


Examining the Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention of the Fashion Industry in Western Province, Sri Lanka: Social Media Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The research investigates the effects of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on Sri Lankan Western Province fashion consumers' purchase decisions. The research investigates the impact of information quality alongside credibility and adoption on consumer purchase choices.

Design/methodology/approach: The study uses a structured survey to collect data from 384 social media users in the Western Province based on the Information Adoption Model. The research used statistical methods which are descriptive statistics, factor analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis to analyze the relationship between information quality and credibility and adoption, and their impact on purchase intentions. The sample was demographically diverse, with age and education.

Findings: The research shows that eWOM adoption depends on information quality and credibility, which in turn drive positive purchase intentions among consumers. The research demonstrates the essential impact of eWOM on fashion industry customer buying choices.

Originality: This research stands as one of the initial studies to utilize the Information Adoption Model in examining the Sri Lankan fashion market, it fills a notable gap in the literature by examining how information quality, credibility, and adoption influence purchase intentions in a developing Sri Lankan context. By focusing on a digitally active region and a highly visual, trend-sensitive sector, the study offers new insights into consumer behavior patterns shaped by social media in emerging sector.

Implications: The research offers actionable recommendations for marketers and businesses, highlighting the need to enhance the quality and credibility of eWOM to establish consumer trust. Organizations that implement effective eWOM strategies will enhance their marketing success while driving sales performance and improving digital consumer choices.

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Introduction

Before the digital age, conventional word of mouth (WOM) played a significant role in consumer decision making as it was perceived as reliable and trustworthy (Ismagilova et al., 2021). Prior research assessed word-of-mouth (WOM) mainly through consumer surveys, interviews, and behavioural observations, emphasizing the frequency of interpersonal communication, message valence, and source credibility (Ismagilova et al., 2021). It was through face-to-face interactions or phone conversations, thus it was social but geographically restricted. However, globalization and technological advancements have reshaped human interactions, with the Internet revolutionizing communication (Verma et al., 2023). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has expanded traditional WOM by enabling interactions via social media, review sites, and e-commerce platforms.

eWOM differs from traditional WOM because it produces enduring digital records both positive and negative that customers can access at any time, significantly shaping their perceptions and decisions (Ismagilova et al., 2021). These reviews that stay electronically for a while can have different effects. Positive feedback typically generates people considering the brand more and desire to purchase, while negative feedback can turn off potential buyers causing damage the brand's reputation (Liu & Park, 2015). eWOM platform, users can share their thoughts about companies and their products and services with a broader range of people. The research subject of eWOM holds importance because consumers now check online reviews and discussions before they make their purchase decisions (Yang et al., 2024). Social media platforms function as influential eWOM instruments that generate elevated user engagement and participation (Bilal et al., 2022).

Social media platforms create better brand involvement which includes consumer interactions such as likes, comments, shares, content creation, and increased purchase intention according to Perera et al. (2019). The platforms create interactive brand connections that differ from standard marketing approaches (Maria et al., 2019). The pandemic has pushed customers toward digital communication and eWOM, which has resulted in improved brand image, together with increased customer retention and decreased advertising expenses (Verma et al., 2023). Studies show that eWOM delivers trustworthy information, which produces a better purchase impact than other media channels (Verma et al., 2023).

The fashion industry shows strong evidence that social media influences purchasing decisions, particularly by encouraging impulse buying, increasing brand awareness, and even prompting brand switching behaviors based on research by Commer et al. (2017). Users of eWOM check these sites on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok both before and after making purchases. These platforms began as networking tools but now function as brand integration spaces where users can share their opinions and recommendations (Yang et al., 2024). Online reviews serve as social proof, boosting trust and brand loyalty while lowering marketing expenses (Verma et al., 2023). Unlike advertising, eWOM provides unbiased experiences that impact consumer behavior.

In Sri Lanka, eWOM is essential to the fashion industry. Brands such as Odel and Fashion Bug leverage social media and online reviews to build their reputation, while platforms like Daraz Sri Lanka incorporate customer feedback into their e-commerce model. However, local brands often struggle to implement eWOM as effectively as global competitors. Properly utilizing eWOM can enhance trust, visibility, and competitiveness. As social media usage expands, marketers recognize its role in engaging customers. Businesses use these platforms to interact with existing and potential clients (Yang et al., 2024). Social media is now a vital part of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), strengthening consumer relationships and fostering social e-commerce. This shift has enabled seamless online shopping experiences within social media platforms, amplifying eWOM's impact on purchasing decisions in fashion (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022).

Research highlights the growing significance of social media in fashion. Fashion engagement, driven by personal connections and hedonistic motivations, fosters lasting consumer commitment (Bashir et al., 2020). In the digital age, people curate and share their style choices, shaping self-identity (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Consequently, eWOM has become integral to fashion-related decision-making and brand image development. Social e-commerce platforms enhance eWOM's influence by integrating product discovery, engagement, and purchasing experiences. In Sri Lanka, post-pandemic digital reliance has revealed a gap, with international brands leveraging eWOM more effectively than local ones. However, companies such as Odel, Fashion Bug, and House of Fashions increasingly adopt user reviews, influencer marketing, and targeted digital strategies to boost engagement.

Social e-commerce is used by platforms such as Daraz Sri Lanka, Kapruka, and BuyAbans, which use real-time customer feedback to influence purchase decisions. The Western Province of Sri Lanka demonstrates the most evident transformation because its fashion consumers consist of a well-educated multicultural population. The two regions of Western Province function as essential hubs for virtual connection because they house substantial numbers of students and young professionals. People from these regions use Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to share ideas and observe fashion trends and engage in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The purchasing decisions of these consumers depend heavily on online reviews, while they choose peer recommendations over traditional advertising methods.

The research investigates cultural influences on electronic word-of-mouth interaction in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, focusing on how collectivist values, social norms, and faith in peer opinions impact perceptions of information quality, credibility, and the adoption of online recommendations in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Local fashion businesses can improve customer engagement through better digital marketing strategies and enhanced brand competitiveness by understanding eWOM communication between generations and fashion brands in the evolving fashion market. The study of this field delivers knowledge about the impact of e-commerce and social media on Sri Lankan

fashion industry customer purchasing decisions. The identification of eWOM influencing factors allows local brands to improve their digital market competition strategy.

Problem Statement

Before the digital age, traditional word of mouth (WOM) was important in influencing customer a

ttitudes (Ismagilova et al., 2021) but it was limited by geographical location and personal contact. However, with the growth of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) through social media, review sites, and e-commerce platforms, people can now share and access a lot of information about products, services, and brands through digital communication. eWOM is an important source of information for consumers in their decision-making process, since, unlike traditional WOM, it provides publicly available and searchable information (Yang et al., 2024). Research shows that eWOM is becoming more credible and has more influence on purchase decisions than other forms of communication (Verma et al., 2023).

