021).

## 2.6.2 Research Related to Customer Engagement

Effective management of customer engagement in consumer markets requires a profound understanding of customer preferences and motivations. Żyminkowska's survey of 2080 Polish consumers sheds light on low engagement intensity, revealing that motivations tied to goals and values exert more influence than involvement or loyalty (Żyminkowska, 2019). Despite disparities in customer engagement intensity across countries, a macro-scale examination suggests overall positive prospects (Żyminkowska and Żyminkowska, 2019).

A meta-analysis explores customer engagement behavior, unveiling two pathways: the organic pathway, emphasizing relationship-oriented factors, and the promoted pathway initiated by firms. Attitudinal engagement-loyalty and behavioral engagement-firm performance linkages are supported, providing new insights into diverse engagement approaches (Barari et al., 2021). In online communities, a study confirms a significant relationship between social identification, customer engagement, and purchase intention (Prentice et al., 2019).

A service-oriented customer engagement framework is developed, based on service-dominant logic, exploring interaction orientation and the contribution of an omnichannel model to positive service experiences (Kumar et al., 2019). Research utilizing Lisrel software indicates that customer engagement dimensions significantly affect marketing performance for private banking companies, offering insights for enhancing marketing team performance (Yusuf et al., 2022).

In the Nigerian service industry, a study reveals a positive relationship between social media customer engagement, customer vigor, dedication, absorption, social media interaction, social involvement, and customer satisfaction (Chime and Okeke, 2023). In India, a survey of 417 consumers explores the mediating role of brand image and consumer engagement between digital media marketing practices and OTT platform purchase intention (Habib et al., 2022).

Exploring the role of customer engagement in small food businesses, research demonstrates that calculative commitment and social media efforts positively influence advocacy in the quick-service restaurant industry (Sashi et al., 2019). A quantitative investigation on Instagram promotions by Bandeng Isi MRB reveals the significant impact of factors like connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement on customers' purchase intentions (Shafa et al., 2023).

Elvarina et al. (2023) explore the impact of customer engagement on buying intentions at Kimia Farma in Surabaya. The survey of 106 participants reveals positive

correlations between customer engagement, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and purchase intention. Perceived value positively influences customer satisfaction and purchase intention, while customer uncertainty negatively impacts purchase intention (Elvarina and Murhadi, 2023). To effectively manage customer engagement and meet expectations, understanding customer preferences and motivations remains crucial (Żyminkowska, 2019).

### 2.6.3 Research Related to Purchase Intention

In Tanzania and Kenya, a study explores factors influencing consumer purchase intention for organic food, revealing that subjective norms, personal attitudes, and health consciousness significantly predict organic purchase intention in both countries. Knowledge acts as a moderator, positively influencing the relationships among these factors and purchase intention. While perceived behavior control has a weak influence in Kenya, no knowledge interaction is found with purchase intention in Tanzania, highlighting the role of knowledge as a moderator in predicting organic food purchase behavior (Wang et al., 2019).

Extending the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, a study predicts participants' purchase intentions in the context of online food ordering. Structural equation modeling uncovers indirect effects on purchase intentions through menu visual appeal, informativeness, and perception of COVID-19 risks. Consumer desire for food and perceived convenience of online ordering mediate this relationship, providing theoretical and managerial implications for effective content marketing and customer attraction, especially post-COVID-19 (Brewer and Sebby, 2021).

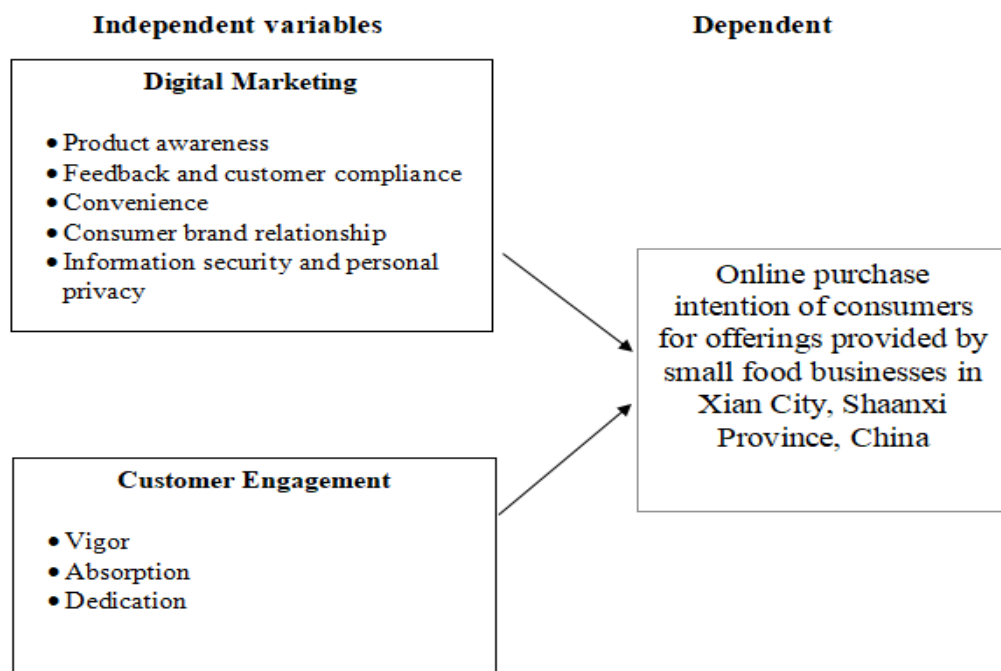
Identifying factors influencing knowledge sharing behavior and customer purchasing intention in the context of social commerce, a study integrates social capital and social interaction theories. Knowledge/information sharing plays a mediating role, connecting dimensions from both theories to customers' purchase intention. The study involves 254 individuals who made more than 5 purchases from social commerce sites, emphasizing the significance of knowledge/information sharing in shaping customer purchasing behavior (Ghahtarani et al., 2020).

Examining factors influencing customer perception, purchase intention, and buying decisions for branded, especially luxury, products in the NCR region, a study identifies Quality, Trust, Psychological, and Social factors as key determinants. Exploratory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling reveal that these factors contribute to purchase intentions, with price discounts playing a partially

mediating role, impacting the buying decision-making process for luxury branded products (Dangi et al., 2021).

Digital marketing, particularly through social media and email channels, is emphasized for building customer engagement, a crucial determinant of purchase intention. Conducted on 363 participants from CoderFirst Sri Lanka, a study confirms the theoretical link between social media, email marketing, customer engagement, and purchase intention using the PLS-SEM method. The research highlights the cost-effective nature of digital marketing tools in promoting products, fostering customer relationships, and ultimately driving increased sales (Nawaz and Kaldeen, 2020).

## 2.7 Research Framework



**Figure 5** Research Framework

This model seeks to predict the 'purchase intention of small food businesses in Xian city, China' by examining two independent variables: 'digital marketing' (encompassing 'product awareness' and 'information security') and 'customer engagement' (comprising 'vigor,' 'absorption,' and 'dedication'). The objective is to explore the impact of changes in these variables on purchase intention. For example, the model aims to answer questions like whether heightened 'product awareness' or increased 'vigor' correlates with elevated 'purchase intention.'

## 2.8 Research Hypotheses

H1: Digital marketing affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H1a: Product awareness affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H1b: Feedback and customer compliance affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H1c: Convenience affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H1d: Consumer brand relationship affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H1e: Information security and personal privacy affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H2: Customer engagement affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H2a: Vigor affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H2b: Absorption affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

H2c: Dedication affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology employed in the investigation of 'online purchase intention of small food businesses in Xian city, China' is comprehensively outlined. The efficacy of any research study is intrinsically tied to the methodological rigor with which data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted. This chapter serves as a roadmap, delineating the research design, participants, data collection instruments, and analytical techniques employed in the pursuit of a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing online purchase intention within the context of small food businesses in Xian city. The study undertakes a meticulous examination of the interplay between 'Digital Marketing' and 'Customer Engagement' as pivotal factors influencing online purchase intention. To illuminate these dynamics, a structured approach is employed, primarily encompassing quantitative research methods. By adopting this multi-methodological approach, the research endeavors to glean insights that are not only statistically robust but also enriched by the nuances and context-specific intricacies of the local small food business landscape in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China.

This chapter unfolds the details of the research design, providing clarity on the rationale behind the chosen methods, the target population, and the procedures implemented for data collection and analysis. Furthermore, ethical considerations, limitations, and potential biases are thoughtfully addressed to ensure the integrity and credibility of the research findings. As the research methodology forms the bedrock of the entire study, its thorough explication is indispensable for readers to contextualize and appraise the subsequent findings and conclusions. The forthcoming sections in this chapter will explore the particulars as outlined below.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

In this section, the chosen research design for the study is presented, employing a quantitative approach. The purpose of this study is to assess the role of digital marketing and customer engagement influencing in shaping the purchasing intention for small food business in Xian, Shanxi, China. This research design aligns with the research objectives, which involve a quantitative assessment of these factors and their relationships.



A quantitative approach is employed, utilizing survey questionnaires for data collection. Statistical data analysis is conducted using the SPSS program to summarize results in tables and accompanying discussions.

## 3.2 Population and Sample

### 3.2.1 Population

The population under examination in this research consists of consumers who have made purchases from small food businesses through various online channels, such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, and who reside in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China. This constitutes a sizable population for which the precise numerical figure is unknown.

### 3.2.2 Sample

This research focused on a sample of individuals who made purchases from small food businesses through various online channels, such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, residing in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China. Given the uncertainty regarding the actual population size, the researcher employed a method for determining the sample size when the population is unknown, assuming that the data follows a normal distribution.

The researcher determined the sample size considering a maximum level of variance set at  $p = 0.5$  and  $q = 0.5$ , with a confidence level of 95% and an acceptable sampling error of 5% (0.05) following the methodology proposed by W.G. Cochran (1953). The sample size is derived from these specified parameters.

$$n = \frac{P(1 - P)Z^2}{e^2}$$

In this context:

- n represents the sample size.
- p Proportion of the population being sampled. In cases where the exact proportion is unknown, it is conventionally assumed to be 0.5.
- Z Statistical significance at a 95% confidence level (critical value is 1.96).  
represents the specified confidence level or statistical significance level. For a confidence level of 95 percent, the corresponding Z value is 1.96.
- e Percentage deviation from the sample that is acceptable. In this research, a confidence

level of 95% with an error value of 0.05 has been set.

