

# *The Impact of Fresh E-Commerce Web Site Customer Orientation on Relationship Benefits and Customer Loyalty*

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**Keywords:** Web Site customer orientation, fresh e-commerce, e-relationship benefits, repurchase intention, advocacy intention

**Abstract:** From the fresh e-commerce website point of view, this study investigates the influence of website customer orientation on e-relationship benefit and e-customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention). Based on the in-depth study of previous relevant high-quality literature, combined with the survey of fresh e-commerce customers, the conceptual model of website customer orientation, relationship benefits and customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention) is established. By using SPSSPRO online software, the research conducts EFA (exploratory factor analysis) and CFA (confirmatory factor analysis). The founding indicates fresh e-commerce website customer orientation has an extremely significant impact on relationship benefits (trust benefit, special treatment benefit and social benefit). Among them, website customer orientation has the greatest impact on trust benefits. However, as for the effect of relationship benefits on customer loyalty, except for the significant impact of trust benefits on customer loyalty, the other two benefit dimensions have no positively significant impact on customer loyalty. Finally, in line with the above empirical results, the paper draws research conclusions, puts forward management suggestions, illustrates the limitations, and discusses the future research scope and direction.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, with the scale of the Internet users growth steady, the popularization of mobile Internet users, and the vigorous development of e-commerce, current business environment has undergone tremendous changes, and online shopping has become the preferred way for a large number of consumers<sup>[1]</sup>. At the same time, with the continuous updating and breakthrough of new retail, consumers' sense of sovereignty has been further enhanced<sup>[2]</sup>. Now, many consumers can easily purchase most products or services online. In order to attract customers to visit their websites, online businesses try to establish websites that meet customer needs from the perspective of customers<sup>[3]</sup>. For example, the customer-oriented web site has a wide range of products and can provide customers with satisfactory products. Even if the customers are not satisfied with the received goods or services, they can provide convenient return and exchange services. Besides, the

Web site can effectively track and mine all previous historical browsing behavior of customers, so they can easily infer alternatives that may satisfy consumers<sup>[3]</sup>. From customer orientation of salesperson (SOCO) to customer orientation of service employees (COSE), from offline context to online setting, the research perspective, field and scope of customer orientation are constantly expanding and extending. In the traditional context, from focusing only on “one-time transactions” to trying to retain customers for a long time, the relationship oriented relationship marketing theory has been unanimously praised by scholars and enterprise managers<sup>[4]</sup>. Specifically, Web site customer orientation can transcend the constraints of time and space, and deliver the concept of meeting customer needs to potential consumer groups through real-time, non-contact and effective services<sup>[5]</sup>.

Research on customer orientation has shown that the behavioral outcomes of customer orientation are directly or indirectly related many factors. For example, based on the survey of B2B platform’s customer needs, Liu, Huang, Huang et al has explored the direct and significant impact of customer orientation on radical innovation and incremental innovation<sup>[6]</sup>. Yang and Zhang<sup>[7]</sup>, Yeo, Park, Yeo, et al<sup>[8]</sup>, Peng, Xu and Liu<sup>[9]</sup>, have conducted surveys on employees of large, medium, and small banks, customers of hair salons, and sales personnel of large enterprises from different perspectives respectively, have demonstrated the significant impact of customer orientation/sales personnel customer orientation on sales performance/employee performance/enterprise performance. At the same time, based on B2B research angle of view, Stock and Hoyer<sup>[10]</sup> have also found a close connection and positive effect between the employees of customer-oriented behavior and sales performance. Besides, represented by the researches of the following scholars, Mediano & Ruiz-Alba<sup>[11]</sup>, Li, Liu, He, & Liu<sup>[12]</sup>, Brady & Cronin<sup>[13]</sup>, Pan & Ha<sup>[4]</sup> have demonstrated the direct or indirect relationship between customer orientation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. However, The above-mentioned scholars’ research on customer orientation mainly focuses on the physical environment (e.g. Stock and Hoyer<sup>[10]</sup>; Pan & Ha<sup>[14]</sup>; Mediano & Ruiz-Alba<sup>[11]</sup>; Peng, Xu and Liu<sup>[9]</sup>), with only a small amount of research taking e-commerce as the background (e.g. Poddar, Donthu, & Wei<sup>[3]</sup>, Wang & Zhang<sup>[2]</sup>).

