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Assessing the Relationship Between Digital Marketing and Customer Participation in the Retail Industry

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Abstract

The issue of advertising and digital marketing is so important and complex that it requires the guidance of digital advertising and marketing experts. Today, users' use of the Internet and their extensive usage of smartphones is considered a subset of marketing management. Therefore, in the present research, the relationship between digital marketing and customer participation in the retail industry has been evaluated with an emphasis on post-Corona. This research is a type of applied research. The descriptive method is also used in the quantitative part. Descriptive statistics are used to determine the dimensions, components, and indicators, and exploratory factor analysis and Lisrel software are used to determine the current situation, determine the influencing factors, and determine the contribution of each of the influencing factors. The statistical population in this research consists of all the active people in the marketing industry in the retail industry. The findings show that four factors, digital marketing planning, digital marketing performance, use of social networks, engagement, and customer participation are factors influencing digital marketing in the retail industry in the post-corona era. In the ranking, since the value of the significance level is 0.000, which is smaller than the error value of 0.05, the ranking of the factors is not the same for at least one of the average factors. In order, digital marketing performance ranks first, digital marketing planning ranks second, the use of social networks ranks third, and customer engagement and participation ranks fourth. The results show that there is a significant relationship between digital marketing planning and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-corona, and there is a significant relationship between the use of social networks and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-corona. Also, the results show that there is a significant relationship between digital marketing performance and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-corona.

Key words

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Introduction

During the last two decades, market orientation has formed the basis of marketing activities, so the as sumed positive relationship between market orientation and commercial performance has been empirically confirmed in many articles and studies. In addition, this relationship seems strong in various environmental conditions in industrial sectors and cultural fields. It can also be stated that marketing capabilities have more diverse effects on performance that depend on the ways

that companies can align themselves with the environment. Market-oriented may cause a company to focus only on the obvious needs of customers and neglect to understand the potential and hidden needs of current or new customers (1-3). According to past researchers' studies, excessive reliance on customers hinders innovation and research and development activities and threatens a company's ability to introduce innovative products to the market. Collaborative design thinking in digital sales is a combination of organizational agility to capture decisive market intelligence with intelligent targeting. Business success strongly depends on the organizational capacity to predict the value of companies. Deciding on the allocation of internal and external marketing activities depends on the allocation of resources (4).

Today, the economy of many countries has been directly and indirectly affected by the Coronavirus outbreak. World financial crisis, decrease in supply, reduction of demand, unemployment growth in the world, reducing oil and derivative products, reducing metal prices, reducing agricultural and livestock prices, export and import restrictions, and closing some borders for fear of Coronavirus, slowing down, increasing transportation costs and government budget deficits are all about the threats and opportunities that will arise in the coming months for business owners (5, 6). The global price of rawest materials and the fear of communities from the Coronavirus and the decline in economic activity report the stagnation and liquidity problem all over the world that business owners in our country will not be spared from them.

We have faced a problem with production and a shortage of goods due to the restrictions imposed by social gaps all over the world. On-demand, we are also experiencing a sharp decline in demand, and the supply and demand system is generally disrupted around the world. But the decline in demand has been much greater than the decline in supply; Because manufacturers have had a sales problem. But the decline in demand has been much greater than the decline in supply; Because manufacturers have had a sales problem. On the other hand, the decline in demand and the decline in the price of raw materials produced has led to a decline in the prices of manufactured products; Therefore, manufacturers and owners either have to sell and maintain goods in warehouses, which have many risks such as commodity failure and further price reduction in the future or will have to make their goods with low profits or even sell them with harm (7).

Despite the many problems that have existed in developing and less developed countries, it is possible to exploit long-term market opportunities in these countries. Although developing or underdeveloped countries face many infrastructure and cultural problems, due to the potential of investment, they are a good opportunity for digital marketing activities that can be achieved in the long-term and short-term intervals (8). Today, with the increasing expansion of digital areas in the world, the number of users in this field is increasingly growing. This has created a high potential for e-commerce, so companies have been forced to do business through the Internet. Advertising is always one of the most significant areas in marketing and the world of business. Among the different marketing methods, digital advertising is one of the most common uses. In the field of internet advertising, the attitude of advertising is of great importance. Attitude is one of the most important concepts in information systems and marketing research (9-10).

