EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN SHAPING PURCHASING INTENTIONS FOR T-SHIRTS IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to investigate the influence of social media marketing on consumers' purchasing intention in the context of the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka. It seeks to understand how factors such as Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) contribute to consumers' willingness to make T-shirt purchases.

Design: The study adopts a quantitative research design, collecting data from 351 individuals actively using social media platforms in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka. It employs a structured questionnaire to assess demographic characteristics, social media marketing factors, and purchasing intention.

Methodology: Data cleansing protocols were applied to ensure data accuracy, including outlier detection and mean replacement for random missing values. Reliability testing employed Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, confirming the internal consistency of measurement scales. Correlation and linear regression analyses were performed to examine relationships between variables and identify the impact of social media marketing on purchasing intention.

Approach: The research employs a systematic and rigorous approach, adhering to established protocols and statistical assumptions. It evaluates the validity and reliability of the data, assesses normality and linearity, and examines multicollinearity concerns. This approach ensures the credibility and consistency of the research findings.

Findings: The study reveals that social media marketing factors, including Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, Word-of-Mouth, and the overall Social Media Marketing model, significantly influence consumers' purchasing intention. These factors collectively account for 19.8% of the variability observed in purchasing intention.

Originality: This research contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence of the impact of social media marketing on purchasing intention in a specific industry and geographical context. It emphasizes the importance of integrating social media marketing into marketing strategies for T-shirt businesses in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the study encourages further research into moderating and mediating factors, offering recommendations for future investigations.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Purchasing Intention, T-shirt Industry, Sri Lanka
Consumer Beha

1. Background of the Study

The T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka has experienced notable changes in recent years, primarily due to the emergence of social media as a potent marketing tool. This research examines the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing intention in the dynamic industry, intending to offer valuable insights for businesses operating in this domain.

The T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka has witnessed significant players, such as **ABC Holdings** Ltd, operating under the trade name ABC, successfully adjusting to evolving market dynamics. ABC, which primarily targeted the business-to-business (B2B) sector by providing personalised apparel to diverse enterprises, encountered obstacles, such as a decrease in sales that can be partially attributed to the impact of the Easter Sunday bomb blast in 2019. In response, the organisation redirected its attention towards the business-to-consumer (B2C) market, a shift that required the implementation of proficient marketing tactics in order to achieve a competitive advantage.

The aforementioned transition prompted ABC to investigate the potential of social media as a cost-efficient method for promoting their merchandise and engaging with customers to acquire and retain them. Recognising the significant impact of social media in their emerging market, they initiated an endeavour to formulate a meticulously designed Social Media Marketing Program.

The primary inquiry driving this study is: "What is the impact of social media marketing on the intention to purchase within the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka?"

In order to investigate this inquiry, the research conducted a preliminary survey encompassing a sample size of 30 participants. Additionally, industry professionals, such as retail shop owners and salespersons, were actively involved in the study. The research findings underscored the significance of comprehending the preferences and behaviours of the target demographic, indicating that individuals aged 16-36 represent the most appealing segment for T-shirt merchandise. Furthermore, the research conducted in Sri Lanka has revealed that WhatsApp is the predominant social media platform in terms of adoption, with Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram following suit. Additionally, it is worth noting that a significant finding emerged from the study, indicating that 73% of participants employ social media platforms to make findings, underscoring the importance of establishing a solid and comprehensive online presence. Insights provided by retail experts highlighted the significance of brand recognition in customers' T-shirt purchasing decisions.

The aforementioned context establishes a foundation for a thorough examination of how social media marketing strategies can significantly impact the intention to purchase within the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka. This analysis provides valuable insights for businesses aiming to leverage the potential of social media platforms in their marketing initiatives.

The study's objectives and the accompanying research questions are designed to examine the influence of different factors related to social media marketing on the intention to purchase within the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka. The research objectives are formulated to investigate and examine the correlation between these factors and the intention to make a purchase.