Substitute the values for customers into the formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{0.5(1 - 0.5) \times 1.96^2}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = 384.16 \quad n \approx 385$$

From the calculation, it was found that in cases where the exact population number at that level is not known, confidence at 95% will result in an appropriate sample size of 385 samples.

However, to prevent discrepancies and errors that may arise from incomplete questionnaire responses from the sample group, the researcher prepared questionnaires for an additional 5% of the sample, for a total of 406 samples.

### 3.2.3 Sample selection method

The researcher opted for the method of selecting a specific sample (Judgment or Purposive Sampling) due to the unknown true characteristics of the entire population. In this approach, the researcher exclusively distributed questionnaires to individuals who have made online purchases from small food businesses through various online channels, such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, and who reside in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

This type of sample selection is considered a nonprobability sampling method, as it does not rely on probability theory to gather data. Distributing online questionnaires allowed the sample easy access to information, saving time and reducing data.

## 3.3 Research Instrument

### 3.3.1 Construction of Research Tools

The research instrument used in this study comprises questionnaires specifically crafted to investigate the influence of digital marketing and customer engagement on purchase intentions. The creation of the research instrument was informed by relevant theories, previous research, and the researcher's own insights obtained through data collection. The questionnaires are organized into distinct sections, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the research variables. These questionnaires are divided into five parts:

### **Part 1: Screening Questions**

The questionnaire includes a checklist to streamline the screening process.

### **Part 2: Demographic and Consumer Behavior Data**

The questionnaire is designed with a checklist feature to methodically collect information on demographics and consumer behavior related to online purchase intentions from small food businesses.

### **Part 3: Digital marketing**

The Digital Marketing questionnaire is in the form of a rating scale consisting of 5 criteria (total of 24 items):

- 1) Product Awareness (5 items)
- 2) Feedback and Customer Compliance (5 items)
- 3) Convenience (5 items)
- 4) Consumer Brand Relationship (5 items)
- 5) Information Security and Personal Privacy (4 items)

### **Part 4: Customer Engagement**

The Customer Engagement questionnaire is in the form of a rating scale consisting of 3 criteria (total of 15 items):

- 1) Vigor (5 items)
- 2) Absorption (5 items)
- 3) Dedication (5 items)

### **Part 5: Online Purchase Intention**

The Purchase Intention questionnaire consists of 5 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree':

Scoring criteria for assessing the level of degree of influence on purchasing decisions were based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

The Likert scale used in the questionnaire consists of 5 levels, each assigned a specific point value, as outlined below:

Strongly Disagree:	1 point
Disagree:	2 points
Neutral:	3 points
Agree:	4 points
Strongly Agree:	5 points

The 5-point Likert scales, which are rating scales widely used for asking respondents' opinions and attitudes, are utilized to ask to assess the influence of digital marketing and customer engagement on customer's purchasing for small food

business in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China. The 5 points on the scale are, respectively, from 1 to 5: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. The evaluation criteria for each class interval can be calculated using a formula to calculate the width of each class as follows:

$$\text{Class interval} = \frac{\text{Highest Value} - \text{Lowest Value}}{\text{Number of Classes}} \quad (3.1)$$

$$\text{Class interval} = \frac{5 - 1}{5}$$

$$\text{Class interval} = 0.8$$

Therefore, the class stratification is 0.8 and is used to classify the mean and criterion scores with the following descriptions:

Range of Score	Level of agreement
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree with the statement
3.41 – 4.20	Agree the statement
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral with the statement
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree with the statement
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree with the statement

### 3.3.2 Development Process for the Questionnaire

The meticulous development of the questionnaire survey tool is paramount to ensuring the acquisition of reliable and impactful data for the research. The following delineates the sequential process involved in crafting the questionnaire survey tool for this study:

1. Literature Review: Initiated by an extensive literature review, the questionnaire design process drew insights from diverse methods. It incorporated findings from relevant theories and concepts, ensuring the questionnaire aligned with the research framework. This phase also provided clear definitions for key variables.

2. Variable Integration: Subsequent to synthesizing pertinent literature, the identified variables were seamlessly integrated into the questionnaire's structure. The final design embraced a 5-level rating scale, facilitating the measurement of respondents' degrees of influence concerning various factors.

3. Advisor Consultation: The questionnaire, constructed based on the research framework, underwent scrutiny and recommendations from the advisor.

Subsequently, revisions were made in response to the feedback received, ensuring the questionnaire's refinement and alignment with research objectives.

### 3.4 Quality Testing of Research Instruments

The meticulous evaluation of research instruments was conducted through the following steps:

#### 3.4.1 Content Validity

The researcher guaranteed content validity by submitting the newly developed questionnaire to the advisor for evaluation. This evaluation concentrated on examining the accuracy, precision, appropriateness, and structural alignment with the research objectives. Following this assessment, adjustments were made to improve the questionnaire's appropriateness and ensure alignment with the research objectives.

#### 3.4.2 Reliability

The research instrument's quality underwent assessment through a Try Out phase, involving a group of retail businesses not part of the primary sample. Cronbach's method was employed in the questionnaire testing. The resulting  $\alpha$  coefficient of reliability, ranging between 0 and 1, provided an overall evaluation of the measure's reliability. An  $\alpha$  coefficient approaching 1, especially with a large number of scale items, indicates a high level of questionnaire confidence, while coefficients below 0.5 are generally deemed unacceptable for unidimensional scales (Cronbach, 1951). Nunnally (1978) proposed a reliability threshold equal to or greater than 0.7. A reliability test, conducted during the pilot test phase with a group of 30 samples, ensured the questionnaire's accuracy and suitability before deploying it for actual data collection.

This step was crucial for informing respondents and ensuring their comprehension, utilizing Cronbach's formula (1970) for this purpose.

$$\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum s^2(X_i)}{s^2(Y)} \right)$$

In this case.

$\alpha$  refers to Questionnaire reliability value

n refers to the number of scale items

$s^2 (X_i)$  refers to the variance associated with item  
 $s^2 (Y)$  refers to the variance associated with the observed total scores

The values obtained from the test are as follows:

**Table 1** Reliability test

Factors	Question	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	$\alpha$
Product awareness	Digital marketing significantly aids me in finding the right product while shopping online for small food businesses.	0.689	0.808	0.848
	Quality information is provided to me through digital marketing during online shopping.	0.585	0.835	
	Detailed information is available through electronic media while engaging in online shopping for small food businesses.	0.675	0.812	
	Digital marketing ensures that I receive high-quality and up-to-date information related to small food businesses.	0.65	0.819	
	The accessibility of product information and the quick purchase of items are facilitated by digital marketing efforts.	0.685	0.809	

Table 1 Reliability test (CONT.)

Feedback and customer compliance	I can exchange opinions with others through the brand's social networking sites, enhancing my engagement with small food businesses.	0.62	0.840	0.857
	The company promptly addresses my complaints, ensuring a responsive and customer-centric digital marketing approach.	0.683	0.824	
	Providing the necessary documents to express my dissatisfaction required significant time and effort, reflecting the depth of consumer feedback in shaping online purchase intentions.	0.703	0.819	
	Resolving my issue took a considerable amount of time, influencing my overall satisfaction with the small food businesses.	0.666	0.828	
	Accessing the customer service center was not easy, highlighting potential barriers in customer interaction and the need for improved digital marketing communication channels.	0.685	0.824	

Table 1 Reliability test (CONT.)

Convenience	I can easily access information on the Internet 24x7, ensuring convenience in gathering details about small food businesses.	0.659	0.838	0.862
	Digital marketing effectively communicates product information and serves as a valuable source for consumer education, enhancing the overall convenience of the online shopping experience.	0.697	0.828	
	Digital marketing platforms, including Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, offer swift and convenient services, contributing to the ease of interaction with small food businesses.	0.653	0.839	
	Digital marketing platforms facilitate the co-creation of product demands, aligning with consumer preferences and enhancing the convenience of online shopping.	0.720	0.822	
	Digital marketing channels, like the ones I use, provide convenient access for consumers to explore various online platforms, contributing to the overall convenience in engaging with small food businesses.	0.670	0.836	



Table 1 Reliability test (CONT.)

Consumer brand relationship	The assistance I receive in finding the right product while exploring online channels such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat positively influences my connection with small food businesses.	0.679	0.867	0.883
	Positive experiences on online platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat significantly contribute to the development and management of better relationships between customers and small food businesses.	0.714	0.860	
	The support I get in searching for the right product on OTT platforms enhances my relationship with small food businesses.	0.772	0.846	
	The company's emphasis on developing ongoing relations is evident in its interactions with customers.	0.718	0.859	
	The periodic contact from the company for personalized services reinforces the relationship I have with small food businesses.	0.713	0.860	

**Table 1** Reliability test (CONT.)

Information security and personal privacy	Digital marketing practices streamline the process of adhering to privacy and data sharing regulations, ensuring a secure environment for consumers in their interactions with small food businesses.	0.579	0.739	0.785
	Consumers receive privacy assurances through the use of digital marketing platforms.	0.605	0.725	
	Digital marketing empowers customization and secure information handling for customers, contributing to a trustworthy online experience with small food businesses.	0.605	0.726	
	Consumers leverage digital marketing for making product comparisons, confident in the protection of their personal information.	0.577	0.739	

Table 1 Reliability test (CONT.)

Vigor	Online interactions significantly influence my decision to explore offerings from small food businesses.	0.627	0.774	0.816
	When exposed to content related to small food businesses on online platforms, I feel a strong sense of vigor, dedicating a considerable amount of time to explore products.	0.606	0.78	
	I experience high levels of resilience while engaging with online media, especially when interacting with content related to small food businesses.	0.612	0.778	
	Content from online platforms plays a crucial role in enhancing my mental resilience and active engagement, particularly with small food businesses.	0.568	0.791	
	The influence of online content amplifies my mental strength and vigor, especially when considering online purchases from small food businesses in Xian City.	0.614	0.777	

Table 1 Reliability test (CONT.)