In Sri Lanka, eWOM is an important factor in the fashion industry, and brands such as Odel and Fashion Bug use social media and reviews to establish trust. Daraz Sri Lanka has also incorporated customer feedback into their e-commerce strategies. However, local brands are still behind global competitors in the effective use of eWOM. Social media platforms, especially in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, are important in influencing fashion trends, and the younger population in urban areas such as Colombo and Gampaha use eWOM to make purchasing decisions. These consumers prefer peer recommendations to traditional advertising, and therefore, brands have to be effective in their digital platforms' engagement.

The rise of social e-commerce has allowed users to browse, interact with, and purchase products within their social media environment, which has revolutionized the shopping experience. The incorporation of eWOM into social commerce has altered consumer purchasing intentions, particularly in the fashion industry, where feedback, influencers, peers, and online reviews are becoming increasingly important (Commer et al., 2017).

Objectives of the Study

The research investigates the influence of e-commerce platforms together with user experience (UX) on Sri Lankan consumers' purchasing intentions for fashion during the post-pandemic period (Sureshan & Aponso, 2023). The research focuses on understanding how online shopping affects consumer actions by examining content quality and platform information quality, and Internet-based information delivery (Babić Rosario et al., 2020). Therefore, this study focuses on the following research objectives:

1. To examine the impact of eWOM information quality on consumers' purchase intentions
2. To examine the impact of eWOM information credibility on consumers' purchase intentions

3. To examine the impact of eWOM information adoption on consumers' purchase intentions

Research Questions

This study answers below research questions which relate to the fashion industry.

1. How does the quality of information on e-commerce platforms influence consumer purchase intentions in the Sri Lankan apparel sector?
2. What is the impact of information credibility on consumer buying decisions in the fashion industry?
3. How does information adoption affect decision-making in fashion e-commerce in Sri Lanka?

Significance of the study

This research contributes to academic knowledge and practical applications by analyzing Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) effects in Sri Lanka's fashion industry during the post-pandemic period, as e-commerce, strongly affects buying decisions. The function of eWOM remains poorly understood in the fashion industry, even though researchers have studied this phenomenon across various sectors, including retail and fast food, hotels, cosmetics, and mobile banking (Jayarathne., 2018) The research investigates eWOM's effects on consumer purchasing decisions by analyzing social media and e-commerce platforms (Sureshan & Aponso, 2023).

The research findings from this study enable fashion industry stakeholders in Sri Lanka to understand how eWOM affects consumer buying behavior. Organizations can enhance user experience (UX) and digital marketing strategies and build stronger client connections despite COVID-19 and economic challenges to grow their market presence and sales (Jayarathne., 2018; Sureshan & Aponso, 2023).

Fashion companies can enhance customer engagement and trust, along with brand image, by implementing eWOM strategies with authentic and reliable content. The research provides specific guidance for developing specific digital marketing strategies. The research develops existing knowledge about how eWOM affects purchase intentions in emerging markets by combining trust-based theories with information adoption models. The research presents both a conceptual framework and operational recommendations for Sri Lanka's fashion industry to succeed in digital markets (Lopez & Ouattara, 2021).

Limitations of the Study

The main goal of this study is to provide important insights into how eWOM affects consumers' purchase intentions in the Sri Lankan fashion industry, but there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The sample foundation and regional uniqueness are key limitations, as the study is mainly based on Sri Lanka's Western Province. Even though this region is home to a significant percentage of the country's

population, its consumer behavior and degree of digital involvement may differ from that of other provinces.

Because the sample was restricted to Sri Lanka's Western Province, it would be challenging to extrapolate the findings to other areas or economic sectors. Social desirability bias, for example, may have an impact on how customers self-report data, which could lead to reduced accuracy of responses. The results were less generalizable in rural or less urbanized regions owing to differences in socioeconomic factors, cultural dynamics, and access to digital platforms (Fonseka., 2024). Conclusions drawn from the Western Province may not necessarily apply to the entire Sri Lankan fashion industry because there are regional differences regarding online purchasing and fashion consumption. While this is a problematic limitation, the goal of the study is to construct relative suggestions that can be utilized by businesses in the Western Province to enhance customer engagement and promote digital marketing activities in this location (Fonseka., 2024).

Literature Review

Fashion Industry in Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan fashion industry has experienced significant growth, driven by digital transformation and consumer trends. Over the past five years, the expansion of fashion-related Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has contributed to this industry's progress (Jayarathne., 2018). Despite this growth, the industry faces challenges in adapting to the evolving digital landscape. The market is dominated by large international fashion labels, but local brands have had difficulty building substantial online presences.

The number of consumers choosing online platforms for fashion purchases continues to rise, especially in urban areas of Gampaha and Colombo. Social media functions as the primary platform where users discover new businesses, evaluate products, and find fashion inspiration. Many Sri Lankan fashion businesses fail to maximize digital resources while sticking to traditional marketing approaches. As a result, these companies forgo opportunities for increased brand recognition and consumer engagement.

The Western Province leads the way in shaping current fashion trends because its customers demonstrate modern and fashionable preferences. The influence of digital platforms on local consumers' purchasing decisions remains poorly understood because few studies have addressed this topic. This research aims to address the knowledge gap by studying the effects of eWOM on purchasing decisions made by customers. The knowledge of Sri Lankan customer interactions with online fashion content allows businesses to improve their marketing approaches. Local fashion brands should use eWOM effectively to build customer trust and brand perception while competing with international fashion companies in the Sri Lankan market through digital trend adoption.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth in the Fashion Industry

To understand how local brands might better navigate this competitive landscape, it is essential to explore the role of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. Fashion brand consumer relations evolved because of electronic word-of-mouth communications, also known as eWOM. Facebook, Instagram and TikTok enable users to distribute product feedback through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which differs from traditional word-of-mouth (Ismagilova et al., 2021). Customers today possess enhanced influence over their purchasing decisions, which extend beyond their immediate social circle. Studies have demonstrated that eWOM affects consumer trust and brand perception directly according to the quality and authenticity of the recommendations (Wang., 2016). Social media users can develop fashion content through reviews and influencer endorsements, and customer testimonials, which affect consumer purchasing decisions. The e-commerce websites and online forums enable buyers to make informed decisions through their detailed customer review sections (Verma et al., 2023). Through eWOM, businesses develop better connections with their customers than standard marketing methods do.