2. Research Objectives

Examine the influence of social media marketing factors (Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalization, Trendiness, and Word of Mouth) on purchasing intention within the Sri Lankan T-shirt industry.

Assess how these social media marketing factors (Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalization, Trendiness, and Word of Mouth) affect purchasing intention in the Sri Lankan T-shirt industry.

Identify the most dominant dimension among these social media marketing factors in shaping purchasing intention in the Sri Lankan T-shirt industry.
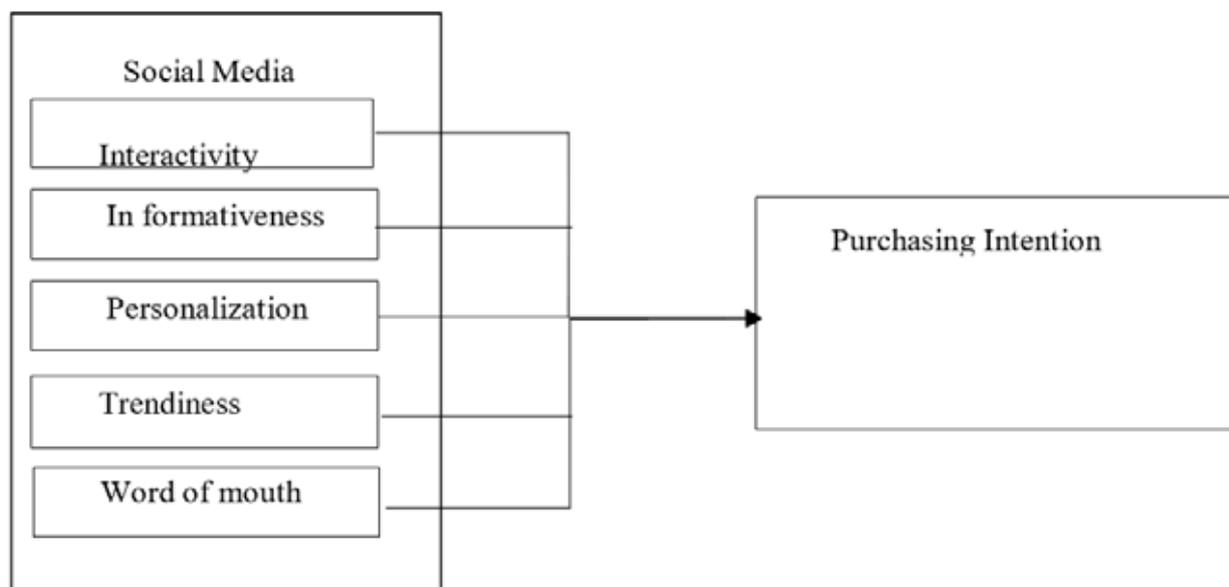
Research Questions:

What is the relationship between social media marketing factors (Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalization, Trendiness, and Word of Mouth) and the purchasing intention observed in the Sri Lankan T-shirt industry?

To what degree do social media marketing factors (Interactivity, Informativeness, Trendiness, and Word of Mouth) impact purchasing intention within the Sri Lankan T-shirt industry? Among the various dimensions of social media marketing, which one exerts the most significant influence on purchasing intention in the Sri Lankan T-shirt industry?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1 illustrates the proposed relationship between the variables under examination in the research study. Specifically, it suggests that Social Media Marketing influences purchasing intention.

Hypotheses of the study

The study's hypotheses were formulated based on the literature review and the theoretical framework within the Sri Lankan apparel industry context. Two main objectives guided the development of these hypotheses:

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant relationship between social media marketing activities and purchasing intention in the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka.

Alternative Hypothesis (H2): There is a significant impact of Social Media Marketing (Interactivity, Informativeness, Personalisation, Trendiness, and Word of Mouth) on purchasing intention in the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka.