During the COVID-19, the fresh e-commerce platform directly obtained a large number of customer resources at a low cost, cultivating the habit of some customers to consume fresh food online. After consumers experience the fresh e-commerce products and services during the COVID-19, they will only leave some loyal customers. In the context of the post COVID-19, how to retain old customers, attract new customers and improve the market penetration of fresh e-commerce has become a core issue of common concern for governments at all levels and fresh e-commerce. Due to the perishable nature, special packaging requirements, and strong transportation timeliness, online customer market penetration of fresh e-commerce is relatively low.

Few scholars have studied this issue. Current research on fresh e-commerce focuses more on factors such as purchase intention, customer trust, perceived risk, customer loyalty, and customer satisfaction, but has not yet taken into account the systematic, harmonious, and forward-looking development of offline and online customers in fresh e-commerce. Therefore, exploring the relationship between customer orientation, relationship benefits, and customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention) has more practical significance for cultivating good customer merchant relationships and promoting the harmonious, stable, and innovative development of fresh e-commerce enterprises.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Customer Orientation

As one of the core thoughts in relationship marketing, the birth of customer orientation is

regarded as an important milestone in marketing<sup>[13]</sup>, which has gained wide recognition and considered as a crucial determination of customer trust<sup>[9]</sup>, satisfaction<sup>[10]</sup>, loyalty<sup>[13-14]</sup>, sales performance<sup>[7-9]</sup>, and so on. In fact, the dawn of customer-centered thought comes from Drucker (1954)<sup>[15]</sup>, who suggested the entire enterprise should think and solve problems from the perspective of customers, and effectively meet their needs. The term 'customer orientation' was first proposed by Levitt (1960)<sup>[16]</sup>. He believed that customer needs are a central issue of the enterprise, who should create and meet the needs of customers instead of trying to sell products<sup>[16]</sup>.

However, customer orientation becomes one of the research focuses in developed countries since the 21st century. After that, numerous scholars and practitioners have studied customer orientation from different perspectives. For example, from the individual research angle of view, Brown et al. (2002)<sup>[17]</sup>, Stock and Hoyer (2005)<sup>[10]</sup>, Poddar et al. (2009)<sup>[3]</sup>, Wang and Zhang (2015)<sup>[2]</sup> and other scholars constantly break through the research scope of customer orientation and propose different dimensions or connotations of customer orientation. Brown et al. (2002)<sup>[17]</sup> considered that customer orientation includes two dimensions: needs orientation and enjoyment orientation. Needs orientation refers to the front-line employees whether has the relative ability to their customers, whereas enjoyment orientation pays attention to internal psychological perception of a service staff and satisfaction from serving his or customers, and pleasure in serving their customers. Based on the context of dyadic data, Stock and Hoyer (2005)<sup>[10]</sup> innovatively raised customer orientation includes two dimensions, which is customer orientation behavior and customer orientation attitude two dimensions<sup>[10]</sup>. Poddar et al. (2009)<sup>[3]</sup> took the lead in expanding the environment of previous research, from offline physical backgrounds to online virtual stores, and expanded the Saxe and Weitz (1982)<sup>[18]</sup> measurement of customer orientation scale to the website customer orientation measurement scale.