The fashion industry's eWOM effectiveness depends on three main factors, which include peer influence and message quality, together with content credibility. A brand's reputation suffers from negative eWOM, yet positive evaluations and recommendations increase brand loyalty, which leads to increased purchases (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022). Consumer trust in eWOM content increases when it originates from friends or influencers, or verified users rather than unidentified online reviewers.

The fashion industry of Sri Lanka can boost customer engagement and brand expansion by effectively implementing eWOM strategies. The lack of organized eWOM plans by numerous local fashion companies limits their market expansion and competitive advantage. Brands should use authentic digital communications with high quality to enhance their online presence and build stronger customer trust. The research investigates eWOM's effects on Sri Lankan consumer behavior throughout the Western Province because it demonstrates the highest degree of digital involvement. Businesses can develop better marketing approaches and enhance their market reach by understanding these characteristics.

Consumer Trust and Digital Purchase Behavior

Consumer trust plays a major role in shaping digital buying behavior, particularly within the fashion industry. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) demonstrates that consumers will adopt eWOM recommendations based on content relevancy and credibility (Erkan., 2016). Internet reviews that are trustworthy, along with purchasing recommendations, decrease buyer uncertainty and increase purchase confidence.

The people who reside in Sri Lanka's Western Province demand genuine communication in their online interactions. These customers base their purchasing decisions heavily on

recommendations from peers and social approval. The platforms Instagram and TikTok serve as essential tools for Sri Lankan consumers to find new fashion trends and validate their purchase decisions.

This study investigates the relationship between eWOM and its effects on Sri Lankan consumer trust and purchasing behavior in online settings. Fashion companies need to enhance their digital marketing approaches by identifying the elements that influence online trust. Businesses should concentrate on delivering transparent and reliable information to achieve both online sales performance and client loyalty growth.

Information Adoption Model (IAM)

The Information Adoption Model (IAM) describes consumer behavior when receiving and accepting information in digital communication and eWOM specifically (Verma et al., 2023). The model combines the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Sussman & Siegal, 2003), which shows that information quality is a critical factor and information usefulness acts as a moderator. Researchers stress the importance of knowledge adoption within social media groups because they continue to expand.

Bilal et al. (2022) identify Information Quality (IQ), Information Usefulness (IU), Information Credibility (IC), and Information Adoption (IA) as the essential components of IAM. Fashion consumers make product assessments through social media eWOM, and positive reviews improve brand perception but negative reviews prevent potential buyers (Babić Rosario et al., 2020). The rise of digital assessments requires authentic information verification because research demonstrates that reliable information directly affects consumer purchasing actions. Recognizing the impact of eWOM, particularly in emerging markets, this study modifies IAM by focusing primarily on Information Quality and Information Credibility, excluding Information Usefulness (Verma et al., 2023). Prior research suggests that usefulness is implicitly covered under ELM's central and peripheral processing routes (Ismagilova et al., 2021). The central route emphasizes completeness, consistency, and accuracy aspects of information quality-while the peripheral route relies on heuristic cues such as credibility. Consumers in South Asia, including Sri Lanka, depend on trustworthy eWOM due to limited standardized product information and brand vulnerability. Therefore, information credibility plays a critical role in shaping consumer trust and influencing purchasing decisions, as buyers frequently rely on online reviews to navigate their options.

This study refines IAM by isolating information credibility, quality, and adoption as key determinants of purchase intention (Bilal et al., 2022). Information credibility refers to the perceived trustworthiness of a source, affecting whether consumers accept or reject the provided content. Information quality determines how effectively consumers process information based on accuracy, relevance, and completeness. Finally, information adoption measures how much consumers incorporate eWOM into their decision-making process. This adjustment enhances the understanding of digital consumer behavior in

online markets, aligning with the Elaboration Likelihood Model while ensuring a more precise evaluation of how eWOM shapes purchasing intentions.

Information Quality

Information quality refers to the extraordinary strength of a comment in an informational communication (Song et al., 2021). In the original IAM, (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) defined thorough, consistent, and accurate assessment criteria for information quality. Since then, some authors have further developed these criteria (Wixom & Todd, 2005). Widened the scope to include completeness, correctness, format, and currency in their assessment of information quality. Factors such as prior beliefs, review context, and information qualities, including correctness, relevance, timely delivery, structuring, and sidedness, play a significant part in shaping information quality (Song et al., 2021). This study employs the parameters of relevance, comprehensiveness, accuracy, and timeliness. Prior studies suggest that comprehensive and relevant information favorably improves the perceived usefulness of eWOM (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022). However, other researchers believe that the perception of information quality is subjective and can lead to information overload, diminishing its usefulness (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022) (Song et al., 2021). In the context of Sri Lanka, a developing country, ensuring high-quality information is crucial for influencing customer decisions in the rising fashion business.

Information Credibility

Information credibility is described as “The apparent capacity and incentive for the message provider to produce reliable and accurate information.” (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013, p. 212). Consumers trust trusted sources for reliable details (Song et al., 2021). In the IAM paradigm, credibility aspects include knowledge, competence, trustworthiness, and reliability, according to Sussman (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). This study covers all these elements and involves sharing usage experiences to benefit customers through eWOM.

In Sri Lanka, a developing country where communal decision-making and social influence are emphasized, eWOM is immensely important in the fashion sector. Consumers often seek affirmation from their social networks and rely on influencers and fashion bloggers for recommendations. The dependability of eWOM is strengthened and the risks and uncertainties associated with purchasing decisions are minimized (Shen et al., 2014) (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022). However, concerns about fake reviews and sponsored content can undermine credibility, and cultural differences can limit the generalizability of eWOM across demographics (Shen et al., 2014).

Information Adoption

Information adoption refers to the process by which people receive and process new information which they then incorporate into their current knowledge system or belief structure (Wang, 2016). The information adoption process evaluates the degree of successful incorporation of new information into a person's current knowledge base and attitude set. Knowledge acquisition followed by processing and integration results in

potential goal and attitude or belief transformations. Song et al. (2021) state that higher adoption rates show the information has effectively modified the person's cognitive structure.

A user announces their decision to implement particular concepts and beliefs and actions for achieving their adoption purpose of a behavioral or technological element during the knowledge transfer process (Song et al., 2021). Users actively seek and utilize information according to Song et al. (2021) when they adopt information adoption concepts. The adoption of eWOM in Sri Lanka demonstrates significant influence on customer purchasing decisions because the country's customers increasingly use internet platforms for product recommendations (Phua et al., 2018). The efficiency of eWOM faces obstacles from information saturation and selective adoption which stem from existing beliefs (Hewei & Youngsook, 2022).