3. Literature Review

Consumer behaviour has been significantly transformed by the rapid evolution of digital marketing in contemporary times. This transformation is primarily driven by technological advancements and the shift to an information-based digital economy (Bhatia, 2017). This evolutionary process encompasses a diverse range of electronic media, such as the Internet, email, interactive TV, and wireless platforms, which are effectively utilised in conjunction with digital customer data for marketing objectives. The

scope of digital marketing has transcended online advertising and now encompasses a wide range of communication methods, both online and offline. The evolution of this phenomenon has closely paralleled the advancement of the Internet, spanning from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0 (Ryan, 2014).

The primary digital marketing channels and strategies include a range of techniques, including search engine optimisation (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), content marketing, social media marketing (SMM), email marketing, online advertising, affiliate marketing, mobile marketing, viral marketing, guerrilla marketing, and influencer marketing (Stokes, 2013). These strategies address various facets of online engagement and customer interaction.

Digital marketing is widely recognised as a crucial aspect of contemporary business environments, wherein the principal obstacle lies in formulating, adjusting, and sustaining efficacious strategies (HubSpot, 2018). Businesses must maintain competitiveness by staying abreast of the most recent trends and technologies in digital marketing (Kingsnorth, 2016).

Social media, an integral element of the digital environment, presents a challenge in providing a precise and universally accepted definition, resulting in diverse interpretations. The term "social media" refers to digital platforms, including internet and mobile applications, that enable users to engage with one another (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It encompasses activities such as creating, distributing, and consuming online information about products, companies, and various topics by users (Blackshaw, 2004). According to Nair (2011), social media facilitates the digital dissemination of various forms of content, viewpoints, concepts, and interactions between commercial entities and their customers. According to Hoffman et al. (2013), it pertains to using web and mobile applications by individuals to generate, access, and interact with various forms of information.

A comparison between social media and traditional media highlights the benefits of social networks, such as the provision of real-time updates, the ability to engage in unlimited commentary, the immediate reception of feedback, and the availability of easily accessible archives (Stokes, 2013). Using social media platforms fosters user interaction and engagement, rendering it a valuable tool for businesses to collect feedback, comprehend customer requirements, and enhance their offerings (Hsu et al., 2013).

Social media encompasses a range of distinct categories, including Social Networking Sites (SNS), Content Communities, Company-Sponsored Blogs, Forums, Business Networking Sites, Personal Blogs, Microblogs, Collaborative Websites (Wiki), Social Bookmarking Sites, Open-Source Software Communities, Virtual Worlds and Games. According to Stokes (2013), these categories present a wide range of user engagement and interaction possibilities.

Social media platforms function according to seven distinct functionality categories: Identity, Conversation, Sharing, Presence, Relationships, Reputation, and Groups. The aforementioned elements are of utmost importance in influencing an organisation's marketing strategy (Kietzmann et al., 2011). How individuals present themselves on social media platforms plays a significant role in shaping their identity, encompassing a wide range of user information. Conversations encompass engagements between users instigated by both individuals and businesses. The speed and extent of content exchange are influenced by sharing, whereas the concept of Presence facilitates access to different social networks. Relationships are expressed through establishing connections among individuals, intricately linked to their sense of identity. The concept of reputation pertains to how users portray themselves, while groups serve as the fundamental building blocks of social media communities.

The 6C model of social media engagement, as proposed by Parent et al. (2011), delineates the strategies companies employ to encourage consumer involvement, promote content dissemination and foster interaction within social media communities. The model emphasises bidirectional communication, wherein substantial discussions evidence consumer engagement.

The usage of social networks has experienced a significant increase, as evidenced by Facebook's reported 2.7 billion monthly active users as of October 2020, positioning it as the leading social network globally (Statista, 2020d).