Absorption	Time seems to fly when I engage with online channels featuring small food businesses.	0.559	0.730	0.775
	When I come across content about small food businesses on digital media, I become so engrossed that I lose track of everything else.	0.632	0.705	
	I invest a significant amount of attention in online channels promoting small food businesses on digital marketing platforms.	0.495	0.752	
	My interactions with small food businesses, particularly through online channels like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, leave a lasting impression on me.	0.515	0.745	
	Intensely engaging with small food businesses through online channels, especially on platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, brings me joy.	0.54	0.737	
Dedication	Engaging with online channels featuring small food businesses through digital marketing inspires me, fostering enthusiasm and pride.	0.601	0.749	0.796
	The presence of small food businesses on digital platforms imparts meaning and purpose to these online channels for me.	0.614	0.745	
	Digital marketing efforts promoting small food businesses on online platforms generate excitement and capture my interest.	0.578	0.756	
	I am enthusiastic about engaging with small food businesses through online channels like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat.	0.604	0.748	
	My interest is captivated when interacting with small food businesses through online channels.	0.485	0.785	

**Table 1** Reliability test (CONT.)

Online purchase intention	I express the intention to become an online shopper for small food businesses.	0.563	0.771	0.802
	My enthusiasm to become an online shopper is significant.	0.587	0.764	
	I am willing to embrace the role of an online shopper.	0.590	0.763	
	I hold a strong intention to engage in online shopping for small food businesses.	0.584	0.765	
	Whenever I browse the web for a product, I plan to make online purchases.	0.601	0.759	

From the reliability analysis, the corrected item-total correlation corresponding to each question item was greater than 0.4, and the Cronbach Alpha of the deleted item corresponding to each dimension question item was less than the Cronbach Alpha of the dimension to which it belonged; a scale or questionnaire with a good reliability coefficient should ideally be above 0.80, with a range of 0.70 to 0.80 being acceptable; a subscale should ideally be above 0.70 and between 0.60 and 0.70 is acceptable.

The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of the subscales represented by the factors in the official questionnaire of this paper are all above 0.70, according to the above criteria and reliability coefficient table can be seen: the questionnaire's reliability is ideal.

### 3.5 Data Collection

For this research, we will initially rely on two primary sources of information:

#### 3.5.1 Primary Data

The primary data for this study were acquired through a tailored questionnaire survey administered to a sample of 406 customers. These data encompass participants' personal information, purchase intentions, and the influencing factors of digital marketing and customer engagement on their online purchasing decisions. The questionnaire employed various question types, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions, to gather comprehensive information.

Primary data collection took place through online platforms, such as specific QQ groups. Following data validation and processing, this primary data will undergo an in-depth analysis to elucidate the role of digital marketing and customer engagement in purchase intention for small food businesses in Xian city, Shaanxi Province, China.

### 3.5.2 Secondary Data

In addition to primary data collection, this study also relies on secondary data. Secondary data refers to pre-existing information collected by other researchers or organizations that are relevant to the research topic. The secondary data sources used in this study include academic papers, reports, and publications related to the influence digital marketing and customer engagement in purchasing intention for small food business. These sources offer valuable insights, statistical data, and theoretical foundations that support primary data analysis.

## 3.6 Statistics and Data Analysis

Upon completion of the requisite number of questionnaires as determined by the study's sample size, the researcher will employ this dataset for statistical analysis. The analysis will be conducted using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program to derive conclusions in accordance with the research objectives as outlined below.

### 3.6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Statistics-based data analysis can be categorized into two types: descriptive analysis, which explicates the general characteristics of the sample data, and inferential analysis.

**Descriptive Statistics Analysis:** This phase involves descriptive analysis to elucidate the general characteristics of the sample data. The analysis can be further categorized based on the questionnaire as follows;

**Questionnaire Part 1:** This section pertains to the screening of participants to ensure they are suitable for the survey and are willing to participate.

**Questionnaire Part2:** This section focuses on the demographics of small food Businesses owners, including gender, age, duration of business operation, usage of digital marketing, frequency of digital marketing usage, and expenditure on digital marketing.

Questionnaire Part 3: This section pertains to the elements of digital marketing quality.

Questionnaire Part 4: This section pertains to the elements of customer engagement.

Questionnaire Part5: Concerning to purchase intention through digital marketing and customer engagement.

### 3.6.2 Inferential Analysis

Multiple Regression Analysis is utilized to examine the relationships between dependent variables and one or more independent variables. This statistical method is applied for hypothesis testing and can be expressed as a linear equation in raw score format:

$$\hat{Y} = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k$$

When;

$\hat{Y}$  = Predictive score of dependent variable Y

$b_0$  = Fixed effects of the prediction equation in raw score format

$b_1$  to  $b_k$  = Score weights or regression coefficients of the variables

$X_1$  to  $X_k$  = Independent variable score 1 to k

k = number of independent variables

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study was conducted in Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province, China, to investigate the impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on the online purchase intentions of small food businesses. The objective was to examine how various factors influence consumers' willingness to buy online from these companies. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey, and the SPSS statistical software package was used for data analysis. The research findings are analyzed and presented in interpretation tables. For clarity, each table is divided into three sections as follows:

#### 4.1 Descriptive Data Analysis

4.1.1 General demographic characteristics of the respondents

4.1.2 Digital marketing factors that influence Online purchase intention of consumers for offerings provided for small food businesses

4.1.3 Customer engagement factors that influence Online purchase intention of consumers for offerings provided for small food businesses

4.1.4 Online purchase intention of consumers for offerings provided for small food businesses

#### 4.2 Verifying Preliminary Assumptions for the Regression Model

4.2.1 Assessing Normality

4.2.2 Examining Relationships between Variables

4.2.3 Multicollinearity

#### 4.3 Inferential Data Analysis for Hypothesis Testing

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This section encompasses a comprehensive analysis including frequency, percentage, mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. The outcomes of the analysis are segmented into four distinct sections, as detailed below:

#### 4.1.1 General Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 2** Frequency statistics for demographic characteristics classified by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	189	46.6
Female	217	53.4
Total	406	100.0



Table 2 presents the frequency statistics for the demographic characteristics of the respondents, classified by gender. The table shows that out of the total sample of 406 respondents, 189 are male, comprising 46.6% of the sample, and 217 are female, making up 53.4%.

**Table 3** Frequency statistics for demographic characteristics classified by age

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
age	20-25 years old	110	27.1
	25-30 years old	167	41.1
	Over 30 years old	129	31.8
	Total	406	100.0

Table 3 illustrates the age distribution of 406 respondents in a study examining the impact of digital marketing on online purchase intentions in Xi'an City, segmented into three age groups. The data shows that 110 respondents (27.1%) are between 20-25 years old, 167 respondents (41.1%) are between 25-30 years old, and 129 respondents (31.8%) are over 30 years old. The largest proportion of the sample falls within the 25-30 years age group, indicating that this demographic is particularly active in making online purchases from small food businesses, a critical insight for targeting digital marketing strategies.

**Table 4** Frequency statistics of demographic characteristics by business type name

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
The name of the enterprise type	Full service restaurant	185	45.6
	Quick service restaurant	140	34.5
	Cloud kitchen	81	20.0
	Total	406	100.0

Table 4 shows the distribution of business types consumed by 406 respondents in a study that examined the impact of digital marketing on the intention to buy online in Xi'an City, divided into three categories. According to the data, 185 respondents (45.6%) accepted Full service restaurant, 140 (34.5%) accepted Quick service restaurant, and 81 (20%) accepted Cloud kitchen. The largest proportion of the sample accepted Full service restaurants, suggesting that this

demographic is particularly active in making online purchases from small food businesses, a key factor in targeting digital marketing strategies.

**Table 5** Frequency statistics of demographic characteristics by location of small food businesses

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
The location of a small food business	Independent business	174	42.9
	Retail	94	23.2
	Accommodation	83	20.4
	Travel	55	13.5
	Total	406	100.0

Table 5 depicts the distribution of small food businesses according to their location types among 406 respondents in Xi'an City, showing that 174 (42.9%) frequent independent businesses, 94 (23.2%) choose retail locations, 83 (20.4%) opt for accommodation-linked establishments, and 55 (13.5%) make purchases at travel-related spots.

**Table 6** Frequency statistics of demographic characteristics classified by one visit to a small food business

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
How often do you visit this small food business?	Usually	83	20.4
	Sometimes	225	55.4
	Rarely	98	24.1
	Total	406	100.0

Table 6 illustrates the frequency with which 406 respondents visit small food businesses in Xi'an City, categorized into 'Usually' for regular visits (83 respondents, 20.4%), 'Sometimes' for occasional visits (225 respondents, 55.4%), and 'Rarely' for infrequent visits (98 respondents, 24.1%).

The data reveal that while a majority of consumers occasionally patronize these businesses, there is a significant opportunity for increasing regular engagement. This suggests that enhancing digital marketing strategies could potentially convert occasional visitors into regular customers, thus boosting the overall patronage of small food businesses.

**Table 7** Frequency of demographic characteristics classified by whether small food businesses use digital marketing

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
Do the small food businesses you patronize use digital marketing?	Yes	125	30.8
	No	281	69.2
	Total	406	100.0

Table 7 assesses the adoption of digital marketing strategies among small food businesses as reported by 406 respondents in Xi'an City. The data shows that only 125 respondents (30.8%) indicated that the small food businesses they patronize use digital marketing, while a significant majority, 281 respondents (69.2%), reported that these businesses do not utilize digital marketing.

**Table 8** Demographic frequency by how often small food businesses use digital marketing categories

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
Do the small food businesses you patronize use digital marketing?	Usually	99	24.4
	Sometimes	198	48.8
	Very few	109	26.8
	Total	406	100.0

Table 8 provides insights into how frequently small food businesses in Xi'an City utilize digital marketing, based on responses from 406 patrons. The data reveals that 198 respondents (48.8%) observe these businesses using digital marketing 'Sometimes', suggesting intermittent usage. Meanwhile, 99 respondents (24.4%) report 'Usually' seeing digital marketing efforts, indicating regular use, and 109 respondents (26.8%) note 'Very few' instances of digital marketing.

**Table 9** Frequency statistics of demographic characteristics by consumer spending on small food businesses

Name	Option	Frequency	Percent
What is your average monthly expense in this small food business?	Less than ¥500	182	44.8
	¥500-1000	154	37.9
	More than ¥1000	70	17.2
	Total	406	100.0

Table 9 categorizes the monthly expenditure of 406 respondents on small food businesses in Xi'an City. The data reveals that 182 respondents (44.8%) spend less than ¥500 per month, making it the most common spending bracket. Another 154 respondents (37.9%) spend between ¥500 and ¥1000 monthly, and 70 respondents (17.2%) spend more than ¥1000. This spending pattern indicates that while the majority of consumers spend relatively modest amounts, there is a significant segment of the market that could potentially be targeted with premium offerings or loyalty programs to increase spending.