Purchase Intention

The Information Adoption Model (IAM) defines purchase intention as the readiness of consumers to buy after receiving information (Erkan., 2016). The last stage of the decision-making process shows a tendency to purchase due to the awareness of the information. The effectiveness of information in influencing purchasing intention depends on its credibility and accuracy and perceived value.

The credibility of information plays a significant role in shaping purchasing intention when it comes to eWOM. The credibility of eWOM increases when it comes from trustworthy peers or influencers which reduces perceived risk and enhances purchase decision confidence. Then comes information adoption that solves the credibility vs. buying intention gap. Although the information is authentic, it can take or not take the customer's attention and incorporate it into the decision-making process if the customer does not find it useful (Song et al., 2021).

In Sri Lanka's collectivist society, recommendations from family, friends, and influencers boost eWOM legitimacy, which makes it a more effective motivator of purchase intention. This paper finds that consumers are likely to believe information that is provided to them within their social circles, thus making the impact of the information adopted on their buying decisions. Hence, the credibility and acceptance of eWOM are key in shaping consumers' intention to purchase from the Sri Lankan fashion company as eWOM plays a significant role in their decision-making process.

Various studies have pointed out the significance of information quality, reliability and acceptance in the context of eWOM and its effect on altering customer behavior, especially in the fashion industry. Hence, in this study, in line with the work of Ismagilova et al. (2021), Babić Rosario et al. (2020) and Verma et al. (2023), these characteristics were examined within the context of various conditions, mainly in developed markets. Nevertheless, very limited understanding is currently on how these attributes manifestly influence consumers' buying intention within the fashion industry in the Western

Province of Sri Lanka. In addition, there is scarce empirical evidence of the influence of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok on fashion consumers in developing countries, including Sri Lanka, even though their use in the growth of eWOM in Western countries has been well established. In order to contribute to the closure of this gap, this study aims to examine the effect of eWOM on purchase intention in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka, specifically focusing on the reception, quality, and reliability of the information. Thus, the contribution of this research is to fill the void in the knowledge on how eWOM functions in the local market and, therefore, provide valuable information to firms seeking to use social media to engage customers and nudge them toward making a purchase.

Methodology

Research Approach

In particular, the Information Adoption Model (IAM) is applied to explore the processes of Information Quality, Credibility, Adoption, and Customer Purchase Intention in the context of Social Networking Sites (SNSs). The group under consideration comprises of social media users who interact with fashion-related information, thus making them appropriate for this study. This research uses a deductive approach to examine the effect of eWOM on purchase intention in the fashion industry in Sri Lanka based on previous concepts.

Study Design

A survey-based methodology is used to achieve the study's objectives. Because they offer both quantitative and qualitative data, surveys are frequently used in business research to enable a thorough examination of customer behavior. This study gathers information from social media users to comprehend how eWOM affects their purchasing decisions by creating structured surveys. This technique coincides with the research purpose of analyzing digital consumer interactions in Sri Lanka's rising fashion e-commerce sector. A quantitative approach is chosen over qualitative as it allows for the collection of numerical data and statistical analysis to identify patterns and relationships between eWOM and consumer purchase intention.

Conceptual Framework

The research framework shown in this study is illustrated in Figure 1, which outlines the relationship between information quality, information credibility, and information adoption on purchase intention.

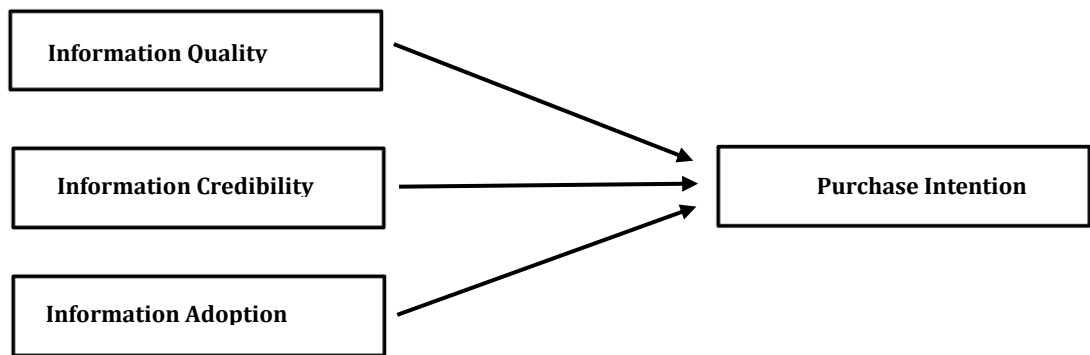


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Hypotheses

In keeping with the conceptual framework, the following three hypotheses are developed:

H1: Information Quality of eWOM information is positively related to consumers' purchase intention

H2: Information Credibility of eWOM information is positively related to consumers' purchase intention

H3: Adoption of eWOM information is positively related to consumers' purchase intention

Operationalization

For testing the hypotheses, the measuring items for every factor need to be identified. Together with the pertinent literature sources, Table 1 lists the measuring items for each of the variables employed in this investigation. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of these scales, which were taken from earlier confirmed research. Additionally, reliability will be reassessed in this study to ensure their suitability for the current sample.

Table 1
Operationalization Table

Variable	Measurement Items	Source
Information Quality	I believe that their information supports their viewpoints strongly enough. I believe that they are impartial and unbiased. I think they are understandable. I think they are clear. In general, I think the quality of them is high. The reviews in SNSs are complete. The reviews in SNSs are accurate	(Erkan.,2016) (Song et al., 2021)

Information Credibility	I find their argument to be persuasive. I think they are strong. I think they are trustworthy. Based on my observations, I believe that they are being precise and correct in their actions. I think they are reliable People who wrote comments were knowledgeable on this topic People who wrote comments were an expert on this topic	(Erkan.,2016) (Song et al., 2021)
Information Adoption	They contribute to my knowledge about the product. They make easier for me to make purchase decisions. They enhance my effectiveness in making purchase decisions. They motivate me to make purchase decision I will consider the shopping experiences of other users on the SNSs when I want to shop I will ask other users on the SNSs to provide me with their suggestions before I go shopping. I am willing to buy the products recommended by other users on the SNSs	(Song et al., 2021) (Erkan.,2016)
Purchase Intention	It is very likely that I will buy the product. I will purchase the product next time I need a product. I will definitely try the product. I will recommend the product to my friends. I intend to purchase with considering eWOM in the near future.	(Erkan.,2016) (Kamalasena & Sirisena, 2021) (Song et al., 2021)

Population and Sample

This study focuses on individuals actively engaging with social networking sites in Sri Lanka's Western Province, which has the highest computer and digital literacy rate 45.9% (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2020) in the country. This high level of digital proficiency suggests strong familiarity with social media platforms, making the region an ideal setting to examine the influence of eWOM on purchase intentions. As of January 2023, 7.20 million Sri Lankans (32.9% of the total population) were active on social media (Kamalasena & Sirisena, 2021), demonstrating its deep integration into daily life. Since the Western Province leads digital adoption, its social media usage patterns provide valuable insights into consumer interactions with eWOM. The study focuses on digitally literate consumers, ensuring that the findings are particularly relevant to Sri Lanka's growing fashion e-commerce industry.