On the other hand, awareness of customer needs and the digital and online shopping process is the basis of successful digital marketing. Customer satisfaction is required to fully meet their needs and accurately identify their desires, expectations, desires, abilities, and limitations on products. By acquiring such information, the factors affecting the behavior of online consumers can be well identified and used in making marketing decisions. The purpose of digital marketing is to identify important elements of digital marketing and leverage organizational and operating strategic topics for the effectiveness of businesses active in the digital business market. Digital marketing is considered as empowering web-based marketing strategic planning. This tool is useful to the general public and everyone who decides to be active on the Internet, and on the one hand, it is effective for Internet organizations to re-evaluate their presence in digital trade (11, 12).

Advertising and digital marketing are among the effective measures for businesses so that they can properly introduce their brand to customers and increase the

sale of their goods or services. The subject of advertising and digital marketing is so important and complicated that it requires the guidance of digital advertising and marketing experts. Today, users' use of the Internet and their extensive use of smartphones is considered a subset of marketing management. We can express the concept of digital marketing by using all digital tools for marketing; So, in this way, all the tools that are used in digital marketing to expand marketing can also be used in digital marketing. Also, in today's modern world, technology has increased the speed of business growth as well as the competition between them. So that if a business wants to promote its brand only through traditional methods, it will not have a place in the market (3). In the meantime, smart businesses use digital marketing to surpass their competitors. Active models in digital marketing include content marketing methods, search engine marketing, advertising display, mobile marketing, email marketing, and several other models that are used based on different situations (13). So far, different methods have been presented to measure the efficiency of different models in the studies, from which Busca et al. (2020) can be mentioned. In this research, which has been devoted to providing an integrated framework for digital marketing, using the analysis of historical information on the Internet, 4 methods of shared systems, traditional market systems, co-creation systems, and possible production market systems for digital marketing have been mentioned.

With the emergence of the coronavirus, the world economy in 2020 suffered a loss of 5.8 trillion dollars, it has shrunk by 2.3% and the unemployment rate in the world has increased by 30%. This crisis will cause the loss of about four years of world economic production and the gross domestic product in developed countries will drop to minus 5%. This is while the production of developing economies will decrease by 0.7% (14, 15).

Marketing during the Corona crisis is completely different from marketing under normal conditions, and this led to the rapid transition of many traditional businesses to the increasingly digital core of the Corona economic crisis. It should be noted that digital marketing in the time of Corona is different from digital marketing in normal times, although their fundamental principles are not different from each other. Considering the importance of this field, the present research evaluates the relationship between digital marketing and customer participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-corona.

According to the conditions governing the country and the results of the conducted studies, it can be seen that the need to have a local model of digital marketing is considered a necessity and the need to accurately measure this area and provide a complete solution is felt. At the same time, the current research is to design a digital marketing model in the retail industry in the post-corona period. Therefore, the question is raised, what is the appropriate or optimal model of digital marketing in the retail industry in the post-corona period? The current research is trying to confirm or reject the following hypotheses:

- There is a significant relationship between digital marketing planning and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-coronavirus.
- There is a significant relationship between the use of social networks and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on the coronavirus.
- There is a significant relationship between digital marketing performance and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-corona.

Research Methodology

This research is an applied research type and it was done using a mixed method (qualitative-quantitative). In the qualitative part, the Delphi method was used in 3 rounds, and in the quantitative part, the descriptive method was used.