The impact of social media is extensive, as it facilitates the creation of content, effective management of customer service, and increased appeal for businesses. These strategies can also influence the purchase intentions of customers (Chen et al., 2011; Ang, 2011; Lu et al., 2010; Aksoy et al., 2013). Incorporating social media platforms for online marketing, commonly known as social media marketing, is pivotal in contemporary business strategies. The process entails utilising social media platforms to promote a company and its products (Akar & Topcu, 2011). Additionally, it involves increasing brand recognition by employing principles of word-of-mouth marketing (Drury, 2008), and managing the company's image, reputation, and relationships with stakeholders (Parveen et al., 2016). According to Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2016), social media platforms provide a means for companies to engage in interactive communication with the market, thereby allowing them to obtain valuable information regarding customer preferences and enabling prompt responses.

The advent of digital and social media has significantly impacted marketing, consumer behaviour, and e-commerce (Shin et al., 2015). According to Schultz and Kitchen (2004), corporate communication has transformed from conventional unidirectional communication to dynamic, interactive dialogues in real-time. Social media marketing encompasses integrating social media platforms with traditional communication channels, facilitating multifaceted interactive engagements among brands, consumers, and users (Sharma & Verma, 2018).

According to Herold (2017), empirical data reveals that social media marketing has yielded favourable outcomes for companies, as evidenced by most social media marketers (52%) reporting enhanced company performance and increased revenue. According to Herold (2017), widely utilised platforms for social media marketing encompass Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram.

The prevalence of social media marketing is emphasised by its extensive utilisation, especially among younger age groups (Pick, 2016). Nevertheless, obstacles still need to be addressed, as some organisations may not effectively utilise the capabilities of social media platforms (Grillo, 2017). According to Shin et al. (2011), empirical evidence indicates that many businesses predominantly employ social media platforms to disseminate information rather than foster interactive engagement. Despite the significance of social media spending, a considerable number of companies exhibit uncertainty regarding their allocation of resources in this domain, as evidenced by a study conducted by Moorman (2016), which found that 41% of companies lack clarity regarding their social media expenditures.

Social media marketing has brought about a significant transformation in communication, leading to the emergence of online social networks and positively influencing the emotional well-being of users (Thoren et al., 2013; Nabi et al., 2013). According to Hair, Clark, and Shapiro (2010), individuals utilise social media to disseminate ideas and facilitate the exchange of information, rendering it a suitable platform for advertisers to interact with their target audience. Consumers actively pursue product information and reviews through social networks, where electronic word-of-mouth (WOM) holds significant sway in shaping their purchasing decisions (Akar & Topçu, 2011; Clemons, 2009). According to Shiau and Luo (2013), blogs and user reviews are crucial in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions, thereby holding considerable importance for users.

According to Weinberg (2009), social media marketing provides companies with the opportunity to advertise their products and services online, interact with customers, and obtain valuable feedback, a capability that is not typically available through conventional advertising methods. According to Roberts and Kraynak (2008), individuals who engage on social networks assume the role of influencers, capable of moulding a company's values and principles. According to Marken (2007),

this particular strategy has resulted in a shift where the intended recipients of advertising messages have become active promoters, decreasing the time it takes to receive responses. The utilisation of social media has emerged as a pivotal instrument in marketing, exerting a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of online consumers (Miller & Lammas, 2010).

4. Methodology

4.1. Study Design

A positivist research philosophy informs the study's research strategy and utilizes a quantitative methodology. The selected methodology adheres to a well-defined hypothetical-deductive framework, encompassing eight essential elements as delineated by Sekaran (2003). The study begins by analyzing the research situation without employing observation as a formal research approach. Subsequently, a comprehensive examination of the existing literature is undertaken in order to collect prior study findings, ascertain any existing gaps in knowledge, and substantiate the importance of the variables under investigation. The purpose of this literature review is to establish the basis for developing a questionnaire that is in line with the study's objectives. The enhancement of conceptual clarity is facilitated by establishing theoretical frameworks, enabling a more profound comprehension of the research topics at hand. Various hypotheses are developed in order to examine and evaluate these theoretical constructions.