The sampling frame was developed through social media analytics and purposeful sampling to ensure a diverse group of participants who engage in fashion conversations

on Facebook and Instagram. The Morgan table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) was used to determine the initial sample size of 384 respondents with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. To reduce selection bias, simple random sampling was the sampling technique employed. Without classifying the target population into distinct strata, each person had an equal chance of getting chosen. This method helped gather objective and representative data about consumer behavior while guaranteeing randomness in the selection of respondents. The possibility of response bias, particularly from underrepresented groups like older people or those who are less involved in fashion-related debates, was reduced by guaranteeing that every participator of the population had an equal opportunity to participate. In order to further understand how eWOM influences purchase intentions in Sri Lanka's fashion business, future studies should consider broadening the geographic reach and use a combination of methodologies.

Data Collection Method

The survey method is selected to obtain primary data from the desired sample. The survey method is the most suitable way to collect data from a broad participant group in terms of cost efficiency and punctuality aspects. A structured questionnaire is designed, covering a total of 29 items. The items are scored using a five-point Likert scale, which has strongly disagreed and strongly agreed as its end points. This method allows for easy data analysis and ensures consistency across responses.

Data Analysis Method

The process of collecting data will adhere to ethical standards, guaranteeing participant confidentiality and anonymity. Every participant will be asked for their informed consent, and all information will be collected safely in accordance with current data protection regulations. Ensuring anonymity and informed consent promotes greater participant trust, honesty, and accuracy in responses, which reduces response bias and increases the reliability of the study's findings. For this reason, these ethical practices are crucial not only to protect participants but also to improve data quality and integrity. Correlation and regression analysis are two of the inferential statistical tools that will be used in this study to examine the relationship between purchase intention and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the context of Sri Lanka's fashion industry. These analyses will reveal the strength and direction of these interactions.

Data Analysis and Findings

Response and Sample Profile

An online survey was used to collect data from social media users residing in the Western Province of Sri Lanka who are engaged in fashion-related activities. The total number of responses received was 395. However, 11 responses were incomplete and were therefore excluded from statistical analysis. As a result, 384 valid responses were used for the

analysis in this study. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics to perform both descriptive and inferential statistical tests.

The structured questionnaire consisted of 29 questions. The first 09 questions were designed to gather demographic and behavioral information about the respondents. These included questions about gender, age, educational qualifications, frequency of fashion-related purchases, time spent on social media, frequency of encountering fashion content, importance of social media influencers, participation in fashion-related forums, and preferred social media platforms for accessing fashion-related content.

The assessment from Question 10 through Question 29 focused on evaluating the constructs within the Information Adoption Model, which include Information Quality, Information Credibility, Information Adoption, and Purchase Intention. The measurement scale consisted of a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from 'Strongly Disagree' (1 point) to 'Strongly Agree' (5 points). The responses received numerical values between 1 and 5, where higher scores demonstrated stronger agreement with the provided statements.

The research presents demographic information and behavioral patterns of the sample population alongside descriptive statistics showing mean and standard deviation values for each construct according to (Erkan., 2016). The analysis provides valuable information about respondent backgrounds, together with their perception patterns regarding electronic word of mouth in the fashion industry.

Sample Profile

The first part of the questionnaire aimed at defining the characteristics of the survey participants. 218 (56.8%) of the 384 valid replies were from men, and 166 (43.2%) were from women. The data indicates that men show higher participation in fashion-related online activities than women do. Simple random sampling was used to select participants and representation of unbiased customers of online fashion consumers in the Western Province.

The age breakdown of responders shows that 35.7% belonged to the 25–34 age group, while 26.8% belonged to the 18–24 age range. Young adults who show a strong interest in online purchasing and digital content consumption make up the majority of social media users who follow fashion content. The educational background of participants revealed that 30.5% possessed Advanced Level (A/L) qualifications, yet 40.9% of respondents achieved a bachelor's degree level education. The majority of participants belong to an educated demographic, which enables them to evaluate online information before making fashion purchases.

The survey results showed that 36.2% of participants shop for fashion items occasionally, between 3–4 times per month, followed by 29.7% who shop frequently, between 1–2 times per week, indicating active purchasing behavior from most participants.

The survey results show that 31.8% of respondents spend more than 3 hours daily on social media platforms while 28.9% spend 1–2 hours daily, which demonstrates extensive daily digital content exposure. In terms of the frequency of encountering fashion content, 33.6% of participants view fashion-related posts 10–20 times per month, and 31.8% encounter such content more than 30 times per month, showing a high level of engagement with fashion content online.

As for the influence of social media influencers, 36.2% rated influencers as very important in their fashion-related decision-making, and 23.4% rated them as extremely important, indicating that influencers play a major role in shaping the purchase intentions of consumers in this industry.

Involvement in fashion-related forums and discussions was also measured. A majority (57.8%) stated that they actively participate, while 42.2% passively observe discussions. This highlights the role of community interaction in information adoption.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their preferred social media platforms for accessing fashion-related content. Many participants mentioned using multiple platforms, with high usage rates for Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp, indicating diverse consumption habits across social media channels.

Factor Analysis

Reliability Analysis

The accuracy of measuring target constructs depends on research instrument validity. This study employed factor analysis to establish fundamental eWOM aspects and their effects on purchase intention. The KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to determine the data's suitability for factor extraction. The KMO values of all variables exceeded 0.70 with information credibility achieving the highest score (0.777), which indicated strong sampling adequacy. The results from Bartlett's test confirmed factorability of the data through statistically significant outcomes ($p < 0.001$) for all constructs. The extracted factors demonstrated strong alignment with the original data structure by accounting for 49.87% to 64.09% of total data variation. The high average variance extracted value of information quality (AVE = 0.65) demonstrated strong convergent validity.