Customer orientation is a positive and upward concept and a typical representative of culture, which can effectively cultivate the durable relationship between enterprises and customers<sup>[19]</sup>, enhance customer value<sup>[2]</sup>, gain customer trust<sup>[1]</sup>, and ensure long-term customer satisfaction<sup>[10]</sup>. Research has confirmed that relationship benefits exist in both traditional service environments<sup>[19]</sup> and e-commerce contexts<sup>[1,4]</sup>. To maintain a long-term and intimate cooperative relationship between enterprises and customers, both parties must inevitably receive benefits in return<sup>[1,4]</sup>. Cui, Su and Li (2006) through statistical analysis of online surveys, they have obtained four dimensional factors of customer relationship benefits in the B2C e-commerce environment: trust, social interaction, special treatment, and honor benefits<sup>[4]</sup>. However, in the early stages of online shopping, online shopping was seen as a fashion, and the dimension of honor benefit was very obvious<sup>[4]</sup>. Nowadays, online shopping has become a way of life, a lifestyle habit, and the halo of fashion and honor has faded<sup>[1]</sup>. By the investigation of the full-service restaurants' customers, Kim argued the customer orientation of service employees (COSE) is the critical factor for the service businesses to provide consumers warm and considerate service in a humanized way, which directly enhanced relational benefits (trust benefit, social benefit and special treatment benefit), ultimately contributes to customer loyalty (e.g. repurchase intention)<sup>[19]</sup>. From the double perspectives of interpersonal and firm, based on the investigation business tourists, Macintosh has demonstrated the positive relationship between customer orientation and relationship quality (trust and satisfaction)<sup>[20]</sup>. Previous studies have shown that highly customer-centered website often directly display more helpful products and services based on customers' personal needs (Poddar, Donthu, & Wei)<sup>[3]</sup>. When the front-line service employee can performs reliably<sup>[11]</sup>, be enthusiastic about customers' opinions and interests<sup>[20]</sup>, and have the strong willingness to meet customer needs<sup>[12]</sup>, customer orientation will enhance the three dimensions of relationship benefits<sup>[12]</sup>. In line with the in-depth investigation of prior scholars' literature and combined with the context of fresh e-commerce between customer orientation and relationship benefits, the study then leads to the following three

assumptions:

H<sub>1</sub>: Fresh e-commerce website customer orientation has a significant positive effect on trust benefit

H<sub>2</sub>: Fresh e-commerce website customer orientation has a significant positive effect on social benefit

H<sub>3</sub>: Fresh e-commerce website customer orientation has a significant positive effect on special treatment benefit

## 2.2. Relationship Benefit

The concept of relationship marketing was first proposed by Berry in 1983, who define it as a strategy to attract, maintain, and enhance customer relationships<sup>[21]</sup>. From then on, related scholars, officially began to the theoretical research on customer relationship issues. The 40 year research process of relationship marketing can be divided into two stages. The first stage was before 1998. During this period, most research on relationship marketing focused on the relationship between enterprises, establishing, maintaining, or terminating relationships with customers, while neglecting the study of customer benefits<sup>[22]</sup>. After 1998, the research on relationship marketing entered the second stage, marked by the concept of relationship benefits proposed by Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner<sup>[23]</sup>. During this period, relationship marketing began to take consumers as an important research perspective<sup>[22]</sup>.

Relationship benefits (based on customer angle of view) refer to “those benefits customers receive from long-term relationships above and beyond the core service performance”<sup>[21]</sup>. Other scholars have also defined the definition of relational benefits from their own research perspectives. For example, Guo (2022) holds relational benefits refer to other dimensions of benefits provided to consumers in addition to core interests during long-term cooperation with enterprises<sup>[1]</sup>. As for the dimension of relationship benefit, the opinions of different experts are relatively consistent. Based on the perspective of traditional services, the representative viewpoint is developed and empirically supported by Gwinner (1998), who has demonstrated customer relationship benefits consist of confidence benefits, social benefits, and special treatment three different dimensions<sup>[21]</sup>. This point of view has been adopted in many traditional contexts, such as Liu<sup>[22]</sup>, Tang, Zhang and Cheng<sup>[24]</sup>, Tang, Zhang and Xu<sup>[25]</sup>, who apply the above three dimensions of relational interests to their own research subjects. However, some scholars have also proposed different viewpoints on the dimensions of relationship benefits. For example, by investigating library users, Qi (2018) proposed relationship benefits are composed of four dimensions psychological benefits, social benefits, special treatment benefits (economic benefits and customized benefits)<sup>[26]</sup>. Cui, Su and Li through statistical analysis of online surveys, they have obtained four dimensional factors of customer relationship benefits in the B2C e-commerce environment: trust benefits, social benefits, special treatment benefits, and honor benefits<sup>[4]</sup>, which is totally different from other scholars' viewpoint. Because in China around 2005, online shopping was seen as a fashion and avant-garde performance, and even more regarded as an honor. Nowadays, the market penetration rate of online shopping for Chinese consumers is more than 90%. Online shopping has become a common way of life, which is totally different from the initial perception to consumers. For example, according to Cui<sup>[4]</sup>, honor benefits are measured using the following items: “the internet brings me a very fashionable shopping experience”, “shopping online makes me feel like I have a brand new way of life”<sup>[11]</sup>. So, in this paper, based on the characteristics of fresh e-commerce and its customers, the author combined with the research, adopts Gwinner's perspective<sup>[23]</sup> and put forward that relationship benefits are composed of three dimensions: trust, social, special treatment benefits three dimensions.