Descriptive statistics are used to determine dimensions, components, and indicators, and exploratory factor analysis and Lisrel software are used to determine the current situation, determine the influencing

factors, and determine the contribution of each influencing factor. The statistical population in this research consists of all those active in the marketing industry in the retail industry. In the qualitative part, the statistical population included 35 experts, and in the quantitative part, the random sampling method is used. A total of 140 experts and experts were interviewed. Admission procedures are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary of research process

Questionnaire	Purpose of posting	No.	No. of Index	Respondents	Result
First	Removing, combining and modifying the index	35	28 indicators	experts	Categorizing, adjusting and summarizing the factors into 24 factors
Second	Modification and prioritization of indicators and their classification	35	24 indicators	experts	Making minor corrections in the description of some indicators
Third	Rechecking the indicators for final approval	35	24 indicators	experts	The formation of the questionnaire
Fourth	Determining the importance of factors and commenting on the classification of factors	140	24 indicators	The statistical sample	Structural equation test

Cronbach's alpha test was used to determine the content validity of the present research and the reliability of the questionnaire, the results of which are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. Reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Objects	α Cronbach	Number
Digital marketing planning	0.943	6
Digital marketing performance	0.849	6
Using social networks	0.876	6
Customer engagement and participation	0.903	6

In the quantitative part, descriptive statistics methods such as frequency distribution tables, frequency percentages, and mean were used. To choose the appropriate test for the exploratory factor analysis test, it is necessary to examine the assumption of normality of the research constructs. For this purpose, using the exploratory factor analysis method, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Lisrel software were used to extract the model.

In the qualitative part of the Delphi method, it was conducted in 3 rounds to survey and identify the factors affecting the digital marketing model in the retail industry with an emphasis on the post-coronavirus. The respondent should have expressed his opinion about the effect of each of the influencing factors on the model by choosing one of the available options in front of them. These options were presented in the form of a Likert spectrum, including "very low effect: 1", "low effect: 2", "medium effect: 3", "high effect: 4", and

Findings

"very high effect: 5". Table 3 of the results The third round of the Delphi method is shown:

Table 3. The results of the third round of Delphi about the factors affecting the digital marketing model in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-Corona

	Description of the agent	No. of answers	Answers Mean	Standard deviation	Kendall	priority
1. Digital marketing planning	Cultivating the use of new shopping methods in order to maintain health	35	4.19	0.636	2.27	3
	Adaptation of organizational structure and market organization	35	4.06	0.745	2.34	6
	Study the market and understand access to parallel markets	35	4.38	0.662	2.19	1
	Creating a technological infrastructure	35	4.47	0.713	2.29	4
	Creating a monitoring and feedback system	35	4.25	0.696	2.31	5
	Creating a value chain in strategic planning	35	4.53	0.673	2.23	2
2. Digital marketing performance	Sales promotion metrics	35	4.39	0.562	2.29	4
	Measures related to the market and innovation	35	4.03	0.729	1.18	1
	Brand evaluation criteria	35	4.51	0.826	1.26	3
	Customer related metrics	35	4.14	0.795	2.37	6
	Content marketing analysis metrics	35	4.56	0.663	2.33	5
	Financial metrics	35	4.40	0.847	1.20	2
3. Using social networks	Online market research to get information related to the Corona era	35	4.34	0.616	2.36	3
	Evaluation of purchase behaviors and behavioral marketing trends in the period of illness	35	4.06	0.618	2.41	4
	Indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of content in social networks	35	4.15	0.533	2.31	1
	Networking and improving the quality of production content	35	4.32	0.785	2.45	5
	Creating an environment in order to increase customer trust in social media	35	4.03	0.639	2.33	2
	Social media and data-driven marketing	35	4.48	0.841	2.51	6
4. Customer engagement and	Solving the needs and concerns of health customers	35	4.11	0.729	2.21	2
	after sales service	35	4.28	0.833	2.26	3
	Better identification of customer needs	35	4.29	0.748	2.31	4

	Respecting privacy and protecting the rights of customers	35	4.41	0.792	2.41	6
	Maintaining customer satisfaction and continuously improving the product based on customer taste	35	4.23	0.658	2.18	1
	Improving the customer relationship management system	35	4.09	0.531	2.35	5

According to the table above, the results of the second and third rounds of Delphi were completely similar, and there was no need to conduct a new round, and these factors were identified. The final questionnaire was delivered to 35 panel members in person and via e-mail to obtain experts' opinions about the model, and the follow-up to receive their answers began four days after distribution. For this purpose, each member was contacted on average 3 times by phone and once by email.