Table 2
Factor Analysis

Variable	KMO Value	Bartlett's Test Of Sphericity	Total Variance Explained	AVE	Factor Loading
Information Credibility	0.777	724.001	58.170	0.57	Component Matrix Component 1 IC1 .791 IC2 .549 IC3 .744 IC4 .712

Information Quality	0.716	520.100	61.189	0.65	Component Matrix Component 2 IQ1 .878 IQ2 .616 IQ3 .824 IQ4 .784 IQ5 .692
Information Adoption	0.734	610.489	64.087	0.61	Component Matrix Component 3 IA1 .868 IA2 .743 IA3 .907 IA4 .659 IA5 .701
Purchase intention	0.749	617.814	49.871	0.54	Component Matrix Component 4 P1 .878 P2 .754 P3 .472 P4 .843 P5 .567

Reliability analysis was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all constructs surpassed the benchmark of 0.70, with information credibility achieving the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.815$). This indicates that the items within each scale were highly correlated, reflecting a cohesive measurement of the latent variables. The standardized Cronbach's alpha values further corroborated these findings, showing minimal deviation from the original coefficients (Erkan., 2016). Such high reliability underscores the robustness of the scales used in this study, ensuring that the results are reproducible and free from random measurement errors.

Table 3
Reliability of the Variables

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Item
Information Credibility	.815	.812	4
Information Quality	.779	.784	5
Information Adoption	.812	.807	5
Purchase intention	.742	.735	5

The reliability test results above demonstrate that Cronbach's Alpha for all of the variables provided is near 0.8. This figure is much higher than the 0.7 limit, suggesting that there are a lot of reliable and internally consistent questions in the variables. Given these findings, it is reasonable to say that the study's data sources are trustworthy.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between the independent variables and purchase intention. Information quality and purchase intention exhibited the strongest correlation ($r = 0.768$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that consumers heavily rely on the accuracy and relevance of eWOM when making purchasing decisions. Information adoption also showed a substantial correlation ($r = 0.793$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the role of social influence in shaping consumer behavior (Erkan., 2016). The results confirm previous studies which highlighted that the fashion industry relies on trustworthy and useful information to influence consumer buying behavior (Jayarathne., 2018).

Table 4
Correlation Matrix

	Information Credibility	Information Quality	Information Adoption	Purchase Intention
Information Credibility	1			
Information Quality	0.824	1		
Information Adoption	0.643	0.637	1	
Purchase Intention	0.765	0.768	0.793	1

The values presented demonstrate that all independent variables have a strong relationship with customer engagement since their correlation coefficients exceed 0.6 and the p-value for the dependent variable remains below 0.05. The correlation between eWOM and purchase intention in the fashion business remains positive throughout because the correlation coefficient shows a positive value in every case (Erkan., 2016).

Multiple Regression Analysis

The predictive power of independent variables on purchase intention was evaluated through multiple regression analysis. The model demonstrated a strong fit by explaining 64.3% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.643$).

Table 5
Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted	Model
1	.802a	.643	.640	.31482

Based on the provided data, the coefficient of determination, represented by the symbol R squared, is found to be 0.802, or approximately 64% of the total. This shows that the model has a 64% explanatory capability, meaning that the independent variables in the study account for 64% of the variability in the dependent variable. The study is

considered to be sufficiently predictive if the R squared value is larger than 60, which is a good indication. The table that follows provides a summary of the ANOVA's findings.

Table 6
ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.512	4	21.129	148.055	.000b
	Residual	43.525	305	.143		
	Total	128.037	309			

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Coefficients

The calculated significance value reaches 0.000 which is lower than the 0.05 threshold. The comprehensive model shows statistical significance at a 95% confidence level. The following table presents the coefficients summary.

Table 7
Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	t	Sig.		
Collinearity Statistics						
1	(Constant)	.608	.146	4.164	.000	Tolerance VIF
	Information Credibility	.362	.059	6.136	.000	.297 3.367
	Information Quality	.407	.054	7.537	.000	.302 3.310
	Information Adoption	.088	.037	2.378	.018	.549 1.820

It is evident from the previously displayed figures that all independent variables' significant values are consistently below the 0.05 cutoff for statistical significance (Hair et al., 2014). According to the trend that has been noticed, social media, content marketing, and mobile marketing proficiency all significantly improve client engagement.

Information quality emerged as the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$), followed by information credibility ($\beta = 0.362$, $p < 0.001$). Information adoption, while statistically significant, had a comparatively weaker effect ($\beta = 0.088$, $p = 0.018$). The ANOVA results confirmed the overall significance of the model ($F = 146.215$, $p < 0.001$), validating its utility in explaining the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention.

Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

The hypothesis testing results also supported these findings. All three hypotheses were supported, with p-values less than 0.05. The strong predictive power of information quality and credibility indicates that consumers in Sri Lanka's fashion industry are likely

to prioritize trustworthy and detailed eWOM when forming purchase intentions (Jayarathne., 2018). The weaker but still significant influence of information adoption suggests that while social validation is important, it is less important than the perceived quality and credibility of the information itself.

Table 8
Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	β	p-value	Decision
H1: Information Credibility has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	0.362	0.000	Accepted
H2: Information Quality has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	0.407	0.000	Accepted
H3: Information Adoption has a significant effect on Purchase Intention	0.088	0.018	Accepted

The research demonstrates how eWOM affects consumer choices in Sri Lanka's fashion industry. The study's robust measurement scales combined with the powerful regression model, demonstrate that information credibility, quality and adoption strongly influence purchase intention (Erkan., 2016). The research provides essential knowledge to marketers who want to use social media platforms for improving customer participation and increasing sales.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study examined how eWOM attributes, including information quality and credibility and adoption, affect purchase intention in Sri Lanka's Western Province fashion industry. The analysis revealed that information quality together with information adoption and credibility, emerged as highly significant predictors. The results show that consumers need structured and concise information that is focused when they make purchase decisions. The second most crucial element was the credibility of information, which underlines the significance of genuine and trustworthy content. Information adoption emerged as a crucial factor because consumers actively use web information during their purchase decision-making process. The research results deliver an valuable insights of social media eWOM effects on consumer actions in the local fashion industry (Jayarathne., 2018).

Discussion

The study results, which are in line with previous research, show that eWOM plays an important role in affecting fashion company consumer buying intentions in the Western Province of Sri Lanka (Erkan., 2016), (Jayarathne., 2018). Facebook and Instagram are the most used channels by people to share reviews and recommendations through electronic word of mouth (eWOM). This research applies the Information Adoption Model (IAM) to analyze how information adoption, together with quality and legitimacy, influences customer behavior. The research objects possess specific characteristics that stand out from previous studies while maintaining consistent findings with Erkan. (2016) and Jayarathne. (2018).

