

# Factors Influencing Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior in The Digital Economy: A Study of Guangxi Vocational & Technical Institute of Industry

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**Abstract-** This study examined how digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, and perceived value jointly influence consumer purchase decision behavior in the digital economy, focusing on first- and second-year students at Guangxi Vocational & Technical Institute of Industry. Using a quantitative design, the research collected 395 valid responses through a structured 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire with stratified random sampling. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that all three variables significantly and positively affected purchase decision behavior. Digital marketing exposure increased students' likelihood of making online purchases, while trust in online sellers played an important role in reducing perceived transaction risk. Among the three predictors, perceived value had the strongest positive influence, indicating that students mainly relied on benefit–cost evaluation when making purchasing decisions in digital contexts. The regression model explained 53.7% of the variance in consumer purchase decision behavior, demonstrating strong explanatory power. The study was grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, trust theory, and value-based consumption theory, which together helped explain students' purchasing behavior in the digital economy. These findings provide useful empirical evidence for understanding digital consumption among vocational college students in emerging regional economies. They also offer practical guidance for digital platforms and marketers to improve value propositions, strengthen seller credibility, and optimize digital marketing strategies to encourage more rational and effective purchasing behavior.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing Exposure, Trust in Online Sellers, Perceived Value, Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior, Digital Economy, Vocational College Students.

## I. Introduction

With the continuous emergence of concepts such as the Internet of Things, cloud computing, and new retail, the digital economy has developed rapidly. In 2023, the scale of China's digital economy reached 53.9 trillion yuan, an increase of 3.7 trillion yuan compared to the previous year, accounting for 42.8% of the country's GDP, and contributing 66.45% to the growth of GDP. According to the "Digital China Development Report (2024)" released by the National Data Bureau of China, China's digital economy is expected to continue to develop rapidly in 2025, with a projected scale exceeding 80 trillion yuan. The position and role of the digital economy in China's national economy are becoming increasingly prominent. Against the backdrop of the new era, digital technology will build a new industrial ecosystem, stimulate greater innovation vitality, and the digital economy will lead a new economic cycle, becoming a new engine for economic development. Under the new digital economy model, people's shopping methods are gradually shifting from offline to online.

