

THE IMPACT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) DIMENSIONS ON ONLINE APPAREL PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract: Businesses are depending more and more on customer relationship management (CRM) strategies to direct, retain, and grow their customers in the quickly growing online clothing market. In the context of online clothing shopping, this study examines the ways in which specific CRM dimensions affect consumers' purchase intentions. In this study CRM dimensions—Knowledge management, Personalized Communication, Service Quality and loyalty programs—and analyze their direct impacts on purchase intention as well as the mediating function of trust, drawing on the body of existing literature. Using information gathered from online clothing customers, this study suggests and evaluate a structural model using SPSS method. The results show that purchase intention is positively influenced by each CRM dimension, with trust acting as a partial mediating factor. In the context of online clothing shopping, this study examines the ways in which specific CRM dimensions affect consumers' purchase intentions. The study also adds to the literature on CRM and online purchase behavior and offers implications for clothing e-retailers.

Keywords: online apparel, CRM dimensions, and purchase Intention, E Retailing.

1. INTRODUCTION

With online shoppers depending more and more on digital channels, the apparel e-commerce industry is expanding quickly both globally and in India. Clothing's intangible qualities (such as its inability to be touched or felt and its uncertain fit) increase risk and necessitate the use of effective relationship management techniques in order to foster trust and sway intention. Previous studies have demonstrated that online website cues, customer engagement, and trust have a significant impact on the intention to purchase apparel. Customer relationship management, or CRM, has become a vital strategic tool for e-commerce customer acquisition, retention, and engagement. Nevertheless, little is known about the precise aspects of CRM and how they affect the intention to buy clothing online.

Mobile commerce, shifting consumer preferences, and rising internet penetration have all contributed to the apparel e-commerce industry's recent notable expansion. Uncertainty about fit and size, the inability to feel fabrics, color variation, and a higher return rate are some of the particular difficulties that come with online clothing shopping. If not properly managed, these raise consumer risk and decrease purchase intention. In this context, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) becomes a key strategic framework: by understanding, engaging, and managing relationships with online apparel customers, retailers can reduce uncertainty, build trust, and enhance intention to buy. Yet, the CRM literature (predominantly in service sectors such as banking, hospitality) has been less applied in online apparel settings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

CRM refers to the processes, strategies and technologies that firms use to manage interactions with customers, to create value and build lasting relationships. According to Gupta & Aggarwal (2020), CRM in an e-shopping context involves aligning e-seller functions (marketing, sales, service, supply-chain) with customer knowledge and behaviour. Customer knowledge management means collecting, analysing and using customer data to customise offerings. Knowledge Management is the practices by which a firm captures, analyses, and uses customer knowledge and data (e.g., purchase history, preferences) to personalise offerings. Customer Knowledge Management (CKM) is an evolving field that integrates the principles of .It means to capture, share, and utilize knowledge about, from, and for customers to enhance organizational performance. CKM was highlighted in early conceptualizations by García-Murillo and Annabi (2002) as a process of gathering and using customer knowledge through interactions to enhance business decision-making. Later research, such as that conducted by Khosravi and Che Hussin (2014), emphasized the strategic role that CKM plays in combining CRM and KM to gain a competitive edge. A framework connecting CKM antecedents (organizational culture, technology, and customer participation), processes (knowledge acquisition, transfer, and utilization), and outcomes (innovation and performance) was proposed by more recent systematic reviews, like Ourzik (2022), which synthesized two decades of research. Small and medium-sized

businesses (SMEs) were included in the discussion by Chaithanapat and Rakthin (2021), who pointed out that CKM research is dispersed and dominated by large-firm viewpoints.

Empirical evidence by Zhou (2022) further demonstrated that CKM positively influences product innovation performance through enhanced marketing dynamic capabilities.

Personalized communication

Personalized communication has emerged as a critical component of contemporary marketing strategy, defined broadly as the tailoring of messages, offers, or interactions to individual consumers based on their characteristics, preferences, behaviours, or context (e.g., Aksoy et al., 2011; Chandra et al., 2022). Research such as Chandra, Verma, Lim, Kumar and Donthu (2022) uses a bibliometric review of 383 publications and identifies six major themes in personalised marketing: personalised recommendations, personalised relationships, the personalisation–privacy paradox, personalised advertising, the concept/discourse of personalisation, and customer insights in personalise marketing. Empirical work underlines that personalised communication can enhance consumer engagement, trust, loyalty and decision-making efficacy — for example, Singh (2022) finds that personalised marketing communication supports consumer-brand connections and repeated purchase behaviour.

Service quality

Service quality & support is the responsiveness, reliability, ease of online transactions and after-sales. In order to promote customer satisfaction, loyalty, and competitive advantage, organizations aim to meet and surpass customer expectations in the areas of service quality and support. The SERVQUAL model, which defines service quality as the difference between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the actual service provided, was developed by A. Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithaml, and Leonard L. Berry (1988). This work is considered to be the foundation of the literature on service quality. YJ Chang (2007) recent research on mobile social media services, for example, shows that aspects like design, convenience, usefulness, and security/privacy have a big impact on user satisfaction. This connects service quality to support systems in digital environments.