Table 4. Evaluation of the final opinion of experts regarding the model

priority	Kendall	Standard deviation	Answers Mean	No. of answers	Description of the component
1	2.16	0.416	4.03	35	Digital marketing performance
2	2.24	0.542	4.08	35	Digital marketing planning
3	2.41	0.653	4.11	35	Using social networks
4	2.48	0.534	3.18	35	Customer engagement and participation

Finally, according to the opinions of experts, the influencing factors on the digital marketing model in the retail industry were extracted and presented with an emphasis on post-corona, as shown in Figure 1:

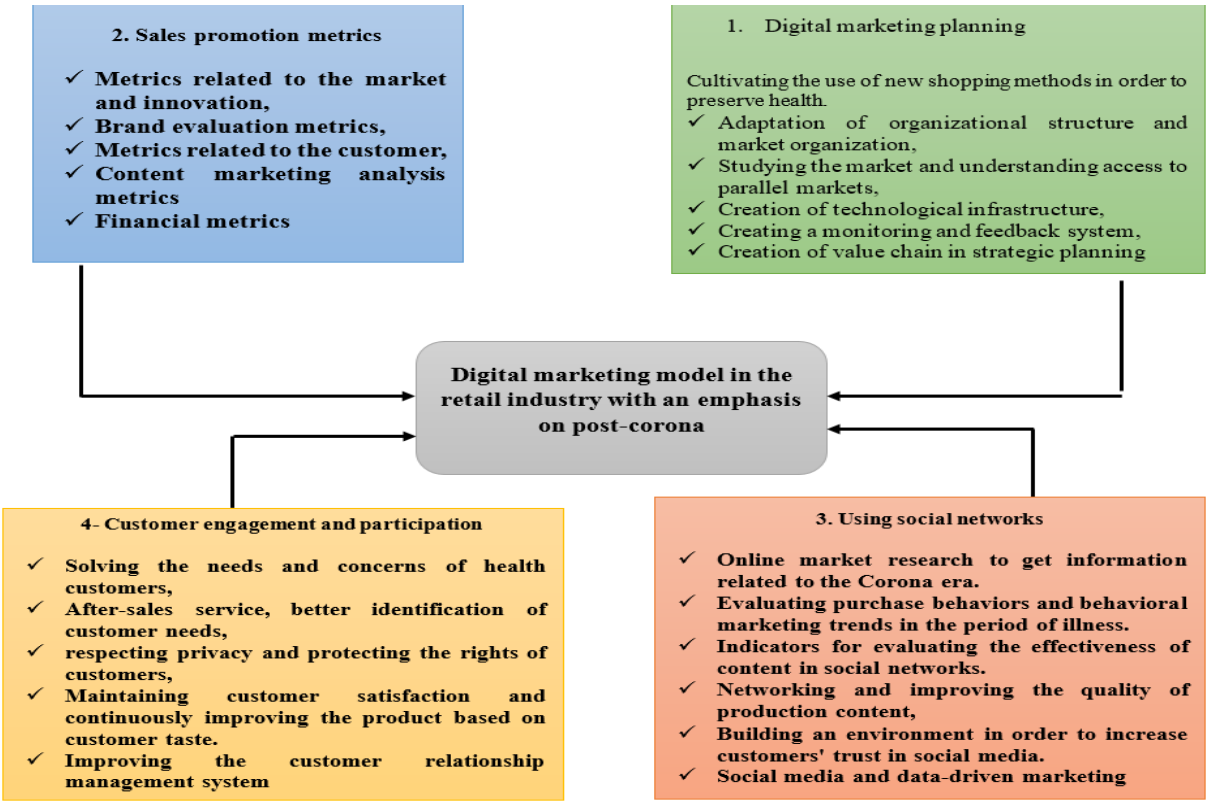

Figure 1. Digital marketing model in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-Corona