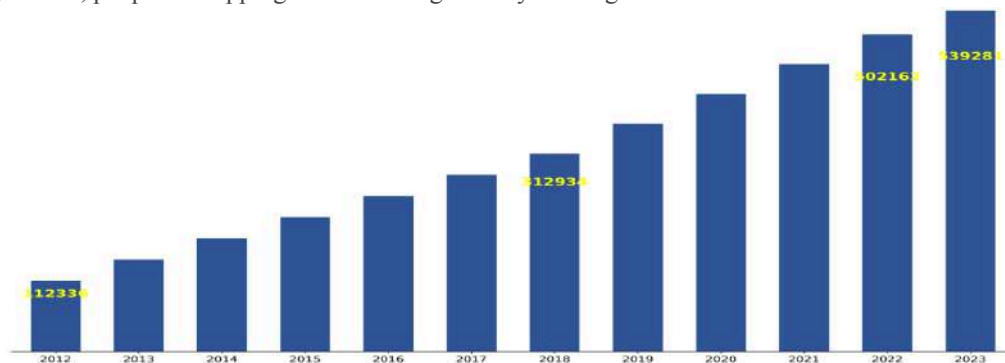


Figure 1. The Scale of China's Digital Economy from 2012 to 2023

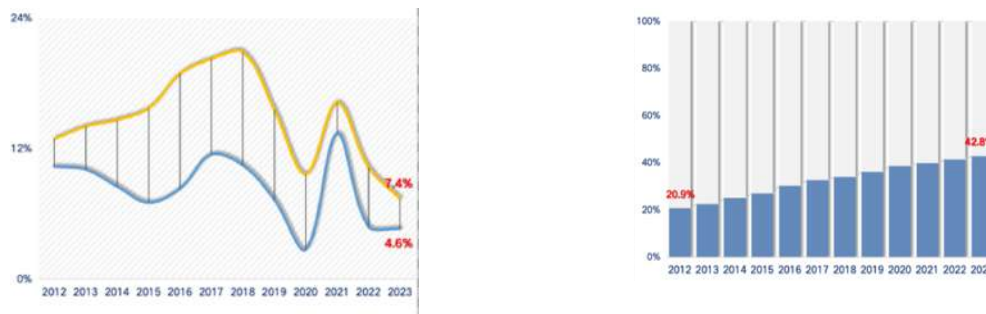


Figure 2. The proportion and growth rate of China's digital economy

In the digital economy, vocational college students have become an important consumer group, actively engaging in digital shopping, social interaction, and mobile payment. Their purchase decisions are influenced by factors such as digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, and perceived value. However, existing research mainly focuses on general consumers or university students in developed regions, leaving a gap in understanding vocational college students in emerging regions such as Guangxi.

Compared with more developed provinces in China, Guangxi has a relatively lower level of economic development, and regional differences may shape distinct purchasing patterns. With the rapid expansion of the digital economy, internet penetration in Guangxi has increased significantly, contributing to the formation of unique purchasing habits among vocational college students. Examining the determinants of their purchase decision behavior can enrich consumer research and support rational purchasing guidance.

This study focuses on first- and second-year students at Guangxi Vocational & Technical Institute of Industry within the digital economy framework. By analyzing digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, and perceived value, it clarifies the internal mechanisms underlying their purchasing behavior.

Theoretically, the study applies the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, trust theory and Value-based consumption theory to a vocational education context, addressing regional research gaps. Practically, the findings provide insights for digital marketers and support the integration of digital economy education into vocational curricula.

### 1.1 Research Objective

1. To examine the levels of digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, perceived value, and consumer purchase decision behavior.
2. To analyze the factors influencing consumer purchase decision behavior in the digital economy among students at Guangxi Vocational & Technical Institute of Industry.

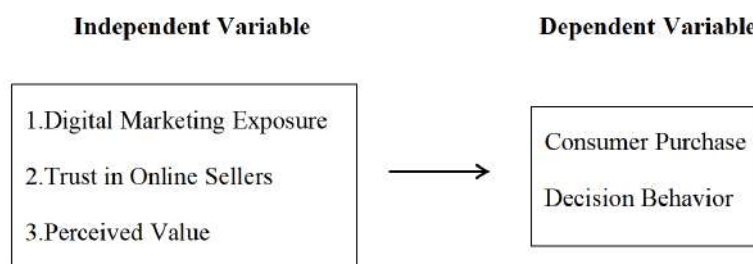


Figure 3. Research Framework

## II. Literature review

This study aims to examine the factors influencing consumer purchase decision behavior among vocational college students in the digital economy. Consumer purchase decision behavior in the digital economy is shaped by cognitive evaluation and perceived risk reduction mechanisms. Therefore, a single theoretical perspective is insufficient to fully explain the complexity of digital purchasing decisions. To address this complexity, the present study adopts an integrated theoretical framework that draws upon the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, trust theory, and value-based consumption theory.

### 2.1 Concept of Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, originally proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974),

provides a comprehensive perspective for explaining how external environmental stimuli influence individuals' internal psychological states and subsequent behavioral responses. According to SOR theory, environmental stimuli (S) affect individuals' cognitive and emotional evaluations (O), which in turn lead to behavioral responses (R).

In the digital economy, consumers are persistently exposed to external stimuli, including digital advertisements, personalized recommendations, promotional information, and platform-based marketing content. These stimuli shape internal cognitive evaluations and ultimately influence behavioral responses. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework provides a systematic explanation of how environmental inputs activate psychological processes that lead to observable behavioral outcomes.

Within this framework, digital marketing exposure represents the stimulus component. Repeated exposure activates internal evaluations, specifically trust in online sellers and perceived value which constitute the organism element by reflecting assessments of seller credibility and benefit–cost trade-offs. Consumer purchase decision behavior represents the response. Thus, the SOR framework explains how digital marketing exposure translates into purchasing decisions through cognitive evaluation mechanisms in the digital economy context.