#### 4.1.2 Digital marketing factors that influence Online purchase intention of consumers for offerings provided by small food businesses

The outcomes of the analysis are segmented into five distinct sections, as detailed below:

**Table 10** Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Digital marketing

Digital marketing	Mean	Standard Deviation	Definition of Level
Product awareness	4.04	0.563	High
Feedback and customer compliance	4.19	0.544	High
Convenience	4.24	0.526	Highest
Consumer brand relationship	4.18	0.578	High
Information security and personal privacy	3.99	0.548	High
Total	4.13	0.552	High

Table 10 presents the mean and standard deviation for various dimensions of digital marketing as rated by consumers of small food businesses in Xi'an City. The findings show that 'Convenience' is rated the highest with a mean of 4.24, indicating that consumers value this aspect most within their digital interactions. It is followed closely by 'Feedback and customer compliance' and 'Consumer brand relationship' with means of 4.19 and 4.18, respectively, both categorized as high. 'Product awareness' also scores high with a mean of 4.04, while 'Information security and personal privacy' has the lowest, yet still high, score of 3.99.

The overall average score for digital marketing factors is 4.13, suggesting that respondents generally perceive the digital marketing efforts of small food businesses as effective, aligning with a high level of satisfaction across the evaluated dimensions.

**Table 11** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Digital marketing Factor in Product awareness

Digital marketing (Product awareness)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Definition of Level
1.Digital marketing significantly aids me in finding the right product while shopping online for small food businesses.	4.03	0.750	Agree
2.Quality information is provided to me through digital marketing during online shopping.	4.13	0.693	Agree
3.Detailed information is available through electronic media while engaging in online shopping for small food businesses.	4.00	0.699	Agree
4.Digital marketing ensures that I receive high-quality and up-to-date information related to small food businesses.	4.04	0.710	Agree
5.The accessibility of product information and the quick purchase of items are facilitated by digital marketing efforts.	4.02	0.716	Agree
Total	4.04	0.563	Agree

Table 11 provides a detailed analysis of the role of digital marketing in enhancing product awareness among consumers of small food businesses in Xi'an City. The table lists five statements related to product awareness with corresponding mean scores and standard deviations, indicating a general agreement among respondents. Scores range narrowly from 4.00 to 4.13, suggesting consistent agreement that digital marketing effectively aids in discovering the right products, provides quality and detailed information, and ensures that the information is both high-quality and up-to-date.

The mean scores affirm that digital marketing significantly facilitates the accessibility of product information and expedites the purchasing process, with the overall average for this dimension standing at 4.04.

**Table 12** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Digital marketing Factor in Feedback and customer compliance

Feedback and customer compliance	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1.I can exchange opinions with others through the brand's social networking sites, enhancing my engagement with small food businesses.	4.250	0.658	Strongly Agree
2.The company promptly addresses my complaints, ensuring a responsive and customer-centric digital marketing approach.	4.180	0.695	Agree
3.Providing the necessary documents to express my dissatisfaction required significant time and effort, reflecting the depth of consumer feedback in shaping online purchase intentions.	4.190	0.700	Agree
4.Resolving my issue took a considerable amount of time, influencing my overall satisfaction with the small food businesses.	4.150	0.685	Agree
5.Accessing the customer service center was not easy, highlighting potential barriers in customer interaction and the need for improved digital marketing communication channels	4.190	0.670	Agree
Total	4.190	0.544	Agree

Table 12 assesses the effectiveness of digital marketing in facilitating feedback and customer compliance for small food businesses in Xi'an City. The responses across five statements reflect a positive reception, with the highest mean score of 4.25 indicating that consumers strongly agree they can actively exchange opinions via social networking sites, enhancing their engagement with the businesses. Other aspects like promptness in addressing complaints and the effort required to express dissatisfaction both received agreeable scores around 4.18 to 4.19, suggesting a generally responsive and customer-centric approach in digital interactions. However, some challenges were noted in terms of time taken to resolve issues and ease of accessing customer services, both scoring slightly lower but still within the agreeable range. The overall average score of 4.19 signals that while feedback mechanisms and

compliance standards are effectively managed, there is room for improving certain operational aspects to enhance customer satisfaction further.

**Table 13** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Digital marketing Factor in Convenience

Convenience	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1.I can easily access information on the Internet 24x7, ensuring convenience in gathering details about small food businesses.	4.25	0.654	Strongly Agree
2.Digital marketing effectively communicates product information and serves as a valuable source for consumer education, enhancing the overall convenience of the online shopping experience.	4.26	0.635	Strongly Agree
3.Digital marketing platforms, including Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, offer swift and convenient services, contributing to the ease of interaction with small food businesses.	4.28	0.631	Strongly Agree
4.Digital marketing platforms facilitate the co-creation of product demands, aligning with consumer preferences and enhancing the convenience of online shopping.	4.21	0.675	Strongly Agree
5.Digital marketing channels, like the ones I use, provide convenient access for consumers to explore various online platforms, contributing to the overall convenience in engaging with small food	4.21	0.681	Strongly Agree
Total	4.24	0.526	Strongly Agree

Table 13 evaluates how digital marketing enhances convenience for consumers engaging with small food businesses in Xi'an City. The table records strong agreement across all items, with mean scores ranging from 4.21 to 4.28, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the convenience provided by digital marketing. Consumers strongly agree that they can access information 24x7 on the internet, appreciate the effective communication of product information, and value the swift services provided by platforms such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat. Additionally, the ease of interacting with businesses and the co-creation of product

demands that align with consumer preferences are highlighted as significant contributors to the convenience of online shopping.

With an overall mean of 4.24, the data clearly suggest that digital marketing substantially simplifies and enhances the consumer experience, making it easier for them to engage with and purchase from small food businesses.

**Table 14** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Digital marketing Factor in Consumer brand relationship

Consumer brand relationship	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1.The assistance I receive in finding the right product while exploring online channels such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat positively influences my connection with small food businesses	4.21	0.686	Strongly Agree
2.Positive experiences on online platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat significantly contribute to the development and management of better relationships between customers and small food businesses.	4.18	0.697	Agree
3.The support I get in searching for the right product on OTT platforms enhances my relationship with small food businesses.	4.15	0.712	Agree
4.The company's emphasis on developing ongoing relations is evident in its interactions with customers.	4.20	0.702	Agree
5.The periodic contact from the company for personalized services reinforces the relationship I have with small food businesses.	4.17	0.703	Agree
Total	4.18	0.578	Agree

Table 14 presents the impact of digital marketing on consumer brand relationships within the context of small food businesses in Xi'an City. The table indicates consistently positive responses with means ranging from 4.15 to 4.21, suggesting that digital marketing significantly fosters consumer relationships. Respondents strongly agree that the assistance received in finding the right products through online channels such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat enhances their connection with these businesses (Mean = 4.21). Other responses indicate



agreement that positive experiences on these platforms contribute to better customer-business relationships, support in product searches on OTT platforms enhances these relationships, and ongoing interactions initiated by the company, including personalized services, significantly reinforce these ties.

The overall mean score of 4.18 reflects a general agreement among consumers that digital marketing strategies effectively cultivate and maintain strong relationships with small food businesses.

**Table 15** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Digital marketing Factor in Information security and personal privacy

Information security and personal privacy	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1.Digital marketing practices streamline the process of adhering to privacy and data sharing regulations, ensuring a secure environment for consumers in their interactions with small food businesses.	3.95	0.725	Agree
2.Consumers receive privacy assurances through the use of digital marketing platforms.	4.01	0.710	Agree
3.Digital marketing empowers customization and secure information handling for customers, contributing to a trustworthy online experience with small food businesses.	4.00	0.680	Agree
4.Consumers leverage digital marketing for making product comparisons, confident in the protection of their personal information.	3.99	0.696	Agree
Total	3.99	0.533	Agree

Table 15 assesses the effectiveness of digital marketing in maintaining information security and personal privacy for consumers of small food businesses in Xi'an City. The table shows that consumers generally agree that digital marketing practices ensure a secure environment by adhering to privacy and data sharing regulations, with a mean score of 3.95. The mean scores range from 3.99 to 4.01, indicating agreement across several aspects: consumers receive privacy assurances from digital platforms, feel empowered by the customization and secure handling of their information, and trust the protection of their personal data when making product comparisons online.

The overall mean of 3.99 suggests that while digital marketing is perceived as largely secure, there is potential for further enhancement to fully satisfy consumer expectations for privacy and security.

#### 4.1.3 Customer engagement factors that influence Online purchase intention of consumers for offerings provided by small food businesses

**Table 16** Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Customer engagement

Customer engagement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Definition of Level
Vigor	3.99	0.522	High
Absorption	4.06	0.509	High
Dedication	4.28	0.483	Highest
Total	4.11	0.504	High

Table 16 evaluates the levels of customer engagement among consumers of small food businesses in Xi'an City, focusing on three components: Vigor, Absorption, and Dedication. The data reveals high engagement levels across all components, with Dedication scoring the highest at 4.28, indicating an exceptional level of commitment and enthusiasm among customers towards the businesses. Absorption, which reflects the level of concentration and engrossment in the activity, also scores high at 4.06. Vigor, representing energy and mental resilience while interacting with the businesses, has a slightly lower but still high score of 3.99.

The overall mean of 4.11 signifies that customers are highly engaged, with Dedication standing out as the most prominent aspect of their engagement, suggesting that consumers are not only interested in but are also emotionally invested in their interactions with these businesses.

**Table 17** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Customer engagement Factor in Vigor

Vigor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Definition of Level
1.Online interactions significantly influence my decision to explore offerings from small food businesses.	4.01	0.715	Agree
2.When exposed to content related to small food businesses on online platforms, I feel a strong sense of vigor, dedicating a considerable amount of time to explore products.	3.97	0.686	Agree
3.I experience high levels of resilience while engaging with online media, especially when interacting with content related to small food businesses.	3.98	0.674	Agree
4.Content from online platforms plays a crucial role in enhancing my mental resilience and active engagement, particularly with small food businesses.	4.02	0.664	Strongly Agree
5.The influence of online content amplifies my mental strength and vigor, especially when considering online purchases from small food businesses in Xian City.	3.98	0.699	Agree
Total	3.99	0.522	Agree

Table 17 explores the vigor component of customer engagement among consumers of small food businesses in Xi'an City, measuring the influence of online interactions on their enthusiasm and mental resilience. The component is assessed through five statements, each reflecting a strong agreement with the role of digital content in enhancing consumer engagement levels. The mean scores range from 3.97 to 4.02, indicating that consumers agree that online interactions significantly boost their decision to explore offerings (Mean = 4.01), invoke a strong sense of vigor (Mean = 3.97), and contribute to their resilience when engaging with digital media related to small food businesses (Means = 3.98 and 4.02).