Research has long confirmed that relationship benefits exist in both traditional service environments and e-commerce contexts and can have a positive impact on outcome variables such as customer satisfaction, customer commitment, repurchase intention, positive word of mouth, and customer loyalty. Exploration on relationship marketing has shown that customers attach great importance to their relationship with company, and valuable relationships can effectively enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions or repurchase intention<sup>[4,19,12]</sup>. The harmonious relationship between customers and businesses is the main source of promoting repeat purchases and positive publicity among customers<sup>[25,27]</sup>. Specifically, in the online environment, trust benefits remain the type of relationship benefits are the most important concern for customers<sup>[4]</sup>. The previous literature has established a strong connection between majority dimensions of relationship benefits and repurchase intention<sup>[4,20]</sup>. Recent research in library and Hairdressing services supports this crucial linkage<sup>[12,26]</sup>. Therefore, the following three assumptions are examined:

H1a: Trust benefit is significant positive related to customer repurchase intention.

H2a: Social benefit is significant positive related to customer repurchase intention.

H3a: Special treatment is significant positive related to customer repurchase intention.

Advocacy intention, also known as word-of-mouth (WOM) intention, is another important indicator for measuring customer loyalty. This indicator refers to the internal emotional response of customers towards service providers, and is also a social measure of loyalty, which is totally different from repurchase intention. According to Chai, Malhotra, & Alpert (2015), if customers feel very comfortable, happy, and satisfied with the service provided by the business, they are more inclined to share this good business with more people in order to help others make better decisions. At the same time, it is also an emotional reward for the business from customers<sup>[27]</sup>. Li, Liu, He, & Liu (2016) suggest commercial friendship is concentrated performance of relationship benefits, which refers to customers gaining many relationship benefits beyond functional benefits<sup>[12]</sup>. The harmonious relationship between customers and businesses is the basic prerequisite and core guarantee for customers to generate advocacy intentions<sup>[27]</sup>. For customers, they not only hope to gain economic benefits, but also hope to gain relationship benefits from service participation and are willing to maintain long-term relationships with them. Specifically, customers are more willing to share with others some of the benefits they have gained in maintaining relationships with businesses<sup>[19,24]</sup>.

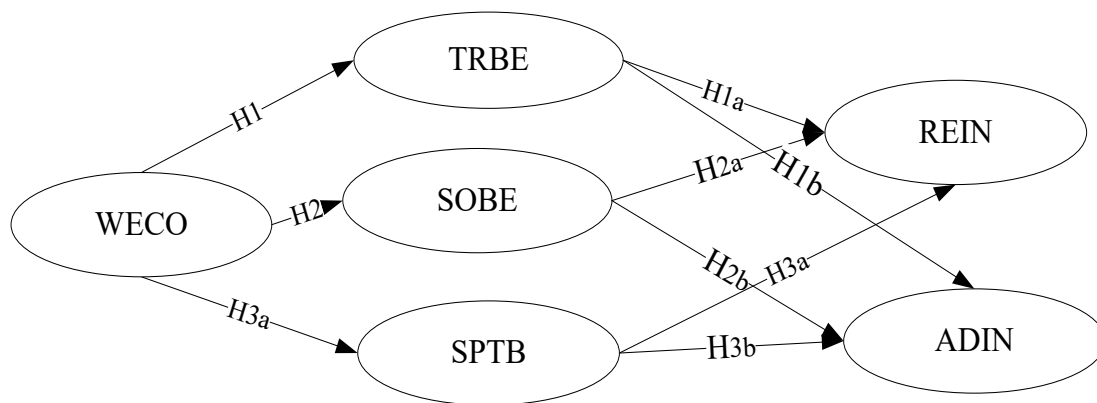
According to the demonstration of previous offline and online service contexts related researches, there are direct linkage between relationship benefits and advocacy intention or WOM or attitude loyalty<sup>[19,20,25]</sup>. Customers' perception of trust benefit is the key driving factor of customer loyalty intention<sup>[4,12,26]</sup>. Consequently, based on the study results of many prior literature and the above analysis of the relationship between online relationship benefits and advocacy intention, then leads the study to the following three assumptions:

H1b: Trust benefit has a significant positive effect on advocacy intention

H2b: Social benefit has a significant positive effect on advocacy intention

H3b: Special treatment has a significant positive effect on advocacy intention

On the basis of the above-mentioned literature review and hypotheses, the study establish a conceptual model, as shown in Figure 1. Starting from website customer orientation, it studies their direct relationship with relationship benefit (trust benefit, social benefit and special treatment benefit). On the other hand, it verifies the influence of website customer orientation on relationship benefit, and finally establishes a structural model of the relationship between website customer orientation, relationship benefit and customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention).



Note: WECO stands for Website Customer Orientation;  
 TRBE stands for Trust Benefits  
 SOBE stands for Social Benefits  
 SPBE stands for Special Treatment Benefits  
 REIN stands for Repurchase Intention; ADIN stands for Advocacy Intention

Figure 1: Conceptual model.

### 3. Research Method

#### 3.1. Sample and Data Collection

In the research, SPSSPRO were used as a core tool for data statistical analysis and structural equation testing. Based on the characteristics of fresh e-commerce customers' online shopping, this survey creates a questionnaire through the professional research platform (www.credamo.com), and issues the fresh e-commerce questionnaire to the related respondents by simple random sampling and online paid survey. The formal survey lasted just one week. Several filter items are set for the questionnaire. If the respondent has not purchased fresh products online or has not purchased a fresh e-commerce membership card, the questionnaire will be deleted. In addition, for customers who have not purchased fresh products online in the past one month, the completed questionnaire would also be deleted. Besides, when the duration of the questionnaire was too short, more than nine consecutive options were all the same, or the untrue answers or contradictory answers were checked, these questionnaires were invalid. Eventually, a total of 258 valid questionnaires were received in this survey. Effective questionnaire recovery rate reached 57.3%.

The respondents were distributed throughout the country. They come from 29 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities. All respondents have experience of purchasing fresh products online. The average frequency online shopping shows that respondents who purchase fresh products more than one time account for 99.28% in a month. Among them, 1-2 account for 16.28%, 3-5 account for 39.15%, 6-9 account for 25.58%, and more than 10 times account for 18.22%. The number of VIP members or recharge cards was 258, 100% of total samples; more than half of the respondents for the sample were female (62.02%); 148 respondents ranged in age from 26 to 40 (55.36%).

#### 3.2. Variable and Measurement

Before the formal investigation, 100 questionnaires were distributed for preliminary investigation. Based on the results and feedback, modifications and adjustments were made to the

original relevant test items, and the formal questionnaire for this study was ultimately determined. All scale items in the paper were derived from previous literature. At the same time, some scales have been minor modified so as to adapt the fresh e-commerce setting. According to the viewpoint of Poddar, Donthu, & Wei<sup>[3]</sup>, the paper finally uses two scale items to evaluation fresh e-commerce website customer orientation, which originated from SOCO, was first developed by Saxe & Weitz<sup>[12]</sup>. Following Gwinner, Gremler, Bitner & Hoyer<sup>[12]</sup> and Cui, Su and Li<sup>[4]</sup>, current study adopts 10 scale items to evaluate trust benefit, special treatment benefit and social benefit. At the same time, present study uses four scale items to measure repurchase intention and advocacy intention adapted from Chai, Malhotra, & Alpert<sup>[27]</sup>.