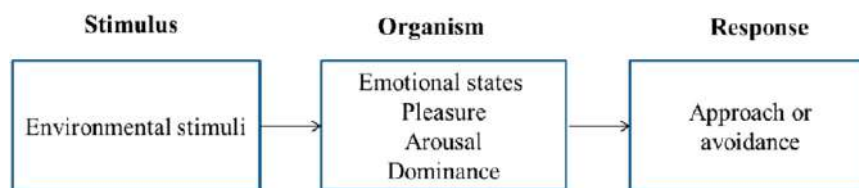


Figure 4. Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework Model

### 2.2 Concept of Theory of Trust

Trust plays a critical role in facilitating digital transactions by reducing perceived risk and uncertainty. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) conceptualized trust as a willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations regarding another party's competence, integrity, and benevolence.

Trust in online sellers is a critical mechanism for reducing transaction risk and facilitating purchase decisions. Prior research shows that higher trust lowers perceived risk, strengthens confidence in sellers, and increases consumers' willingness to complete purchases, particularly among young and less experienced consumers. In the digital economy characterized by information asymmetry and uncertainty, trust theory suggests that transactional willingness depends on perceptions of sellers' reliability, integrity, and competence. By alleviating uncertainty, trust promotes purchase decision behavior and strengthens the explanatory power of the research framework.

### 2.3 Concept of Value-Based Consumption Theory

Value-based consumption theory emphasizes that consumers make purchasing decisions based on a rational evaluation of perceived benefits relative to perceived costs. Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived value as the consumer's overall assessment of a product's utility based on what is received versus what is given.

For vocational college students, perceived value is a key determinant of purchasing behavior due to budget constraints and price sensitivity. Consumers are more likely to purchase when perceived benefits exceed monetary and non-monetary costs, and empirical studies consistently confirm its positive influence on purchase decisions in the digital economy. Value-based consumption theory suggests that purchasing decisions result from evaluating expected benefits against expected costs. In the digital economy, abundant information and frequent price changes intensify this assessment process. In this study, perceived value is incorporated as a core cognitive factor directly influencing consumer purchase decision behavior, highlighting the importance of benefit–cost evaluation in students' digital purchasing decisions.

### 2.4 Research on Relationship Between Digital Marketing Exposure, Trust in Online Sellers, Perceived Value and Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior

Digital marketing exposure has emerged as a central driver of consumer purchase decision behavior in the digital economy. Exposure through social media, targeted advertising, and platform-based content shapes purchase intentions by enhancing awareness, interest, and decision readiness. By providing product information, personalized promotions, and interactive engagement, digital marketing accelerates the transition from awareness to purchase. Empirical studies consistently confirm that strategies such as content marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO) positively influence purchasing decisions across consumer groups, including fast-food customers and Generation Z shoppers, with psychological and social factors often mediating these effects (Nimtrakool & Saisanit, 2023; Pinca et al., 2024; Nartea & Barrera, 2026).

Nevertheless, the impact of digital marketing exposure depends substantially on consumers' trust in online sellers. In the digital economy characterized by information asymmetry and uncertainty, trust functions as a



critical mechanism that determines whether marketing stimuli translate into actual purchase behavior. Trust theory posits that consumers' willingness to transact is shaped by perceptions of sellers' reliability, integrity, and competence. Empirical evidence demonstrates that higher levels of trust reduce perceived transaction risk, strengthen confidence, and enhance purchase intention and behavior (Bibi & Shaukat, 2023; Ahmad et al., 2025). Trust also operates as both a direct predictor and a mediating variable linking digital marketing activities to purchasing outcomes, particularly in high-risk digital settings (Azhar et al., 2023; You et al., 2022).

Beyond trust as a risk-reduction mechanism, consumers engage in value assessments before making purchase decisions. Perceived value reflects the evaluation of benefits relative to monetary and non-monetary costs, integrating utilitarian and hedonic considerations. In the digital economy, this cost-benefit assessment plays a decisive role, and substantial empirical research confirms its positive association with purchase intention and behavior (Wu & Huang, 2023).

Collectively, digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, and perceived value provide a coherent explanation of how external marketing stimuli and internal cognitive evaluations jointly shape consumer purchase decision behavior in the digital economy.

### III. Methodology

This section details the methodologies used in the study to Factors Influencing Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior in The Digital Economy: A study of Guangxi Vocational & Technical Institute of Industry.