These responses underscore the vital role that content on digital platforms plays in enhancing consumers' mental resilience and active engagement, especially when considering purchases from small food businesses in Xi'an. The overall mean of 3.99 suggests that the vigor induced by online content is a significant factor in driving active and resilient customer engagement.

**Table 18** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Customer engagement Factor in Absorption

Absorption	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1.Time seems to fly when I engage with online channels featuring small food businesses.	4.03	0.691	Agree
2.When I come across content about small food businesses on digital media, I become so engrossed that I lose track of everything else.	4.02	0.709	Agree
3.I invest a significant amount of attention in online channels promoting small food businesses on digital marketing platforms.	4.16	0.698	Agree
4.My interactions with small food businesses, particularly through online channels like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, leave a lasting impression on me.	4.11	0.692	Agree
5.Intensely engaging with small food businesses through online channels, especially on platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, brings me joy.	3.99	0.716	Agree
Total	4.06	0.509	Agree

Table 18 assesses the absorption aspect of customer engagement with small food businesses in Xi'an City through digital platforms. This dimension of engagement measures how consumers become engrossed and lose track of time while interacting online. The mean scores, ranging from 3.99 to 4.16, indicate strong agreement among participants. Consumers agree that time seems to fly when engaging with online content from small food businesses (Mean = 4.03) and report becoming so absorbed in the content that they lose track of everything else (Mean = 4.02). A particularly high score (Mean = 4.16) is noted for the level of attention invested in such digital content. Further, interactions through platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat are reported to leave a lasting impression (Mean = 4.11) and bring joy (Mean = 3.99), emphasizing the profound impact these interactions have on consumer engagement.

Overall, with a mean score of 4.06, the data highlights that digital marketing platforms significantly enhance the absorption aspect of customer engagement, drawing consumers deeply into the experiences offered by small food businesses.

**Table 19** Mean and Standard Deviation of the Customer Engagement Factor in Dedication

Dedication	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1.Engaging with online channels featuring small food businesses through digital marketing inspires me, fostering enthusiasm and pride.	4.30	0.641	Strongly Agree
2.The presence of small food businesses on digital platforms imparts meaning and purpose to these online channels for me.	4.27	0.652	Strongly Agree
3.Digital marketing efforts promoting small food businesses on online platforms generate excitement and capture my interest.	4.30	0.639	Strongly Agree
4.I am enthusiastic about engaging with small food businesses through online channels like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat.	4.31	0.671	Strongly Agree
5.My interest is captivated when interacting with small food businesses through online channels.	4.24	0.650	Strongly Agree
Total	4.28	0.483	Strongly Agree

Table 19 quantifies the dedication aspect of customer engagement, specifically evaluating how digital marketing impacts consumer commitment to small food businesses in Xi'an City. The table illustrates exceptionally strong engagement, with mean scores consistently above 4.24, indicating that consumers strongly agree that digital interactions inspire and enrich their shopping experiences. Notably, engagement with online channels inspires enthusiasm and pride (Mean = 4.30), imparts meaning and purpose (Mean = 4.27), and generates excitement (Mean = 4.30). The highest mean score of 4.31 reflects the strong enthusiasm consumers feel when engaging with businesses on platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat.

With an overall mean of 4.28, these results underscore the profound effect of digital marketing in fostering a deep sense of dedication among consumers towards small food businesses, significantly enhancing their engagement and loyalty.

#### 4.1.4 Online Purchase Intention of Consumers for Offerings Provided by Small Food Businesses

**Table 20** Mean and Standard Deviation of Online purchase intention

Online purchase intention	Mean	Std. Deviation	Definition of Level
1. I express the intention to become an online shopper for small food businesses.	4.20	0.670	Agree
2. My enthusiasm to become an online shopper is significant.	4.22	0.674	Strongly Agree
3. I am willing to embrace the role of an online shopper.	4.23	0.674	Strongly Agree
4. I hold a strong intention to engage in online shopping for small food businesses.	4.24	0.644	Strongly Agree
5. Whenever I browse the web for a product, I plan to make online purchases.	4.20	0.654	Agree
Total	4.22	0.496	Strongly Agree

Table 20 assesses the online purchase intentions of consumers regarding small food businesses in Xi'an City. The data showcases a strong inclination towards online shopping, with mean scores ranging from 4.20 to 4.24, indicating that consumers agree or strongly agree with the statements about their shopping behaviors. Specific responses suggest that consumers not only express a clear intention to become online shoppers (Mean = 4.20) but also exhibit significant enthusiasm for this mode of shopping (Mean = 4.22) and are willing to embrace the role of online shoppers (Mean = 4.23). The highest agreement appears with the statement regarding a strong intention to engage in online shopping (Mean = 4.24), reflecting a decisive consumer mindset towards purchasing from small food businesses via digital platforms.

The overall mean score of 4.22, categorized as 'Strongly Agree,' underscores a robust consumer readiness to transition to or continue engaging in online shopping, emphasizing the effectiveness of digital marketing in influencing purchasing decisions.

## 4.2 Verifying Preliminary Assumptions for the Regression Model

### 4.2.1 Assessing Normality

Testing the distribution of the dependent variable and its tolerances. The test method for will be checked by the method Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test with a significance level significance greater than 0.05.

**Table 21** Test of Normality for Dependent Variables and Error Values

Tests of Normality			
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
OPI	0.213	406	0.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction			

To assess the distribution of the dependent variable and its tolerances, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was employed, utilizing a significance level of greater than 0.05. The results indicate a significance value (Sig) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, suggesting that the sample group does not exhibit a normal distribution.

However, according to the Central Limit Theorem, which posits that the distribution of sample values will approximate a normal distribution if the sample size is sufficiently large, typically over 30 samples (Bland, 1996), the use of 406 samples in this study supports the assumption of normality for the dependent variable and its tolerance values.

### 4.2.2 Examining Relationships Between Variables

**Table 22** Correlation Analysis

		Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	OPI
Product Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1								
			Sig. (2-tailed)							
Feedback and Customer Compliance	Pearson Correlation	0.449**	1.000							
				Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000					
Convenience	Pearson Correlation	0.435**	0.297**	1.000						
					Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000			
Consumer brand relationship	Pearson Correlation	0.386**	0.315**	0.247**	1.000					
						Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
Information security and personal privacy	Pearson Correlation	-0.005	0.012	0.005	-0.016	1.000				
							Sig. (2-tailed)	0.920	0.815	0.917
									0.744	



Table 22 Correlation Analysis (CONT.)

		Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	Product Awareness	OPI
Vigor	Pearson Correlation	0.074	-0.036	0.072	0.032	-0.090	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.138	0.473	0.150	0.516	0.070			
Absorption	Pearson Correlation	0.472**	0.305**	0.306**	0.323**	-0.063	0.042	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.204	0.400		
Dedication	Pearson Correlation	0.402**	0.300**	0.308**	0.358**	0.040	-0.069	0.443**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.416	0.166	0.000	
OPI	Pearson Correlation	0.593**	0.485**	0.490**	0.510**	0.007	0.056	0.535**	0.483**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.891	0.264	0.000	0.000

It turns out, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, absorption and dedication, online purchase intent are 0.593\*\*, 0.485\*\*, 0.490\*\*, 0.510\*\*, 0.535\*\*, 0.483\*\*, respectively, so we can know that product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, absorption and dedication online purchase intention have significant positive correlation. The correlation coefficients of information security and personal privacy, Vigor were 0.007 and 0.056, which were not significant with online purchase intention.

#### 4.2.3 Multicollinearity

**Table 23** Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
0.761 <sup>a</sup>	0.579	0.570	0.325	1.961

**Table 24** Collinearity Statistics

	Tolerance	VIF
Product Awareness	0.584	1.712
Feedback and Customer Compliance	0.751	1.331
Convenience	0.772	1.296
Consumer brand relationship	0.776	1.288
Information security and personal privacy	0.986	1.015
Vigor	0.966	1.035
Absorption	0.681	1.468
Dedication	0.700	1.428

Tests on the Multicollinearity of the models showed that all VIF values were less than 5, indicating no collinearity, and D-W values were near the number 2, therefore, the model does not exist self-correlation, there is no correlation between the sample data, the model is better.

### 4.3 Inferential Data Analysis for Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis was verified by using SPSS software. The results show that online purchase intention and product awareness, feedback and customer

compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, absorption, dedication have significant effects.

#### 4.3.1 Model Settings

On-line purchase intention behavior was interpreted as variable  $y$ . The interpretation variable is product awareness  $\times 1$ , feedback and customer compliance  $\times 2$ , Convenience  $\times 3$ , consumer brand relationship  $\times 4$ , Information Security and personal privacy  $\times 5$ , Vigor  $\times 6$ , absorption  $\times 7$ , dedication  $\times 8$ . The regression model is set as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8$$

H1: Digital marketing, specifically Product awareness, Feedback and customer compliance, Convenience, Consumer brand, Information security and personal privacy, have an influence on purchase intention of consumers from small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

**Table 25** Factors influencing online purchase intention by digital marketing

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.455	0.221		2.058	0.040
	Product Awareness	0.261	0.037	0.296	6.974	0.000
	Feedback and Customer Compliance	0.178	0.036	0.195	4.951	0.000
	Convenience	0.221	0.036	0.234	6.067	0.000
	Consumer brand relationship	0.238	0.033	0.277	7.293	0.000
	Information security and personal privacy	0.008	0.031	0.009	0.272	0.786
	R2				0.526	
F				8.873		
P				0.000		

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

Formula:

$$Y = 0.455 + 0.261(PA) + 0.178(FC) + 0.221(C) + 0.238(CBR) + 0.008(IP)$$

The R2 of the model is 0.526 and the adjusted R2 is 0.520. The regression equation explained 52.6% of the total variance and the F value in the model was 88.873, indicating a linear correlation between independent and dependent variables.