Inspecting the normality of model components

•Normality test (Kolmogorov Smirnov) for the digital marketing planning component

H0: The data is normal (the data comes from a normal population)

H1: The data is not normal (the data did not come from a normal society)

If the value of the significance level is greater than the value of the error (0.05), we conclude the assumption of zero, and if the value of the significance level is smaller than the error (0.05), we conclude the assumption of one..

Table 5. Kolmogorov Smirnov test results for the digital marketing planning component

conclusion	Confirmation of the hypothesis	Error value	meaningful level	variable
It is normal	H0	0.05	0.362	Digital marketing planning

Since the value of the significant level is equal to 0.362 and greater than the error value (0.05), then we conclude the null hypothesis, that is, digital marketing planning is normal.

• *Normality test (Kolmogorov Smirnov) for digital marketing performance component*

H0: The data is normal (the data comes from a normal population)

H1: The data is not normal (the data did not come from a normal society)

If the value of the significance level is greater than the value of the error (0.05), we conclude the assumption of zero, and if the value of the significance level is smaller than the error (0.05), we conclude the assumption of one.

Table 6. Kolmogorov Smirnov test results for digital marketing performance component

conclusion	Confirmation of the hypothesis	Error value	meaningful level	variable
It is normal	H0	0.05	0.149	Digital marketing performance

Because the value of the significant level is equal to 0.149 and is greater than the error value (0.05), then we conclude the null hypothesis, that is, the performance component of digital marketing is normal.

• *Normality test (Kolmogorov Smirnov) for the component of using social networks*

H0: The data is normal (the data comes from a normal population)

H1: The data is not normal (the data did not come from a normal society)

If the value of the significance level is greater than the error value (0.05), we conclude the assumption of zero, and if the value of the significance level is smaller than the error (0.05), we conclude the assumption of one.

Table 7. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the component of using social networks

conclusion	Confirmation of the hypothesis	Error value	meaningful level	variable
It is normal	H0	0.05	0.295	Using social networks

Because the value of the significance level is equal to 0.295 and is greater than the error value (0.05), then we conclude the null hypothesis, that is, the component of using social networks is normal.

• *Normality test (Kolmogorov Smirnov) for customer engagement and participation component*

H0: The data is normal (the data comes from a normal population)

H1: The data is not normal (the data did not come from a normal society)

If the value of the significance level is greater than the error value (0.05), we conclude the assumption of zero, and if the value of the significance level is smaller than the error (0.05), we conclude the assumption of one.

Table8. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results for customer involvement and participation

conclusion	Confirmation of the hypothesis	Error value	meaningful level	variable
It is normal	H0	0.05	0.388	Customer engagement and participation

Because the value of the significant level is equal to 0.388 and is greater than the error value (0.05), then we conclude the null hypothesis, that is, the customer engagement and participation component is normal.

Structural equation testing and hypothesis testing

In this section, the outputs of the model run by PLS software are displayed.