#### 3.1 The Population / Sample Group

The target population of this study comprises approximately 31,000 first- and second-year students from Guangxi Vocational & Technical Institute of Industry. Because selecting only first- and second-year students can enhance the homogeneity of the sample, reduce potential confounding factors, and strengthen the internal validity of the study. Given the substantial population size, a stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure the sample's representativeness across key characteristics. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1973) formula:  $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$ . Accordingly, the minimum required sample size was determined to be approximately 395.

#### 3.2 Research Instrument

This research is a quantitative study. The data collection tool used is only one: a questionnaire survey.

#### 3.3 Data Collection

After determining the sample size, the researchers collected the data by distributing questionnaires online. The data collection process is summarized as follows:

1. The researchers distributed the questionnaires by sending the online questionnaire links to the online community.
2. In order to improve the efficiency of questionnaire collection, for those respondents who had not submitted their questionnaires, an online reminder was sent out every other day.
3. After receiving the completed questionnaires, the researchers checked the responses for completeness and validity, and counted the number as planned. In cases of missing or incomplete data, follow-up communication was conducted where possible.
4. The valid questionnaire data was coded and transformed into preliminary statistical data.
5. The obtained data was analyzed by statistical methods.

#### 3.4 Reliability and Validity

This questionnaire has a high level of reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients all exceeded 0.8, indicating that all constructs reached an acceptable level of reliability. This confirms that the measurement items used in this study are reliable and suitable for subsequent statistical analyses. The specific results are presented in the table 1.

**Table 1.** The reliability results of the overall questionnaire

Variables	sample capacity	Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha (Total)
Digital Marketing Exposure	395	.885	
Trust in Online Sellers	395	.882	
Perceived Value	395	.850	.937
Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior	395	.885	

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher uses statistics to analyze data according to the research objectives as follows:

Objective 1: To explore the levels of digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, perceived value and consumer purchase decision behavior.

Statistical method: Descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize the basic characteristics of the respondents and each variable.

Objective 2: To examine the influence of digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, and perceived value on consumer purchase decision behavior.

Statistical method: Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the impact of these independent variables on the dependent variable.

## IV. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 2.** Basic Information of Respondents

(n=395)				
Question	Item	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	106	26.8	
	Female	289	73.2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Grade	Freshman	275	69.6	
	Sophomore	120	30.4	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Monthly living expense range	¥1,000 and below	94	23.8	
	¥1,001 – ¥1,500	247	62.5	
	¥1,501 – ¥2,000	40	10.1	
	¥2,001 and above	14	3.5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
The average number of online shopping times per month	1-2 times	93	23.5	
	3-5 times	202	51.1	
	6-8 times	45	11.4	
	9 times and above	55	13.9	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

From Table 2, the general information of the respondents is as follows.

Gender: A total of 395 valid questionnaires were collected for this study. In terms of gender distribution, the majority of respondents were female, accounting for 289 respondents (73.2%), while 106 respondents (26.8%) were male.

Grade: Regarding grade level, most respondents were freshmen, with 275 respondents (69.6%), followed by sophomores, totaling 120 respondents (30.4%).

Monthly living expense range: With respect to monthly living expense range, the largest proportion of respondents reported a monthly living expense of ¥1,001–¥1,500, accounting for 247 respondents (62.5%). This was followed by ¥1,000 and below, with 94 respondents (23.8%). Respondents with monthly living expenses of ¥1,501–¥2,000 accounted for 40 respondents (10.1%), while those with ¥2,001 and above represented the smallest group, with 14 respondents (3.5%).

The average number of online shopping times per month: In terms of the average number of online shopping times per month, most respondents reported shopping online 3–5 times per month, accounting for 202 respondents (51.1%). This was followed by 1–2 times per month, with 93 respondents (23.5%). Respondents who shopped online 9 times and above per month accounted for 55 respondents (13.9%), while those shopping 6–8 times per month accounted for 45 respondents (11.4%).

**Table 3.** The mean and standard deviation (S.D.) of all variables

Variables	Mean	S.D.	MIN	MAX	Interpretation
Digital Marketing Exposure	3.73	.552	3.00	5.00	high level
Trust in Online Sellers	3.59	.534	3.00	5.00	high level
Perceived Value	3.53	.518	2.80	5.00	high level
Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior	3.85	.580	3.00	5.00	high level

From Table 3, the mean and standard deviation of all variables included in this study are presented. The results indicate that all variables are at the high level. It is indicated that the respondents demonstrated positive perceptions across all the examined constructs. The standard deviation values of all variables ranged from 0.50 to 0.60, indicating that respondents' responses were relatively consistent and did not show excessive dispersion.