Loyalty programs

Loyalty programs and rewards include membership perks and incentives for recurring purchases with the intention of preserving enduring client relationships. In the field of customer relationship management, loyalty programs (LPs) have long been accepted as strategic instruments with the goals of increasing lifetime value, encouraging repeat business, and fortifying customer-company relationships. As defined in recent work, an LP comprises an integrated system of personalized communications and reward mechanisms—both tangible (e.g., discounts, vouchers, gifts) and intangible (e.g., status, special access, personalized services)—that recognize and reward

consumers for their loyalty behaviours. Early theoretical treatments, such as Henderson, Beck & Palmatier (2011), highlight that the effectiveness of loyalty programmes rests upon three psychological domains: status (the elevated standing afforded to members), habit (automatic pattern-formation from repeated participation) and relationship (emotional or relational bonds with the brand) across time. As defined in recent work, an LP comprises an integrated system of personalized communications and reward mechanisms—both tangible (e.g., discounts, vouchers, gifts) and intangible (e.g., status, special access, personalized services)—that recognize and reward consumers for their loyalty behaviours. While LPs can increase enrollment and immediate purchase behavior, empirical research and reviews demonstrate that the long-term benefits are less reliable. Instead, key success factors include program design elements like reward type, flexibility, redemption ease, communication quality, personalization, and trust in member data usage. For example, a literature review by Hofman-Kohlmeyer (2023) found that combining both financial incentives and affective or symbolic rewards yields better long-term loyalty than mere hedonic discounts. Empirical studies and reviews show that while LPs can indeed boost enrolment and immediate purchase behaviour, the long-term payoff is less consistent—program design elements such as reward type, flexibility, redemption ease, communication quality, personalisation and trust in member data usage emerge as critical determinants of success.

CRM acts as a mediator between purchase intention and online trust. CRM's trust-related dimensions aid in converting trust into purchase intent Saputra & Muhammad (2022). CRM in the banking industry and determined that trust, commitment, communication, and dispute resolution are the four "key" CRM dimensions. Zegullaj, Zeqiri, Abazi-Alili, and Reshidi (2023) CRM elements are grouped similarly by Customer Relationship Marketing and Institutional Support: behavioral intentions, such as purchase intention and loyalty, are influenced by trust, commitment, communication, and dispute resolution. Kovač, Petrović, and Ćurčić (2021). The impact of mobile CRM activities on trust-based commitment. This demonstrates how CRM interactions, particularly through digital platforms, can increase client commitment by fostering trust Sohn (2011).

Online Apparel Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's conscious plan to make a purchase at some point in the future. In the online apparel context, factors such as product presentation, website cues, trust and convenience have been shown to influence intention. For example, Thomas et al. (2023) found that website cues and trust significantly impacted Generation Z's apparel purchase intention online. Mandeep Kaur (2018) showed that shopping orientations such as convenience, quality orientation and brand orientation affect online apparel purchase intention, with convenience being the strongest contributor.

2.2 Linking CRM Dimensions to Purchase Intention

CRM dimensions help mitigate risk, personalise experience and strengthen relational bonds, thereby enhancing intention to purchase online. When customer knowledge is used to tailor offers, consumers feel the retailer understands their needs → higher intention. Personalised communication can enhance perceived relevance and engagement. High service quality reduces perceived risk in apparel online (size/fit, returns) and builds confidence. Loyalty programmes signal ongoing value and encourage repeat intention .Relationship commitment and trust reduces uncertainty, fosters brand-attachment and thus increases purchase intention.

Based on this, we propose the following conceptual model of Hypothesis

H1: Customer knowledge management positively influences online apparel purchase intention.

H2: Personalized communication positively influences online apparel purchase intention.

H3: Service quality positively influences online apparel purchase intention.

H4: Loyalty programmes positively influence online apparel purchase intention.

H5: Relationship commitment/trust positively influences online apparel purchase intention.

H6: Trust mediates the relationship between CRM dimensions (especially knowledge management) and purchase intention.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An online survey was administered to 365 respondents who have shopped for apparel online in the past 6 months in Delhi NCR. A purposive sampling method was used. This is a cross-sectional, quantitative study. A structured questionnaire is developed, using 5-point Likert scale items for each construct, adapted from prior validated scales (subject to adaptation for online apparel context Data were analyzed using SPSS. Reliability, validity, model fit and hypothesis testing were conducted.

3.1 Measures for Analysis

Customer knowledge management (scale items adapted from prior CRM research). Personalized communication (tailored messages/offers). Service quality (ease of use, responsiveness, returns, reliability). Loyalty programmes (membership benefits, rewards). Relationship commitment/trust (customer's perceived attachment and trust with retailer). Online apparel purchase intention (likelihood to purchase apparel online). All items measured on 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to establish construct reliability and validity and to test hypothesized relationships and mediation effect of Trust.