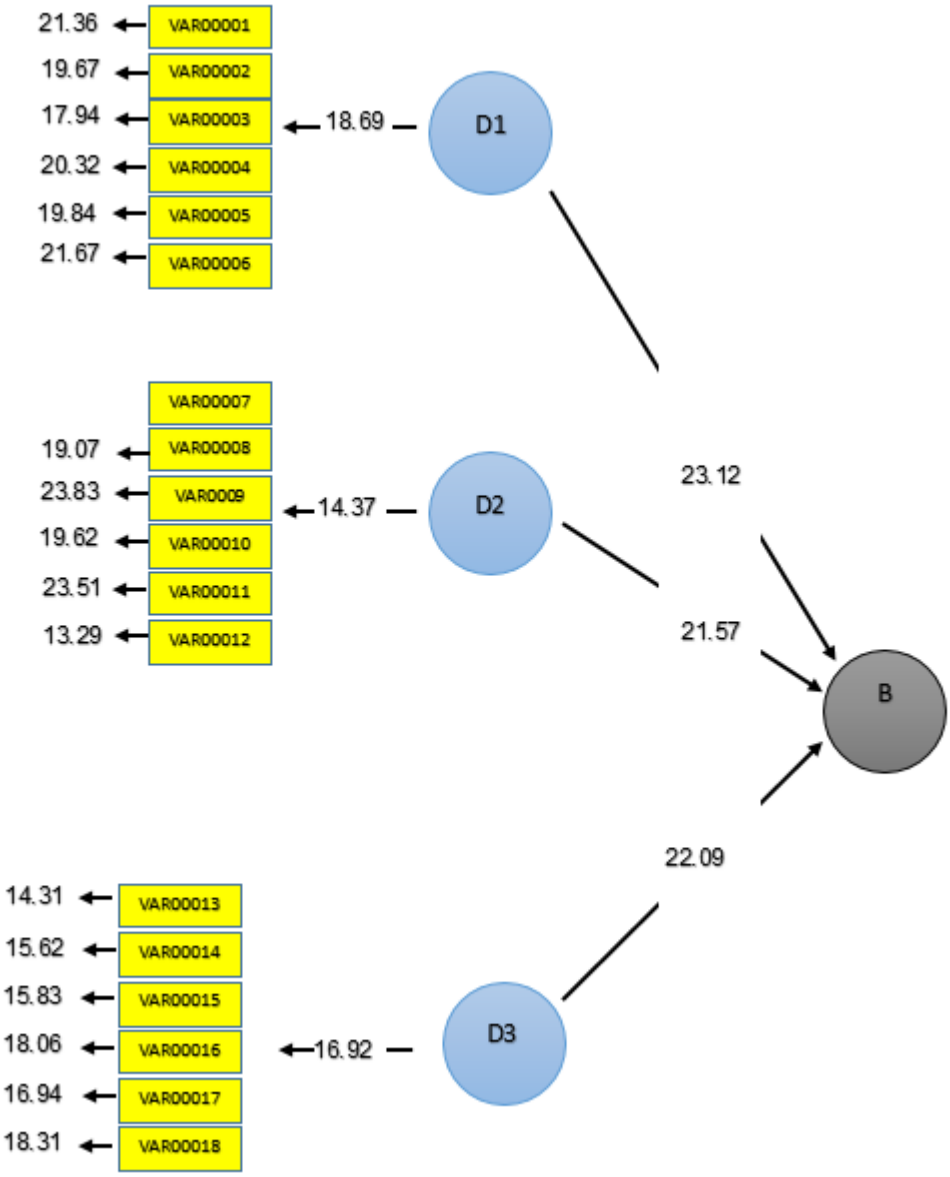

Diagram 1. Structural equations of the final model

Based on the test of structural equations performed for the four components extracted by PLS software, the results of the hypotheses of the current research are shown in Table No. 9:

Table 9. The results of research hypotheses

No.	hypothesis	Result
1	There is a significant relationship between digital marketing planning and customer engagement and engagement in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-coronavirus.	confirmation
2	There is a significant relationship between the use of social networks and customer engagement and participation in the retail industry with an emphasis on the corona virus.	confirmation

3	There is a significant relationship between digital marketing performance and customer engagement and engagement in the retail industry with an emphasis on post-coronavirus.	confirmation

Ranking of model components

In order to rank the research components, the Friedman test was used to rank the factors according to the average scores. In this test, the hypotheses H0 and H1 are defined as follows:

H0: μ1= μ2 = μ3 = μ4 = …

H1: At least one of the means is not equal.

If the value of the significance level is greater than the error value, we conclude the assumption of zero, and if the value of the significance level is smaller than the error, we conclude the assumption of one.