**Table 4.** The results of the analysis of the correlation coefficient between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Variables	DME	TOS	PV	CPDB
Digital Marketing Exposure	1			
Trust in Online Sellers	.523**	1		
Perceived Value	.485**	.617**	1	
Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior	.576**	.583**	.657**	1

From Table 4, the results of the correlation coefficient analysis indicate that positive relationships exist between the independent variables and Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior. In addition, the correlation coefficients among the independent variables were all below the recommended threshold of 0.80, suggesting that no serious multicollinearity problem exists among the independent variables.

#### 4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

**Table 5.** Regression Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error				
Digital Marketing Exposure	.297	.044	.283	6.809	.000	1.462
Trust in Online Sellers	.200	.050	.184	3.981	.000	1.805
Perceived Value	.454	.050	.406	9.002	.000	1.715

$R^2 = .537, *P < .05$

From the regression coefficient analysis results in Table 5, it can be seen that digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers, and perceived value all have a significant positive impact on consumer purchase decision behavior. Among them, the impact of perceived value is the most significant. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the regression model is 0.537, indicating that approximately 53.7% of the variance in consumer purchase decision behavior can be explained by the three independent variables included in the model.

#### V. Discussion

The study discussed the empirical findings by integrating the descriptive and regression analysis results with existing literature. The findings indicate that Digital Marketing Exposure, Trust in Online Sellers and Perceived Value all significantly influence Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior in the digital economy. Moreover, respondents perceived these factors at relatively high levels, this reflects its proactive decision-making attitude when participating in digital platforms.

The regression results further confirmed that all proposed hypotheses were supported. Among the three independent variables, Perceived Value exerted the strongest effect, underscoring the primacy of value-based cognitive evaluation in driving digital purchase decision behavior. Collectively, consumer purchase decision behavior is shaped by the combined effects of digital marketing exposure, trust in online sellers and perceived value.

#### VI. Conclusion

This study first analyzed the general characteristics of the respondents, including gender, grade, monthly living expense range, and the average number of online shopping times per month. Female students constituted the majority of the sample, and most respondents were freshmen, followed by sophomores. The majority reported low to middle monthly living expenses, with only a small proportion indicating relatively high budgets. Despite moderate financial capacity, respondents engaged regularly in digital shopping, with most purchasing several times per month. These findings indicate that vocational college students with limited economic resources remain active participants in the digital consumer market.

The descriptive analysis of the main variables Digital Marketing Exposure, Trust in Online Sellers, Perceived Value, and Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior showed consistently high levels across all constructs. Digital



Marketing Exposure recorded a mean of 3.73, reflecting frequent exposure to digital marketing content. Trust in Online Sellers (mean=3.59) and Perceived Value (mean=3.53) were also rated highly, indicating generally positive perceptions of seller credibility and product value. Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior achieved the highest mean score (3.85), suggesting strong engagement in digital purchasing decisions. Overall, respondents demonstrated a positive and balanced pattern of digital consumer behavior.

Regression analysis further confirmed that Digital Marketing Exposure, Trust in Online Sellers, and Perceived Value all significantly influence Consumer Purchase Decision Behavior, indicating that digital purchase decisions are shaped by the combined effects of marketing stimuli, trust mechanisms, and value evaluation. Among the predictors, Perceived Value emerged as the strongest determinant ( $\beta = .406, p < .001$ ), underscoring the central role of benefit–cost assessment in digital decision-making. Digital Marketing Exposure was the second strongest predictor ( $\beta = .283, p < .001$ ), demonstrating that frequent exposure to promotional content increases purchase likelihood. Trust in Online Sellers also showed a significant positive effect ( $\beta = .184, p < .001$ ), although comparatively weaker, suggesting that trust primarily functions as a risk-reduction and supportive factor. All VIF values were below 5, indicating no multicollinearity concerns and confirming the robustness of the model.

In conclusion, the findings validate the proposed research framework and confirm that consumer purchase decision behavior in the digital economy is jointly influenced by perceived value, digital marketing exposure, and trust in online sellers, with perceived value serving as the primary driving force.

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