Information Adoption and Consumer Decision-Making

The IAM defines information adoption as the process through which people accept and respond to received information. The study's findings are in line with Chen et al. (2014) suggesting that knowledge adoption may play a role in the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention, although no formal mediation analysis was conducted. The use of eWOM in customer decision-making increases when customers believe the information is both accurate and relevant. The findings align with previous research, which demonstrates that people tend to accept reliable information which then influences their purchasing decisions. Our research extends previous knowledge by demonstrating that Sri Lankan consumers particularly in the fashion industry place a higher priority on influencer endorsements and peer recommendations compared to general online reviews, an aspect that has been underexplored in prior studies. This is corroborated by the fact that 57.8% of respondents actively participated in fashion-related forums, and 36.2% of respondents regarded influencers as very significant and 23.4% as extremely important in their decision-making process. These numbers demonstrate how much more individualized, socially relevant eWOM is used than anonymous or generic review content. Customers tend to incorporate eWOM into their decision-making if they consider the information to be accurate and relevant. This is in line with previous studies that establish consumers are likely to adopt information they consider to be accurate and reliable and this in turn impacts on their buying decisions (Chen et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2019). However, our findings extend beyond this knowledge because the results show that Sri Lankan consumers, especially those in the fashion industry, are more concerned with influencer endorsements and peer recommendations than with general online reviews, an aspect that has not been adequately addressed in previous research.

Information Quality as a Primary Driver

Information quality emerged as the most significant predictor of purchase intention, with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.407$, $t = 7.537$, and $p < .001$, indicating a strong positive influence, which corroborated findings by Sen et al. (2017) and Xie et al. (2015). According to these academics, consumers prefer detailed, well-organized, and targeted information when making purchasing decisions, particularly in industries like fashion where trends shift regularly. Additionally, our study shows that Sri Lankan customers appreciate lengthy, well-written, and eye-catching eWOM content. However, earlier studies show that incomplete or unclear information hinders consumers' intentions to make purchases Sen et al. (2017). Our research indicates that peer conversations are frequently used by Sri Lankan consumers to supplement information that is lacking, which lessens the negative effects of negative eWOM. This suggests a cultural component whereby collective decision-making mitigates the risks associated with inadequate product knowledge.

Information Credibility and Consumer Trust

The research conducted by Erkan. (2016) and Park et al. (2018), indicate that information credibility is still a primary factor in predicting purchase intentions. Prior research shows that customers place more trust in eWOM from reliable sources like influencers and verified reviews than in conventional advertising. This study's findings support this theory by showing that Sri Lankan consumers still place a high value on influencer reviews, even when they are not written by officially recognized experts. This was measured using a Likert scale, where respondents rated the perceived usefulness, trustworthiness, and influence of such reviews. This study demonstrates that, unlike Western markets where expert opinions hold more reliability, Sri Lankan consumers demonstrate significant trust in local social media influencers and micro-influencers according to Park et al. (2018). This emphasizes how important familiarity and perceived relatability are in establishing credibility.

The Influence of Information Adoption

This study confirms the earlier findings by Chen et al. (2014). The relationship between purchase intentions and information quality, credibility is highly influenced by information adoption. While our analysis did not directly assess mediation effects, the findings suggest that information adoption plays an important role in shaping perceptions of credibility. However, our study goes beyond that by revealing that before entirely embracing eWOM recommendations, Sri Lankan consumers actively look for more proof. This validation step involves assessing the veracity of information from various sources, including personal networks, prior to making a purchase decision. This demonstrates that while information adoption remains important, it is influenced by additional social verification systems that were not thoroughly examined in earlier research (Jayarathne., 2018).

The Influence of Social Media and Digital Platforms

The findings confirm Lee et al. (2019) that social media has become a significant factor in enhancing the effects of eWOM particularly through high frequency of use, preference for platforms like Instagram and Facebook, and active engagement with fashion-related content among Sri Lankan consumers. The post-pandemic rise in online buying has made Sri Lankan consumers more dependent on eWOM. The study's findings differ from previous studies that focus on global e-commerce trends, as they show that local customers prefer localized content mostly. This means that in order to meet cultural and customer expectations, regional fashion companies should adapt their eWOM strategies.

The Role of User Experience (UX) in eWOM Engagement and Decision-Making

The research reveals that user experience functions as a vital element that determines how customers engage with e-commerce platforms while building trust and making purchasing decisions. The analysis of eWOM attributes focused mainly on information quality and credibility, showed that elements frequently linked to user experience, like

content accessibility, ease of navigation, and display clarity, may indirectly influence behavioural reactions and trust (Erkan., 2016). The high mean scores and strong factor loadings of information quality items (e.g., IQ1 = 0.878; IQ3 = 0.824) and the significant regression result ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated the influence of these UX elements, even though they were not directly measured as standalone constructs. This suggests that easily accessible and well-structured information greatly boosts trust and purchase intention. A platform that presents peer reviews and influencer content and product details through an easy-to-use interface that looks good enhances consumer trust and boosts their engagement with eWOM messages. Fashion consumers in the Western Province of Sri Lanka show preference for content that combines well-organized presentation with mobile-friendliness and personalization, which matches the general principles of positive UX. The user experience function helps build trust because it simplifies the evaluation process of eWOM content while decreasing mental effort. Users who experience comfort and control during platform navigation tend to view information as credible, which leads them to adopt it during their decision-making process (Jayarathne., 2018). E-commerce platforms that focus on UX design both create satisfied users and strengthen the persuasive effects of eWOM, which leads to better informed purchasing decisions (Erkan., 2016).

The research of Jayarathne. (2018) supports that Sri Lankan consumers consider eWOM recommendations from friends, family and influencers to be highly important. The study results differ from Jayarathne's findings, which state that online reviews significantly affect purchase intentions because offline conversations enhance trust in digital recommendations. According to this study, Sri Lankan customers, especially those in the fashion business, base their selections on a combination of socially embedded interactions and online eWOM. Findings like the high value placed on peer recommendations and influencers (with 36.2% rating influencers as very important and 57.8% actively participating in fashion-related forums) support this culturally grounded pattern, even though the study did not measure offline influence directly. These findings imply that Sri Lankan consumers might combine interpersonal and digital sources of trust, setting them apart from trends usually observed in more technologically sophisticated countries where online sources might predominate.

Practical Implications for Marketers

The strategic importance of implementing reliable and high-quality eWOM content cannot be overstated. Local fashion enterprises need to use sophisticated eWOM strategies to overcome online engagement challenges. The strategies involve selecting reliable content that meets expectations and using influencers to boost credibility and organizing product information for better quality, and enabling peer discussions and user-generated content to aid group decision-making (Erkan., 2016).

Implications of the Study

The research findings present vital knowledge to academics and policymakers as well as industry professionals. The study shows that high-quality, trustworthy electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information acts as a vital factor that influences consumer purchase intentions in Sri Lanka's fashion industry (Jayarathne., 2018).