The results of the regression analysis showed that under the same conditions, the coefficients of product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, and influencing factors on online purchase intention behavior were 0.261,0.178,0.221, and 0.238( $P < 0.05$  & Lt; 0.05) , which meant that product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, perceived usefulness of each additional unit of purchasing power, and so on, were 0.261,0.178,0.221, and 0.238 ( $P < 0.05$  & Lt; 0.05) , it adds 0.198 units. Consumer brand relationship has a positive effect on online purchase intention behavior. The coefficient of information security and personal privacy is 0.008( $P > 0.05$ ) , but not on online purchase intention, therefore, information security and personal privacy have no influence on online purchase intention.

H2: Customer engagement, specifically Vigor, Absorption, and Dedication, have an influence on purchase intention of consumers from small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.

**Table 26** According to the influence factors of customer participation on online purchase intention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.056	0.252		4.198	0.000
	Vigor	0.058	0.038	0.061	1.516	0.130
	Absorption	0.384	0.043	0.394	8.870	0.000
	Dedication	0.321	0.046	0.313	7.024	0.000
	R2				0.365	
	F				77.168	
	P				0.000	

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

Formula:

$$Y=1.056+0.058*(V)+0.384*(A)+0.321*(D)$$

The  $R^2$  of the model is 0.365 and the adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.561. The regression equation explained 36.5% of the total variance and the F value in the model was 77.168, indicating a linear correlation between independent and dependent variables.

In the final analysis, the regression coefficient of vitality was 0.058 ( $P < 0.05$  &  $GT. 0.05$ ), which means that vitality has no effect on online purchase intention. The regression coefficients of co-existence telepresence were 0.071 ( $t = 1.138$ ,  $P = 0.256 > 0.05$  &  $GT. 0.05$ ), absorption and contribution were 0.384, 0.321 ( $P < 0.05$  &  $Lt. 0.05$ ), meaning that absorption and dedication will have a significant positive impact on online purchase intention relationship.

#### 4.3.2 Summary of Research Hypotheses

The hypothesis was verified by using SPSS software. The results show that online purchase intention is related to product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, absorption and dedication. Product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, absorbability, dedication have significant effects, while the relationship between online purchasing behavior and gender, age, type, information security, privacy, vitality has no significant impact on online purchasing behavior.

**Table 27** Results of Research Hypothesis Test

No.	Research hypothesis	Result
H1	Digital marketing, specifically Product awareness, Feedback and customer compliance, Convenience, Consumer brand, Information security and personal privacy, have an influence on purchase intention of consumers from small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H1a	Product awareness affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H1b	Feedback and customer compliance affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H1c	Convenience affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H1d	Consumer brand relationship affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H1e	Information security and personal privacy affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Refused

**Table 27** Results of Research Hypothesis Test (CONT.)

H2	Customer engagement affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H2a	Vigor affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Refused
H2b	Absorption affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted
H2c	Dedication affecting purchase intention of consumers for small food businesses in Xian City, Shaanxi Province, China.	Accepted



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to explore the strategic efforts of Xian small food enterprises in the field of digital marketing. Outlines the main findings, clarifies the theoretical and practical implications, and proposes tailored strategies to expand consumers' willingness to buy online. Furthermore, this paper outlines a roadmap for future research efforts, highlighting potential investigative avenues that can shed further light on the nuances of digital consumer engagement. An overall understanding of the complexity of the digital marketing landscape is facilitated by addressing the inherent limitations of the study. In conclusion, it aims to provide stakeholders with a nuanced understanding of the impact of digital marketing and to facilitate informed decision-making and strategic planning in dynamic and evolving digital markets. The findings, discussions, and recommendations are summarized below.

- 5.1 Conclusion
- 5.2 Discussion
- 5.3 Research significance
  - 5.3.1 Theoretical significance
  - 5.3.2 Practical significance
- 5.4 Limitations of the study
- 5.5 Recommendations and future studies

#### 5.1 Conclusion

##### 5.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample consisted of 406 participants living in Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province, China, who purchased food from small food companies through various online channels such as Tiktok, Toutiao, Sina Weibo and wechat. Most are female (53.4%), aged 25-30 (41.1%), mostly choose accepted Full service restaurant(45.6%), and there are advantages to being in Independent business(42.9%) depending on location, Most of them Sometimes choose online purchases (55.4%), mostly use digital marketing strategies (69.2%), most consumers sometimes use digital marketing (48.8%), and most consumers spend less than ¥500 (44.8%).

##### 5.1.2 Digital Marketing Factore

#### 1) Product Awareness

According to the research, product cognition factors show that digital marketing helps participants find the right products and provide high-quality information when shopping for snacks. Electronic media provide detailed information to ensure that consumers get the latest, high-quality snack business information. Digital marketing promotes the acquisition of product information and rapid purchase, so this study has a positive impact.

## **2) Feedback and Customer Compliance Factor**

The feedback and customer compliance factors in the study showed that participants could exchange opinions through brand social networking sites and enhance interaction with snack companies. The company handles complaints quickly, reflecting responsive, customer-focused digital marketing. Expressing dissatisfaction takes time and effort to show the impact of consumer feedback on online purchase intentions. Problem solving takes time and affects overall satisfaction. Customer service centers are difficult to access, highlighting barriers to customer interaction and the need to improve digital marketing communication channels. Overall, feedback and smooth customer compliance have a positive impact on online shopping.

## **3) Convenience Factor**

According to the convenience factor of the study, participants can obtain snack enterprise information online at any time, and digital marketing effectively conveys product information, helps consumer education, and improves the convenience of online shopping. Digital marketing platform facilitates interaction with snack businesses. Digital marketing channels facilitate consumers to explore different platforms and enhance the convenience of interaction with snack companies.

## **4) Consumer Brand Relationship Factor**

The research shows that the factors of consumer brand relationship profoundly affect the interaction between customers and snack enterprises. Online platforms such as Douyin and Toutiao provide accurate recommendations and services that enhance the shopping experience. The active interaction of these platforms is crucial to building and maintaining the relationship between customers and snack companies. Support when searching for products through OTT platforms enhances participants' trust and dependence. Therefore, it has a positive impact on the role of online purchase intention of small food enterprises in Xi 'an.

## **5) Information Security and Personal Privacy Factor**

Through this article's survey of participants' information security and personal privacy, it is an important consideration for digital marketing. By following privacy and



data sharing regulations, digital marketing practices ensure a safe environment for consumers to interact with snack businesses. The digital marketing platform provides privacy protection for consumers, realizes personalized customization and secure information processing, and enhances consumers' trust in snack companies. Therefore, information security and personal privacy factors do not affect the convenience of online shopping.

### 5.1.3 Digital Marketing Factors

#### 1) Vigor Factor

Through research showing dynamic factors, online interaction influenced my decision to explore snack business products. When exposed to content related to snack companies, participants were energetic, invested a lot of time in exploring products, and participants demonstrated a high degree of resilience, especially when interacting with snack company content. Online content is very important to enhance the psychological resilience of participation and active participation itself. Therefore, the vitality factor does not affect the enthusiasm of online shopping.

#### 2) Absorption Factor

Absorption factors indicate that participants devote a lot of time and attention to the online channels that showcase snack companies and immerse themselves in the online platforms. Especially on platforms such as Tiktok, Toutiao, Sina Weibo and wechat, the interaction between participants and snack companies left a deep impression and a sense of pleasure for participants. Therefore, online shopping channels have a positive impact on participants, deepening participants' understanding and love of snack enterprises, and therefore have a positive impact on the willingness of small food enterprises in Xi 'an to play a role in online purchase intention.

#### 3) Dedication factor

The discovery of the dedication factor in digital marketing shows my enthusiasm and pride in the online channels of snack companies, giving these channels meaning and purpose. Digital marketing efforts by businesses promoting snacks generate excitement and attract the interest of participants. Participants are keen to interact with snack businesses through online channels and have a fun experience. Therefore, dedication has a positive impact on the online purchase intention of small food enterprises in Xi 'an.

## 5.2 Discussion

This study conducted an exploratory study in Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province, China, to analyze the relationship between digital marketing, customer engagement, and online purchase intent. Our findings illustrate the important role that digital marketing can play in improving small food businesses and thereby influencing consumers' willingness to buy online.

The study found that In Digital marketing product awareness, feedback and customer compliance, convenience, consumer brand relationship, including factors of customer participation absorption and dedication, has a positive impact on the role of small food entrepreneurs in Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province, China. These factors affect the willingness of consumers and enterprises to enter the field of digital marketing in a rapidly changing environment. It is important to reflect on its wider impact and its impact on small food businesses in Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province and elsewhere. The findings highlight the transformative role of digital marketing and customer engagement in shaping online purchase intent. In an increasingly digital world, small food businesses have the independent opportunity to connect with consumers in meaningful ways, which not only drives sales, but also cultivates a loyal consumer. At the same time, this study is consistent with the findings of Peter and Dalla Vecchia et al. (2021), which show that learning about digital marketing contributes to consumers' willingness to buy online in small food businesses.

Digital marketing factors include Product awareness, Feedback and customer compliance, Convenience, Consumer brand relationship, These four factors have a positive impact on consumers' intention to buy small food online in Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province, while digital marketing helps consumers to accurately find the right products when shopping online, providing up-to-date, high-quality snack business information. The study feedback and customer compliance factors show that participants can exchange opinions through brand social networking sites, can respond quickly and customer-oriented digital marketing concepts, and enhance interaction with snack companies. As for the study of convenience factors, consumers can obtain snack enterprise information online at any time, and digital marketing can effectively convey product information, help consumers obtain and improve the convenience of online shopping. The factors of consumer brand relationship have a profound impact on the relationship between customers and snack enterprises. For example, online platforms such as Tiktok and Weibo provide consumers with accurate recommendations and services and improve the shopping experience. Support when searching for products through OTT platforms enhances

participants' trust and dependence. Believing that they can make a business a reality and a success affects consumer determination and acceptance. Therefore, these factors are an important factor that can influence future consumers to become online shoppers of small food products. This study is consistent with research (Rashid et al., 2021) which found that, A Malaysian study during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests the potential of digital marketing in fortifying new business practices among small entrepreneurs (Rashid et al., 2021).

Customer participation factors include Absorption and Dedication. These two factors exert a positive influence on consumers' intention to buy small food online in Xi 'an, Shaanxi Province. Research in this field contributes to the promotion effect of consumers' online purchase of small food. The research reflects that consumers will devote a lot of time and attention to the online channel display of food companies and immerse themselves in the online platform. Especially on platforms such as Tiktok, Toutiao, Sina Weibo and wechat, the interaction between participants and snack companies left a deep impression and a sense of pleasure for participants. It was found that participants were keen to interact with snack businesses through online channels and have a fun experience. These reflect consumers' deep sense of belonging, pride, enthusiasm and commitment as customers of small food enterprises in Xi 'an, and actively promote the formation of online purchase intentions.