3.2 Reliability /Hypothesis

All CRM dimensions showed good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$) and convergent

H6

validity.

3.3. Hypothesis Results

Table-1

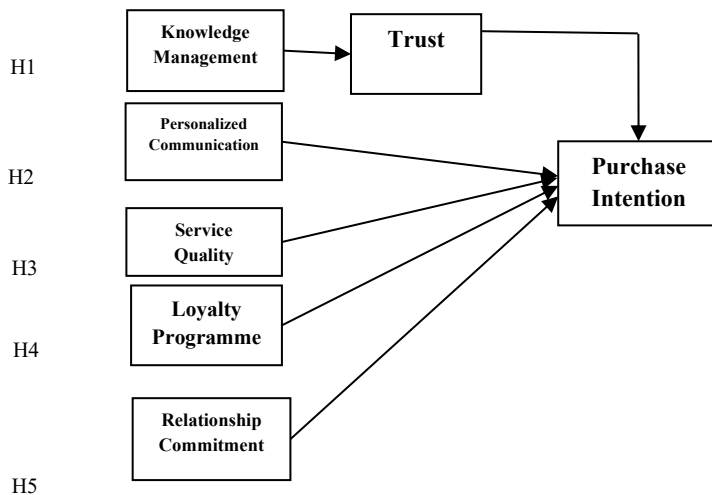
Hypothesis	Dimension	Beta value/ P value	Results
H1	Knowledge management	$\beta = 0.05, / p < 0.24$	Indirectly Supported
H2	Personalized Communication	$\beta = .32/p < 0.01$	Supported
H3	Service Quality	$\beta = 0.28/p = 0.05$	Supported

H3	Service Quality	$\beta = 0.28/p = 0.05$	Supported
H4	Loyalty programmes	$\beta = 0.15, p < 0.10$	Marginally Supported
H5	Relationship Commitment	$\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$	Supported
H6	Trust	$\beta = 0.30, p < 0.001$	Supported

Diagram -1

CRM dimensions

Independent variables Dependent Variable



Explanation:- Table no 1 Shows that H2 (Personalized communication), H3 (Service quality) and H5 (Relationship commitment/trust) were supported with significant positive effects on purchase intention (e.g., $\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$ respectively). H1 (Knowledge management) had a positive but non-significant direct effect on purchase intention; however, its effect was significant via trust mediation (supporting H6). H4 (Loyalty programmes) had a positive but weaker effect ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.10$) and thus only marginally supported. Trust ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). Mediation tests (e.g., bootstrapping) indicate that Trust partially mediates the relationships between each CRM dimension and Purchase Intention.

Model fit indices indicated good fit (e.g., CFI > 0.90 , RMSEA < 0.08).

4. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

The findings confirm that personalized communication, service quality and relationship commitment/trust are key CRM dimensions driving online apparel purchase intention. Interestingly, while knowledge management did not directly influence intention, its indirect effect via trust highlights the importance of converting data and insights into relational benefits rather than mere data collection. In the context of online clothing, consumers may value immediate relational and service benefits over formal reward schemes, as evidenced by the weaker effect of loyalty programs. For online apparel retailers, these results suggest that investing in personalized interactions (e.g., tailored recommendations, customized messaging), ensuring excellent service (returns, fit guidance, quick responses) and building trust/commitment (transparent policies, brand consistency) will more effectively enhance purchase intention than simply accumulating customer data or running loyalty points programmes alone. E-tailers should deploy CRM systems that emphasize real-time personalization and responsive service rather than just database building. Loyalty programmes should be designed to bolster relational commitment (e.g., exclusive previews, personalized offers) rather than just point accumulation.

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Theoretical Implications:

By outlining which CRM dimensions are
most important in online clothing contexts
and how they relate to purchase intention, the
study contributes to the body of knowledge on
CRM.

5. CONCLUSION

CRM is more than just gathering customer
data in the fiercely competitive online
clothing market; it's also about providing
meaningful personalization, excellent
customer service, and fostering relationships
based on trust. This study finds that these
CRM dimensions significantly enhance online
apparel purchase intention, with relational
trust playing a crucial mediating role. For
apparel e-retailers, the message is clear: invest
in relational strategies that treat customers as
individuals, not just data points. This study
finds that these CRM dimensions significantly
enhance online apparel purchase intention,
with relational trust playing a crucial
mediating role.

6. Limitations & Future Research

The cross-sectional sample was restricted to
the National Capital Region. Longitudinal
studies could examine how CRM dimensions
influence actual purchase behavior over time.
Self-reported intention may differ from actual
purchase. Future research could track
purchase logs. The apparel category has
unique challenges (size, fit, style preference);

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future studies could compare across product
categories.

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