All scales in the study originate from previous studies. In order to ensure the scale items are suitable for fresh e-commerce background, Chinese people’s thinking habits and language expression ways, the researcher has fine-tuned some scale items. There are 2 scale items to measure website customer orientation, 4 scale items to judge trust benefit, 3 scale items to evaluate social benefit, 3 scale items to measure special treatment benefit, 2 scale items to estimate customer repurchase intention, and 2 scale items to assess customer advocacy intentions. It should be noted that all scale items in this paper adopts a 5-level Likert Scale.

## 4. Model Analysis

### 4.1. Validity Analysis

In the paper, SPSSPRO software was used to conduct CFA ( confirmatory factor analysis) on the six latent variables in the conceptual model, namely, website customer orientation (WECO), trust benefit (TRBE), social benefit (SOBE), special treatment benefit (SPTB), repurchase intention (REIN), and advocacy intention (ADIN). The standardized factor loading coefficients of fresh e-commerce each measurement item were gained, and then the average variance extraction (AVE) of every latent variable was measured, which is between 0.55 and 0.83. The results revealed the standardized factor loading of all scale items was greater than 0.5 (critical value). The AVE of the six latent variables is larger than 0.5, which means that the convergent validity of the six variables in the research model is suitable.

Table 1 lists the Pearson correlation and AVE root value. According to related expert advice, if the square root of the AVE (average variance extraction) is greater than the correlation coefficient between the two latent variables, which indicate the discriminant validity between the latent variable relationship between two pairs is relatively good.

Table 1: Discriminant validity: Pearson correlation and AVE root value.

	WECO	TRBE	SOBE	SPTB	REIN	ADIN
WECO	<b>0.55</b>					
TRBE	0.48	0.58				
SOBE	0.34	0.49	0.80			
SPTB	0.28	0.38	0.73	0.83		
REIN	0.32	0.55	0.29	0.28	0.65	
ADIN	0.35	0.55	0.53	0.48	0.42	0.70

Note: \*p<0.1, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01; the diagonal value is the root value of the factor AVE

In confirmatory factor analysis, as shown in Table 2, it can be seen that the core model fit indices are  $2 < \text{CMI/DF} < 3$ ,  $\text{CFI} = 0.933 > 0.9$ ,  $\text{RMSEA} = 0.068 < 0.10$ , and GFI, NFI, NNFI are all close to or greater than 0.9. It follows that the fitting degree meets the corresponding requirements, and the fit between the data and the model is good.

Table 2: Model fit indices.

Common Indicator	CMIN	DF	CMI/DF	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	NFI	NNFI
Judgment criteria	-	-	<3	<0.10	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Value	194.383	89	2.184	0.068	0.885	0.933	0.885	0.091

Note: \*p<0.1, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

#### 4.2. Reliability Analysis

In the paper, the research used SPSSPRO online statistical software to calculate the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of fresh e-commerce website customer orientation, trust benefit, social benefit, special treatment benefit, customer repurchase intention and advocacy intention in the model. The results are shown in Table 3. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  Values of each variable are all above 0.7, suggesting that all scales of the model have good reliability. Among the critical ratio (CR) values of all latent variables, the maximum value is 0.86, which is almost larger than the critical level of 0.6, implying that the internal consistency of the scale is basically acceptable.

Table 3: Reliability analysis of variables.

Variables	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR Value
Website customer orientation(WECO)	0.55	0.55
Trust benefit (TRBE)	0.65	0.63
Social benefit(SOBE)	0.69	0.84
Special treatment benefit (SPTB)	0.74	0.86
Repurchase Intention(REIN)	0.68	0.60
Advocacy Intention(ADIN)	0.72	0.65

#### 4.3. Structural Model Checking

Table 4: Model regression coefficient table. Applying SPSSPRO online software to perform data fitting analysis on the model. The fit indices of the model are CMIN=241.287, DF=95.000, P-value=0.000\*\*\*, CMI/DF=2.5401<3, GFI=0.858, AGFI=0.92 (they are all above the critical value of 0.8), CFI=0.907, NFI=0.858, NNFI=0.883 (they are close to the recommended threshold value of 0.9), SRMR=0.041, RMSEA=0.077 (it is less than the critical value of 0.08). All the fitting indices are within the acceptable range, which suggests the fit between the data and the model is good.

Table 4: Model regression coefficients.