The study highlights the nuances of consumer behavior in the digital age, and in the booming Xi 'an market and similar cities, digital marketing is not just a tool, but a necessity for survival and development. The insights gained show that small businesses are resilient and adaptable in the face of a vast and sometimes overwhelming digital ecosystem. This study opens the way for further exploration of the dynamic interplay between digital marketing strategies and consumer behavior, and urges future scholars and practitioners to delve deeper into the complexities of digital engagement. This study doesn't end there, it just marks the beginning of a deeper understanding and appreciation of the evolving nature of the digital marketing field. For small food businesses, the message is clear: embrace the digital wave, connect with consumers and allow small food businesses to achieve rapid economic growth in the heart of China's ancient capital and beyond.

## 5.3 Research Significance

### 5.3.1 Theoretical Significance

The results of this study provide valuable advice for consumer behavior in the context of the digital age, and constitute a substantial complement and enrichment of the existing knowledge system. By closely integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with multiple dimensions such as digital marketing and customer engagement, this study not only fills the theoretical gap in the field of dynamic research on online consumer behavior, but also builds a comprehensive and in-depth theoretical framework. It helps us to more accurately grasp the changes in consumer psychology and behavior in the digital world.

The report elaborates on the enormous impact of digital marketing in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, revealing how digital marketing techniques can subtly influence consumers' decision-making processes. At the same time, the report also highlights the importance of exploring the role of digital interfaces in consumers' interactions with brands, not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a bridge between emotions and values.

In addition, the report provides insight into the differentiated impact of different digital marketing factors on purchase intentions, revealing the complexity and diversity of consumer engagement in the digital space. This finding prompts us to re-examine the applicability and limitations of traditional marketing theories in the context of digital consumerism, and provides a more solid theoretical foundation and practical guidance for future marketing strategy formulation.

### 5.3.2 Practical Significance

For small food enterprises in Xi 'an, the importance of this research is self-evident. It highlights the indispensable value of digital marketing strategies in increasing consumer engagement and willingness to buy online. In the digital age, how to effectively use various digital means to attract and retain consumers has become a problem that these companies should consider solving.

Through in-depth research, we found that focusing on product awareness, establishing effective feedback mechanisms, and providing easy ways to interact online are key to increasing consumer engagement and purchase intentions. Therefore, we encourage small food enterprises in Xi 'an to actively optimize their digital marketing methods and create a more personalized, informationized and convenient online shopping experience, so as to attract more consumers' attention and trust.

At the same time, the survey results also show a phenomenon. Although information security and customer privacy should be highly valued in theory. They do not have a significant impact on actual purchase intentions. This finding suggests that while privacy concerns cannot be ignored, they may not be a major determinant of consumer purchase intentions among small food businesses in Xi'an. This gives companies more flexibility and room for innovation, while ensuring basic privacy security, to focus more on other factors that can directly enhance the consumer buying experience.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

A study conducted in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, on the impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on small food businesses' willingness to buy online provided profound results. However, it is important to recognize some limitations that may affect the generality and interpretation of the results.

First, the study's geographical focus on Xi'an city limits the applicability of its findings in China and other parts of the world. Xi'an's unique cultural, economic and technological environment may not reflect other regions and may affect digital marketing effectiveness and customer engagement strategies in other regions. Future research could be expanded geographically to include different urban and rural environments in order to have a more complete picture.

Second, the questionnaire's reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, in which participants may overestimate or underestimate their willingness to participate or purchase due to social expectations or memory recall problems. While measures have been taken to ensure anonymity and encourage honesty, the inherent nature of self-reporting can still affect the accuracy of data.

Finally, rapid advances in digital marketing and technology mean that the strategies and platforms being researched can quickly become obsolete. Emerging digital marketing tools and platforms continue to reshape consumer engagement and buying behavior, demonstrating the need for ongoing research to keep pace with these changes and fully understand their impact.

Addressing these limitations in future research could improve our understanding of the role of digital marketing in shaping consumer behavior and provide stronger recommendations for small food businesses aiming to leverage online platforms for growth.

### 5.5 Recommendations and Future Studies

This study opens up many avenues for future research in the field of digital marketing and its impact on consumer behavior. Future research could provide a deeper understanding of the role of information security and personal privacy in different cultural and demographic contexts to determine their different effects on consumers' purchase intentions. In addition, studying the long-term impact of digital marketing and customer engagement on brand loyalty and consumer trust will provide valuable insights for business strategic planning. Further research could also explore the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning into personalized marketing strategies and their effectiveness in increasing customer engagement and purchase intentions.

Another promising area for future research is how the relationship between consumers and brands may change over time. Studying the dynamic evolution of this relationship, and how digital marketing and consumer engagement affect this evolution, will help businesses better understand and manage consumer relationships. Provides a broader perspective on the applicability and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in different market segments.



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APPENDIXES



APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES (In English)



**Examining the role of digital marketing and customer engagement in  
shaping online purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian,  
Shaanxi province, China**

Dear Madam/Sir,

Hello! First, thank you very much for filling out this questionnaire sincerely. This questionnaire aims at “Examining the role of digital marketing and customer engagement in shaping online purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian, Shaanxi province, China”, to provide relevant suggestions for individuals and merchants to better utilize the characteristics of the questionnaire was designed to provide suggestions for purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian, Shaanxi province, China in the context of digital marketing and customer engagement. Secondly, the questionnaire is filled out anonymously, and the results of the survey are only for the use of this thesis research, without any commercial interests involved and strictly confidential. Finally, please fill in the questionnaire according to your actual situation, your filling in will be a great help to this research. Thank you for your cooperation!

This survey investigates the relationship between digital marketing, customer engagement, and online purchase intentions for small food businesses in Xian City. Divided into 5 parts:

Part 1: Screening Questions

No.1 Are you currently doing business in Xian, Shanxi, China?

Yes

No (end of the questionnaire)

No.2 Are you doing business on food and beverage?

Yes

No (end of the questionnaire)

No.3 Would you be willing to take a questionnaire?

Yes

No (end of the questionnaire)

No.4. Do the numbers of staffs in your business bigger than 50?

No

Yes (end of the questionnaire)

## Part 2: Demographic

No.1 Gender

 Male Female

No.2 Age

 20-25 years old 25-30 years old

Over 30 years old

No.3 Name of type of business

 Full service restaurant ( Asian, European, latin American, Middle Eastern, North American, Other full-service restaurant cuisine) Quick service restaurant ( Asian, European, latin American, Middle Eastern, North American, Other full-service restaurant cuisine) Cloud kitchen

No. 4 Location of small food business

 Independent business Retail Accommodation Trave

No.5. How often do you visit this small food business?

 Usually (1-3 times per week) Sometimes (1-4 times per month) Rarely (less than twice every 3 months)

No.6 Does the small food business you patronize use digital marketing?

 Yes No

No.7 If so, how often do you notice their digital marketing?

 Usually (once a month) Sometimes (some special occasions/holidays/anniversaries...) Very few (almost none)

No.8 What are your average monthly expenses for this small food business?

 Less than ¥500 ¥500-1000 More than ¥1000

## Part 3: Digital Marketing

Assesses the role of digital marketing in product awareness, feedback mechanisms, convenience, consumer-brand relationships, and information security.

No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
<b>1. Digital Marketing</b>						
<b>1.1 Product awareness</b>						
1	Digital marketing significantly aids me in finding the right product while shopping online for small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Quality information is provided to me through digital marketing during online shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Detailed information is available through electronic media while engaging in online shopping for small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Digital marketing ensures that I receive high-quality and up-to-date information related to small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The accessibility of product information and the quick purchase of items are facilitated by digital marketing efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1.2 Feedback and customer compliance</b>						
1	I can exchange opinions with others through the brand's social networking sites, enhancing my engagement with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The company promptly addresses my complaints, ensuring a responsive and customer-centric digital marketing approach.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Providing the necessary documents to express my dissatisfaction required significant time and effort, reflecting the depth of consumer feedback in shaping online purchase intentions.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Resolving my issue took a considerable amount of time, influencing my overall satisfaction with the small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Accessing the customer service center was not easy, highlighting potential barriers in customer interaction and the need for improved digital marketing communication channels.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1.3 Convenience</b>						
1	I can easily access information on the Internet 24x7, ensuring convenience in gathering details about small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Digital marketing effectively communicates product information and serves as a valuable source for consumer education, enhancing the overall convenience of the online shopping experience.	1	2	3	4	5

3	Digital marketing platforms, including Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, offer swift and convenient services, contributing to the ease of interaction with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Digital marketing platforms facilitate the co-creation of product demands, aligning with consumer preferences and enhancing the convenience of online shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Digital marketing channels, like the ones I use, provide convenient access for consumers to explore various online platforms, contributing to the overall convenience in engaging with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
1.4 Consumer brand relationship						
1	The assistance I receive in finding the right product while exploring online channels such as Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat positively influences my connection with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Positive experiences on online platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat significantly contribute to the development and management of better relationships between customers and small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The support I get in searching for the right product on OTT platforms enhances my relationship with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
4	The company's emphasis on developing ongoing relations is evident in its interactions with customers.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The periodic contact from the company for personalized services reinforces the relationship I have with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
1.5 Information security and personal privacy						
1	Digital marketing practices streamline the process of adhering to privacy and data sharing regulations, ensuring a secure environment for consumers in their interactions with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Consumers receive privacy assurances through the use of digital marketing platforms.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Digital marketing empowers customization and secure information handling for customers, contributing to a trustworthy online experience with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Consumers leverage digital marketing for making product comparisons, confident in the protection of their personal information.	1	2	3	4	5

## Part 4: Customer Engagement

Explores emotional responses to online interactions, including vigor, absorption, and dedication towards small food businesses.