Organizations should focus their resources on building better quality eWOM content that users find trustworthy and relatable. To assess this, practitioners can monitor measurable indicators such as engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares), sentiment analysis of user responses, and direct feedback through ratings or surveys measuring perceived credibility and relevance. Additionally, tracking conversion rates or click-through behavior linked to eWOM campaigns can help evaluate the content's persuasive effectiveness in real-world settings. Companies should support authentic user-generated content by forming alliances with influencers whose values align with their brand (Jayarathne., 2018). Interactive content, such as product launches alongside brand endorsements and live sessions, will boost both engagement and trust levels. Information adoption stands out as a fundamental element that consumers use during their purchasing decision process (Erkan., 2016). The study reveals that eWOM affects consumers who rely on this information to select products for purchase. Businesses must ensure their digital content remains accurate while also being simple to understand and engaging for users. The study demonstrates that regulatory frameworks should establish ethical standards for eWOM practices. These include mandatory disclosure of sponsored content, authentication of online reviews, and collaboration between regulators and social media platforms to combat misinformation and fraud. These measures will help build a more transparent and trustworthy digital marketing environment (Erkan., 2016). The study also encourages consumers to critically evaluate online content. Promoting digital literacy can help users navigate the complexities of social media marketing and reduce susceptibility to misleading content. From a theoretical standpoint, the study supports the Information Adoption Model (IAM) and aligns with elements of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). It demonstrates how consumers are influenced through both rational assessment and emotional cues. This integration provides a comprehensive basis for future studies on online consumer behavior (Erkan., 2016).

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. It focuses on the fashion industry within Sri Lanka's Western Province, limiting generalizability of the findings to other regions or industries. The Western Province was selected due to its high level of digital involvement, strong mobile and social media penetration, and consumer preference for personalized, mobile-friendly content with organized presentation. The use of self-reported data may also introduce social desirability bias. Furthermore, since the sample was restricted to active social media users, selection bias may be present. Future research should consider expanding the sample across different regions and industries to improve the external validity of the findings (Jayarathne., 2018). In conclusion, this study bridges the gap between theory and practice by demonstrating how the informational features of

eWOM influence actual consumer behavior. It fulfills its objectives by offering actionable insights for businesses, guidance for policymakers, and a foundation for future academic exploration (Erkan., 2016).

Further Research Suggestions

This study explored how Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) impacts consumer purchase intentions in the fashion industry, focusing on adoption, credibility, and information quality. However, several areas remain for future exploration. First, this study primarily focused on positive eWOM. Negative eWOM such as complaints or poor reviews, can significantly influence consumer behavior; often more than positive feedback. Future research needs to investigate consumer processing of negative eWOM and develop strategies for brands to handle crises and defend their digital reputation. The research study focused exclusively on the Western Province of Sri Lanka and the fashion industry (Jayarathne., 2018). Future research needs to expand its scope by studying various geographic locations and business sectors because cultural elements and economic conditions and industry characteristics may affect eWOM adoption patterns and impact levels. Research into eWOM credibility needs to consider how technological advancements and algorithmic content delivery systems and fake reviews and influencer endorsements affect its credibility (Erkan., 2016). Research that investigates methods to maintain trust in digital content remains crucial for future development. The variables of perceived risk, together with customer satisfaction and brand familiarity, have the potential to affect purchase decisions. Consumer responses to eWOM are influenced by mediating factors, which include trust and brand loyalty. The relationship between information quality and purchase intention becomes stronger or weaker based on the trust consumers have in their information source (Jayarathne., 2018).

Research involving different demographics, including age and income, together with cross-cultural studies, would provide advanced understanding of eWOM responses from various consumer groups. Research conducted over time would allow scientists to monitor how these variables transform throughout successive periods. Future research that addresses these knowledge gaps will deliver a complete understanding of eWOM effects on consumer behavior (Jayarathne., 2018).

Conclusion

This research is aimed at understanding how eWOM affects consumer purchase intention in the fashion industry with a focus on the Western Province of Sri Lanka. This study contributes to both academic theory and business strategy and policy-making based on theoretical concepts like information adoption, credibility, and quality.

This research started with a specific problem: the increasing role of eWOM in consumer choice and the dearth of information on how it impacts fashion consumers in Sri Lanka. Chapter Two described the conceptual framework of the research based on the Information Adoption Model (IAM), which was augmented by the Elaboration Likelihood

Model (ELM). The combination of IAM and ELM in this study offers a strong theoretical framework for digital decision-making in emerging markets (Erkan., 2016). The research provides a significant cultural finding about eWOM consumption. The Western market's expert reviews are the most influential, while Sri Lankan consumers place more value on peer opinions and influencer endorsements (Jayarathne., 2018) which aligns with Hofstede's characterization of Sri Lanka as a collectivist culture where individuals tend to prioritize group recommendations and trust socially embedded sources of information. This occurs because the region operates under a collectivist culture that leads people to trust local micro-influencers because they seem authentic and relatable. The findings of this research validate the necessity of developing eWOM approaches which align with regional cultural norms and trust systems.

The research also provides some practical implications for all the stakeholders. Businesses should concentrate on authenticity and digital trust alongside eWOM campaign and influencer engagement, and content creation to fulfill consumer expectations and build brand loyalty according to Erkan. (2016). Consumers should evaluate eWOM credibility before purchasing products since this evaluation leads to value-based choices. Policymakers need to implement strict ethical digital marketing regulations along with advertising transparency standards to prevent deception in advertising.

The findings of the study are in agreement with the existing literature in that there are differences in the consumption patterns of Sri Lankan fashion consumers. This study is different from Western studies like Cheung et al. (2009), which discovered that when assessing eWOM, Western consumers frequently depend more on own cognitive processing and the reliability of the source. Sri Lankan fashion buyers, on the other hand, show a preference for locally relevant influencer content and socially engaged platforms, suggesting a hybrid approach that blends community cues with individual assessment. This becomes more apparent when we look at the differences in influencer roles, localized content, and peer evaluation processes from previous studies. This research provides significant findings that can inform further research and practical recommendations for businesses that want to enhance their online presence in the Sri Lankan fashion market (Jayarathne., 2018).

This study demonstrates that business collaboration with consumers and regulatory stakeholders is essential for eWOM evolution. The digital age requires eWOM as an essential tool that shapes consumer actions according to Marshall McLuhan, who stated, "We create tools, and then the tools create us." This reflects how eWOM, once developed as a means of digital word-of-mouth, is now actively reshaping consumer behavior, trust dynamics, and decision-making in digital marketplaces. The findings of this research establish a foundation for additional eWOM potential studies while promoting innovative digital marketplace trust and ethical engagement.

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