Since the value of the significance level is 0.000 smaller than the error value of 0.05, for at least one of the factors, the averages are not equal to each other, so the ranking of the factors according to the ranking average is shown in Table 10:

Table 10. Ranking of the 4 research components

Rank	Component	Rank average
1	Digital marketing performance	5.79
2	Digital marketing planning	5.33
3	Using social networks	5.25
4	Customer engagement and participation	4.47

Among the components of the model, digital marketing performance ranked first and customer engagement and participation ranked fourth.

Exploratory factor analysis to discover the final model

The researcher's exploratory factor analysis seeks to examine experimental data to discover and identify indicators and the relationships between them and does this without imposing any particular model.

In the current research, the purpose of using factor analysis is to determine the components and indicators of a suitable model for the subject under investigation and to determine the amount of variance determined by each of the variables in the form of packaged factors. To perform factor analysis in this research, the following steps have been taken:

1- Determining and diagnosing the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis using the KMO and Bartlett tests.

If the value of KMO is less than 0.5, the data will not be suitable for factor analysis, and if its value is between 0.5 and 0.7, the correlation between the data is suitable for factor analysis, and if it is greater than 0.7, the variables are very They will be suitable.

Also, to ensure the suitability of the data for factor analysis, in addition to the fact that the correlation matrix that is the basis of the analysis is not equal to zero in the community, Bartlett's sphericity test should be used based on the following formula:

$$\chi^2 = -(n - 1 - \frac{2p + 5}{6}) \ln|R|$$

where n represents the number of subjects, p the number of variables, R is the absolute value of the determinants of the correlation matrix. This statistic has a chi-square distribution with 0.5P(P-1) degrees of freedom. It evaluates the amount of information in the absolute value of R by examining the relationship between the number of observations and the number of variables and tests the probability of error to reject the null hypothesis of no difference from the same matrix. Bartlett's test tests the hypothesis that the observed correlation matrix belongs to a community with uncorrelated variables. For a factorial model to be useful and meaningful, it is necessary for the variables to be correlated, otherwise, there is no reason to explain the factorial model. If the hypothesis "variables are not related" is not rejected, the use of factor analysis will

be questioned, so it should be reconsidered. The significant chi-square represents the minimum necessary conditions for the implementation of factor analysis.

2- Determining the number of factors: One of the important things in factor analysis is determining the number of extractable factors. Although a precise quantitative basis for deciding on the number of extraction factors has not been provided, there are criteria that are used in deciding the number of extraction factors, which include:

- Eigenvalue criterion
- Previous criterion
- Variance percentage criterion
- Cut test criteria.

In this research, considering that the factor analysis is of an exploratory type, the first criterion - that is, the eigenvalue - has been used, and the purpose is to extract factors whose eigenvalue is greater than one.

3- Factor rotation: The purpose of rotation in factor analysis is to rotate the factor axes around the coordinate center. The rotation is done when the interpretation of the factors is not easily possible. Therefore, in order to simplify the structure of factors and make them interpretable, factor rotation is used. There are several methods to rotate the factors, in this research, the varimax method was used, and variables whose factor loadings were greater than 0.5 were extracted as significant factor loadings.

4- Calculation of factor values: factor analysis summarizes the main variables in a limited number of factors. When these limiting factors are used in subsequent analyzes (such as diagnostic or regression analysis), some values must be used to derive new variables. These values are actually a combination of all the main variables that played a major role in creating new factors. This combination of variables is called factor score (values). Since the goal of this research is not to obtain a new, but limited set of combined variables to be used instead of the main variables in subsequent analyzes (diagnostic analysis, regression analysis), therefore factor values are not calculated to achieve this goal.

Based on the findings of the factor analysis, a suitable model for the subject under investigation is the value of KMO, the value of the Bartlett coefficient and the level of significance as described in the following table:

Table 11. KMO value and Bartlett coefficient value and significance level of the 4 research components

No.	Component	Bartlett coefficient	KMO	Sig
1	Digital marketing performance	4722.031	0.782	0.000
2	Digital marketing planning	4521.022	0.753	0.000
3	Using social networks	4490.70	0.642	0.000
4	Customer engagement and participation	4439.146	0.640	0.000

According to the Kaiser criteria, the above factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted. After factor rotation using the varimax method, the inhibiting factors of these systems were classified into the above factors.