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	Standardized Coefficient	Z	P
H <sub>1</sub>	WECO→TRBE	0.702	4.282***	0.000***
H <sub>2</sub>	WECO→SOBE	0.834	4.703***	0.000***
H <sub>3</sub>	WECO→SPTB	0.992	4.604***	0.000***
H <sub>1a</sub>	TRBE→REIN	1.036	6.76***	0.000***
H <sub>1b</sub>	TRBE→ADIN	0.691	5.251***	0.000***
H <sub>2a</sub>	SOBE→REIN	0.271	1.583	0.113
H <sub>2b</sub>	SOBE→ADIN	0.066	0.459	0.646
H <sub>3a</sub>	SPTB→REIN	-0.510	-2.313	0.000***
H <sub>3b</sub>	SPTB→ADIN	0.177	1.028	0.304

Note: \*p<0.1, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 2, it can be seen that H<sub>1</sub>-H<sub>3</sub> are supported, H<sub>1a</sub>-H<sub>3a</sub> just H<sub>1a</sub> are



supported, and H<sub>1b</sub>-H<sub>3b</sub> just H<sub>1b</sub> are supported. H<sub>2a</sub> and H<sub>2b</sub> are not valid. The reason for the results may be in the virtual environment of online shopping, people get to know each other for some reason, which is very different from understanding one another in the real setting. In the physical context, everyone can meet and communicate with each other, clarify their identities, and feel more practical and reliable. In the internet, it is difficult to establish trust because virtual social interaction is lack of mutual understanding, and confirm identity is a big challenge. Besides, the other party's recommendation and advocacy may not necessarily be based on the true performance of the product or service, but may only be driven by economic factors.

H<sub>2a</sub> and H<sub>2b</sub> are not supported. The possible reasons for this outcome are due to the perishable nature, special packaging requirements, and strong transportation timeliness, online customer market penetration of fresh e-commerce is relatively low. Customers have a higher perceived risk of purchasing fresh products. The more the fresh e-commerce customers purchase, the greater they likely be harmed or loss. Therefore, special treatment has no significant impact on advocacy intentions and repurchase intentions.

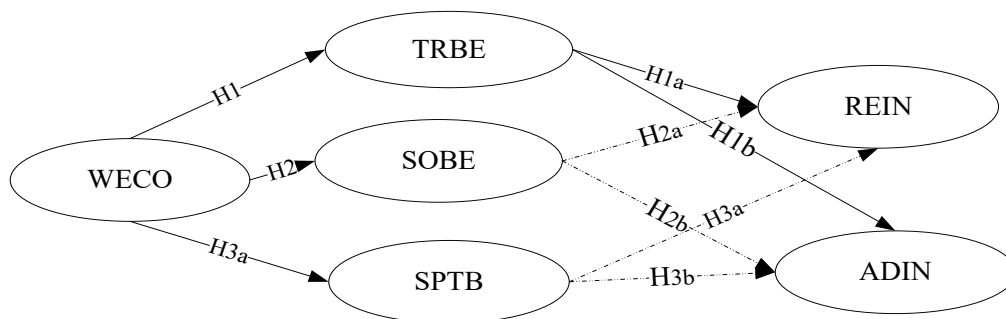


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model Analysis Results of the influence of website customer orientation on relationship benefits and customer loyalty.

## 5. Conclusions, Enlightenment and Prospects

### 5.1. Conclusions and Contributions

This article takes the fresh e-commerce industry as the background and examines the relationship between website customer orientation, relationship benefits, and customer loyalty (repurchase intention and promotion intention) from the perspective of customer perception. The research conclusions and contributions mainly include the following aspects:

Firstly, the impact of website customer orientation on relationship benefits. Existing research mainly examines the impact of offline environment on relationship benefits, while there is a lack of research on the antecedents of online background relationship benefits. Based on existing literature, this article divides relationship benefits into trust benefits, social benefits, and special treatment benefits, and examines the influence of website customer orientation on three types of relationship benefits. The empirical research results indicate that customer orientation has an effective facilitation on all three types of relationship benefits. Relatively speaking, website customer orientation has a greater impact on trust benefits than on social benefits and special treatment. The aforementioned findings validate Cui, Su, & Li's <sup>[11]</sup> assertion, from an empirical research perspective that trust benefits are the prerequisite and foundation for cooperation between customers and websites, and without trust benefits, everything else cannot be discussed.