No.	Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
2. Customer Engagement						
2.1 Vigor						
1	Online interactions significantly influence my decision to explore offerings from small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	When exposed to content related to small food businesses on online platforms, I feel a strong sense of vigor, dedicating a considerable amount of time to explore products.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I experience high levels of resilience while engaging with online media, especially when interacting with content related to small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Content from online platforms plays a crucial role in enhancing my mental resilience and active engagement, particularly with small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The influence of online content amplifies my mental strength and vigor, especially when considering online purchases from small food businesses in Xian City.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 Absorption						
1	Time seems to fly when I engage with online channels featuring small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	When I come across content about small food businesses on digital media, I become so engrossed that I lose track of everything else.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I invest a significant amount of attention in online channels promoting small food businesses on digital marketing platforms.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My interactions with small food businesses, particularly through online channels like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, leave a lasting impression on me.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Intensely engaging with small food businesses through online channels, especially on platforms like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat, brings me joy.	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 Dedication						
1	Engaging with online channels featuring small food businesses through digital marketing inspires me, fostering enthusiasm and pride.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The presence of small food businesses on digital platforms imparts meaning and purpose to these online channels for me.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Digital marketing efforts promoting small food businesses on online platforms generate excitement and capture my interest.	1	2	3	4	5

4	I am enthusiastic about engaging with small food businesses through online channels like Douyin, Toutiao, Sina Weibo, and WeChat.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My interest is captivated when interacting with small food businesses through online channels.	1	2	3	4	5

#### Part 5: Online Purchase Intention

Evaluates respondents' inclination, enthusiasm, and willingness to embrace online shopping for small food businesses.

No. 3	Questions	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
<b>Online purchase intention</b>						
1	I express the intention to become an online shopper for small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My enthusiasm to become an online shopper is significant.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am willing to embrace the role of an online shopper.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I hold a strong intention to engage in online shopping for small food businesses.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Whenever I browse the web for a product, I plan to make online purchases.	1	2	3	4	5



APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES (In Chinese)

亲爱的女士/先生,

你好!首先,真诚地感谢您填写这份问卷。本问卷旨在“考察数字营销和顾客参与对中国陕西省西安市小型食品企业在线购买意愿的影响”,为个人和商家更好地利用问卷的特点提供相关建议,旨在为中国陕西省西安市小型食品企业在数字营销和顾客参与背景下的购买意愿提供建议。其次,问卷采用匿名方式填写,调查结果仅供本论文研究使用,不涉及任何商业利益,严格保密。最后,请根据您的实际情况填写问卷,您的填写将对本次研究有很大的帮助。谢谢您的合作!

本研究调查了西安市小型食品企业的数字营销、客户参与和在线购买意愿之间的关系。分为5部分:

### 第一部分:筛选问题

1.您目前是否在中国陕西西安做生意?

是的

否(问卷结束)

2.你是做餐饮生意的吗?

是的

否(问卷结束)

3.你愿意接受问卷调查吗?

是的

否(问卷结束)

4.你公司的员工人数超过50人吗?

没有

是(问卷结束)

### 第二部分:人口统计学

1.性别

男性

女

2.年龄

20-25岁

25-30岁

30岁以上

3.企业类型名称

全方位服务餐厅(亚洲,欧洲,拉丁美洲,中东,北美,其他全方位服务餐厅美食)

快餐厅(亚洲,欧洲,拉丁美洲,中东,北美,其他全方位服务餐厅美食)

云厨房

4、小型食品企业的位置

独立营业



- 零售
- 住宿
- 旅行
5. 您多久光顾一次这个小型食品企业？
- 通常（每周 1-3 次）
- 有时（每月 1-4 次）
- 很少（每 3 个月不到两次）
6. 您光顾的小型食品企业是否使用数字营销？
- 是
- 否
7. 如果是，您多久注意到他们的数字营销？
- 通常（每月一次）
- 有时（某些特殊场合/假期/周年纪念日...）
- 很少（几乎没有）
8. 您在这个小型食品企业的平均月支出是多少？
- 少于¥500
- ¥500-1000
- 超过¥1000

### 第三部分:数字营销

评估数字营销在产品意识、反馈机制、便利性、消费者品牌关系和信息安全方面的作用。(采用评级量表的形式，量表等级分为强烈反对、反对中立、同意、强烈同意，请您根据实际情况勾选选项)

No.	问题	强烈反对 (1)	反对 (2)	中立 (3)	同意 (4)	强烈同意 (5)
1. 数字营销						
1.1 产品认知						
1	营销在我为小吃企业在线购物时极大地帮助我找到合适的产品。	1	2	3	4	5
2	数字营销在我进行在线购物时为我提供了优质的信息。	1	2	3	4	5

3	在我为小吃企业进行在线购物时，通过电子媒体提供了详细的信息。	1	2	3	4	5
4	数字营销确保我获得与小吃企业相关的高质量且及时的信息。	1	2	3	4	5
5	数字营销的努力使产品信息的获取和快速购物变得更加便利。	1	2	3	4	5
1.2 反馈和客户遵从						
1	我可以通过品牌的社交网络站点与他人交流意见，增强我与小吃企业的互动。	1	2	3	4	5
2	公司迅速解决我的投诉，确保了一种响应迅速且以客户为中心的营销方法。	1	2	3	4	5
3	提供必要文件来表达我的不满需要很大的时间和精力，反映了消费者反馈在塑造在线购买意愿方面的深度。	1	2	3	4	5
4	解决我的问题花费了相当长的时间，影响了我对小吃企业的整体满意度。	1	2	3	4	5
5	访问客户服务中心并不容易，突显了客户互动潜在的障碍以及改进数字营销沟通渠道的需要。	1	2	3	4	5

1.3 方便						
1	我可以很容易地在互联网上获取信息，确保我可以方便地收集到有关小型食品企业的详细信息。	1	2	3	4	5
2	数字营销有效地传达产品信息，并作为消费者教育的宝贵来源，提高了在线购物体验的整体便利性。	1	2	3	4	5
3	抖音、今日头条、新浪微博、微信等数字营销平台提供快速便捷的服务，有助于与小食品企业轻松互动。	1	2	3	4	5
4	数字营销平台促进了产品需求的共同创造，与消费者偏好保持一致，增强了网上购物的便利性。	1	2	3	4	5
5	所使用的数字营销渠道，为消费者提供了探索各种在线平台的便利途径，为与小食品企业互动提供了整体便利。	1	2	3	4	5
1.4 消费者品牌关系						
1	我在抖音、今日头条、新浪微博、微信等网络渠道中找到合适的产品，这对我与小食品企业的联系产生了积极的影响。	1	2	3	4	5

2	抖音、今日头条、新浪微博和微信等网络平台上的积极体验，对发展和管理更好的客户与小食品企业之间的关系有很大的帮助。	1	2	3	4	5
3	我在 OTT 平台上寻找合适的产品时得到的支持增强了我与小型食品企业的关系。	1	2	3	4	5
4	在与客户的互动中，公司对发展持续关系的重视是显而易见的。	1	2	3	4	5
5	公司定期与我联系，提供个性化服务，加强了我与小型食品企业的关系。	1	2	3	4	5
1.5 信息安全和个人隐私						
1	数字营销实践简化了遵守隐私和数据共享法规的过程，确保了消费者与小型食品企业互动时的安全环境。	1	2	3	4	5
2	消费者通过使用数字营销平台获得隐私保障。	1	2	3	4	5
3	数字营销为客户提供定制和安全的息处理，为小型食品企业提供值得信赖的在线体验。	1	2	3	4	5

4	消费者利用数字营销进行产品比较，对保护他们的个人信息充满信心。	1	2	3	4	5
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#### 第四部分:客户参与

探索对在线互动的情感反应，包括对小型食品企业的活力、吸收和奉献。(采用评级量表的形式，量表等级分为强烈反对、反对中立、同意、强烈同意，请您根据实际情况勾选选项)

No.	问题	强烈反对 (1)	反对 (2)	中立 (3)	同意 (4)	强烈同意 (5)
2. 客户互动						
2.1 活力						
1	在线互动极大地影响了我探索小型食品企业产品的决定。	1	2	3	4	5
2	当我在网络平台上接触到与小食品企业相关的内容时，我感到了强烈的活力，投入了相当多的时间去探索产品。	1	2	3	4	5
3	在与在线媒体互动时，尤其是与小型食品企业相关的内容互动时，我体验到了高度的弹性。	1	2	3	4	5

4	在线平台的内容在增强我的心理弹性和积极参与方面发挥了至关重要的作用，尤其是在小型食品企业。	1	2	3	4	5
5	网络内容的影响放大了我的精神力量和活力，特别是考虑到在西安市的小食品商家网上购买。	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 吸收						
1	当我参与以小型食品企业为特色的在线渠道时，时间似乎过得飞快。	1	2	3	4	5
2	当我在数字媒体上看到关于小型食品企业的内容时，我变得如此全神贯注，以至于忘记了其他事情。	1	2	3	4	5
3	我在网络渠道上投入了大量的精力，在数字营销平台上推广小型食品企业。	1	2	3	4	5
4	我与小食品企业的互动，特别是通过抖音、今日头条、新浪微博和微信等在线渠道，给我留下了深刻的印象。	1	2	3	4	5
5	通过在线渠道，特别是抖音、今日头条、新浪微博和微信等平台，与小食品企业密切接触，给我带来了快乐。	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 奉献						
1	通过数字营销参与以小型食品企业为特色的在线渠道，激发了我的热情和自豪感。	1	2	3	4	5

2	对我来说，数字平台上的小型食品企业赋予了这些在线渠道意义和目的。	1	2	3	4	5
3	在网络平台上推广小型食品企业的数字营销工作令人兴奋，并引起了我的兴趣。	1	2	3	4	5
4	我热衷于通过抖音、今日头条、新浪微博、微信等网络渠道与小食品商家互动。	1	2	3	4	5
5	当我通过在线渠道与小型食品企业互动时，我的兴趣被迷住了。	1	2	3	4	5

### 第五部分:在线购买意向

评估受访者对小型食品企业网上购物的倾向、热情和意愿。(采用评级量表的形式，量表等级分为强烈反对、反对中立、同意、强烈同意，请您根据实际情况勾选选项)

3.网上购买意向						
1	我表达了成为小型食品企业网上购物者的意愿。	1	2	3	4	5
2	我成为网上购物者的热情是显著的。	1	2	3	4	5
3	我愿意接受网上购物者的角色。	1	2	3	4	5
4	我有强烈的意愿从事小型食品企业的网上购物。	1	2	3	4	5
5	每当我在网上浏览产品时，我都计划在网上购物。	1	2	3	4	5

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME Tianliang Wang

DATE OF BIRTH 28 April 1994

EDUCATION Bachelor's degree in Management in 2019, Renai College,  
Tianjin University, Tianjin, China