In order to categorize factors, the criterion of eigenvalue has been used and factors whose eigenvalue is greater than one have been considered.

Exploratory factor analysis for components

The results of the factor analysis for the indicators of different components showed that among the 4 factors presented in this section, 3 factors had the greatest impact on this component by explaining the coefficient of variation of 49.79. These factors are described in the table below.

Table 12. Extracted components related to the components

Components	special amount	percentage of the variance of the specific value	Cumulative variance percentage
1	3.336	17.557	17.557
2	3.204	16.864	34.421

3	3.053	16.069	50.497
4	3.520	15.303	15.303

Based on the findings from Table 12, the first factor with a specific value of 3.336 alone explains more than 17.557% of the total variance, which is a very high value for the four factors obtained.

Discussion

Today, with the increasing digital space in the world, the number of Internet users is growing increasingly. This has created a high potential for digital business, so companies are forced to do business activities through the Internet. Advertising is always one of the important fields in the marketing and the business world. Among the various advertising methods, digital marketing is one of the most widely used. In today's competitive world, the customer plays a key and essential role in maintaining the status and survival of organizations. Customer relationship management helps organizations in creating effective relationships with customers. This concept is a business strategy combined with technology to effectively manage the entire customer life cycle. Customer relationship management is an approach based on maintaining a positive relationship with the customer, increasing customer loyalty, and expanding the value of the customer's life cycle. Understanding the needs of customers and providing services that create value for customers is one of the basic success and failure factors of organizations. Organizational marketing performance shows how an organization reaches its mission and goals, organizational performance implies starting from a certain situation and reaching a precise goal, which may include several target points such as market share, sales volume, employee motivation, customer satisfaction, quality level, etc. With the intensification of competition between companies in the period of corona disease and the closeness of the marketing mix of different companies to each other, the sales philosophy lost its effectiveness. Companies were no longer just looking for attracting new customers, but keeping customers and turning them into loyal customers became one of the priorities of every organization. The CRM function is a multifaceted approach to marketing, sales, and customer care(16-8). In traditional customer relationship management, the customer has a role without participation and communication, but in the social type of this concept, this role has completely changed and has a central role in how an organization operates. Instead of marketing and sending messages to the customer, now the brand of the organization communicates and participates with the customer to solve business problems. But constantly posting on social media doesn't work because this type of media is specific and new. Unlike consumers of older media, social media users have more control over these two-way communications. They are able to engage, reject, share or even mock a posted message and as the name suggests, social media is inherently social. People expect to participate and be a part of this communication. They want two-way communication, and when they are faced with a one-way advertisement, they will be dissatisfied and disappointed. Another reason for social media marketing failure is ignoring consumer expectations. Therefore, customer relationship management in the social media environment is an important and unavoidable process. Despite the many efforts that have been made to market the use of social media, most businesses use this possibility less. Digital marketing is a process that brings new values to customers and then shares these benefits between customers and the company. In addition, it includes understanding, focusing, and managing continuous cooperation between the company and selected customers. Communication marketing is based on managing the relationship with the company's customers.

Conclusion

The company can gain a competitive advantage by maintaining or increasing the level of satisfaction of current customers. Satisfying the customer as a priority focuses on promoting the product brand and is one of the values of communication and brings the trust

and commitment of the customer. Therefore, using standard formats to sell products in digital marketing in the retail industry can bring customer satisfaction. Various files such as images, e-books, and videos have a wide range and can use various formats. Also, having creativity and initiative for the support team is considered one of the important advantages for communicating effectively with customers and creating empathy among them. It is clear that the requirement of such a system is the existence of a culture of customer understanding throughout the organization so that their needs and demands are prioritized.

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