Secondly, the relationship between relational benefits and customer loyalty based on fresh e-commerce setting. Previous studies have found that the dimensions of relationship benefits have a positive impact on customer loyalty <sup>[11,12]</sup>. Based on the previous literature, the study divides

customer loyalty into repurchase intention and promotional intention, and examines the impact of relationship benefits on these two types of customer loyalty. The empirical research results reveal that only trust benefits have a significant positive impact on customer loyalty, while social benefits and special treatment benefits have no significant positive impact on customer loyalty. This empirical research result is different from previous studies and further expands the relevant research conclusions, which has important value and significance for the enrichment of relationship marketing theory and the development of China's fresh e-commerce marketing industry.

## 5.2. Management Enlightenment

(1) Internally adhering to customer orientation, externally implementing customer orientation. Customer orientation is a concept and a culture. It is the presentation of inclusive and innovative behavior. The unity of internal and external customer orientation makes it easier to effectively convey customer orientation concepts and behaviors to customers, thereby further enhancing relationship benefits. Besides, fresh e-commerce website can call on more VIP customers to participate in various ways, so that they can gain more relationship benefits in the experience, enhance their sense of intrinsic value and respect, so as to establish more lasting relationship links with the website. At the same time, providing personalized services to customers, establishing and improving social platforms on websites, and enhancing customer stickiness.

(2) Special treatment should be moderate, and customers should socialize with style. Highly value and actively prevent the special risks hidden by the relationship benefits. Fresh e-commerce website must fully understand the actual, potential, and inherent needs of VIP customers, appropriately provide special treatment, pay more attention to the timing, methods, and targets of special treatment, give customers a certain sense of ceremony, and avoid generalized, formal, and task-based special treatment.

(3) Actively cultivate and enhance customer social value. The fresh e-commerce website should strengthen virtual social management, plan member social communication and exchange activities, enhance member social sincerity and pragmatic perception, and ensure multiple contacts between customers and the company. Fresh e-commerce website administrators can encourage various forms of customer information sharing, in order to enhance customer behavioral loyalty and emotional commitment, bring relationship benefits to customers, simplify customer choices, and eventually reduce purchasing risks and word of mouth recommendation concerns.

## 5.3. Research Limitations and Prospects

This paper discusses the impact of fresh e-commerce website customer orientation, relationship benefit (trust benefit, social benefit and special treatment benefit) on customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention), and obtains some research results. At the same time, this study also has certain limitations.

Firstly, the universality of research conclusions is worth being vigilant. This study focuses on the fresh e-commerce website, which serves individual consumers. Therefore, the research conclusions may not necessarily apply to organizational consumers. Future research can choose the field of organizational customers to validate and expand the conclusions of this paper. The research just examine the influence factors of relationship benefits from the perspective of website customer orientation. In fact, there are many other factors that may affect the formation of relationship benefits between customers and employees, such as the customer orientation of front-line service employee (COSE)<sup>[19]</sup>, relationship quality<sup>[20]</sup>, loyalty program<sup>[24]</sup> service quality, and future research can consider incorporating these factors into the research framework.

Secondly, this article only examines the impact of relationship benefits on customer loyalty in

the context of fresh e-commerce website. Existing literature has pointed out that relationship benefits have an impact on marketing variables such as cross purchasing<sup>[1]</sup>, customer satisfaction<sup>[4]</sup>, service quality perception<sup>[14]</sup>, and service error tolerance<sup>[26]</sup> may also have an impact. Future research can further investigate the relationship between relationship benefits and these variables.

Finally, the research emphasis of this study is the impact of website customer orientation on relationship benefits (trust benefits, social benefits, and special treatment) and customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention). It does not examine the mediating effect and moderating effect of relationship benefits between website customer orientation and customer loyalty. Future research can consider exploring the relationship between website customer orientation and customer loyalty (repurchase intention and advocacy intention) so as to further reveal the mechanism of relationship benefits on website customer orientation and customer loyalty.

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