4.2. Data Collection Design:

The study focused on individuals in the Colombo District engaged in online T-shirt purchases, as indicated by data from the Sunday Observer (2021). In January 2022, the social media user base in Sri Lanka reached 7.20 million individuals, comprising an impressive 32.9% of the entire population. Considering the metropolitan nature of Colombo, with widespread access to network and Wi-Fi facilities across all generations, the total population in the district was estimated at 620,000. Assuming all of them use social media for purchasing, the study's effective population was set at 620,000, and the estimated proportion (p) was conservatively set to 0.5 to account for maximum variability. Utilizing a 95% confidence level (approximated as 1.96) and a margin of error (E) of 0.05 (5%), the calculated sample size was determined to be 384.

Given the absence of a formal sampling frame due to the unique characteristics of the population, a combination of convenience sampling methods particularly Snowball Sampling, was employed for participant selection. Cluster sampling was chosen to ensure a diverse range of responses from various social media user types. Rigorous criteria were set for participant selection, requiring regular social media usage, previous engagement in e-commerce transactions, and involvement in product-related activities (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). This method was chosen to obtain a representative sample from the target audience and bolster the study's validity and reliability. Initially, 1,000 potential sample units were approached, but the initial response rate was disappointingly low, below 10%. To overcome this challenge and enhance data collection, Snowball Sampling, with a typical response rate range of 5% to 30% according to an online survey in 2022, was adopted, resulting in data collection from 243 respondents. The sample units were defined based on specific criteria: individuals who regularly used social media, engaged in e-commerce purchases, provided product ratings and reviews, and consulted such reviews in their purchase decisions, ensuring the selection of participants actively involved in both social media and e-commerce activities. The study conducted by Wu et al. (2022) employed a meta-analytic approach to investigate the response rates of online surveys, particularly online survey methods. The analysis encompassed a total of 1071 reported online survey response

rates, yielding an average rate of 44.1%. Given the aforementioned circumstances, we distributed our survey with the anticipation of attaining a minimum response rate of 40%. Nevertheless, the difficulties associated with accurately address to sample units have had a negative impact on the rate of response in online surveys.

Data collection predominantly relied on survey research, involving the distribution of self-administered questionnaires electronically through social media platforms. The questionnaire design followed principles outlined by Sekaran (2005) concerning wording, measurement, and the questionnaire's general appearance, meticulously structured into four sections. The first section focused on demographic variables and employed a categorical scale, offering predefined categories for participant selection. The second section aimed to gauge participants' opinions on their involvement in social media marketing activities, employing a 5-point Likert-type scale without reverse-scored statements. The third section of the study, which is based on the work of Yadav and Rahman (2017), evaluates the variable of Social Media Marketing. This evaluation is conducted using a Likert scale that spans from 1 to 5, with 1 representing a strong disagreement and 5 representing a strong agreement. The fourth section of the study examines the dependent variable, purchasing intention. This variable is measured using seven items that were developed based on the construct proposed by McKnight et al. in 2002. The questionnaire's structure incorporates established frameworks and scales utilized in prior research, thereby offering a comprehensive methodology for examining the correlation between social media marketing, purchasing intention, and pertinent demographic variables. The chosen methodology guarantees the study's relevance, reliability, and comparability to previous literature, thereby strengthening the study's robustness.

A preliminary investigation involved 20 users of social media platforms in the Colombo District, evaluating the questionnaire's wording, sequencing, and layout. It also assessed respondents' familiarity, response rate, and completion time. After a pilot study, slight modifications were made to enhance questionnaire efficacy. Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity testing were conducted on the collected data, surpassing the recommended alpha level of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

4.3. Data Analysis Design:

Sample Survey and Results: The data analysis process included a sample survey, where responses from the 243 participants in the Colombo District were collected and processed. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the sample, while inferential statistics were employed to test hypotheses and derive meaningful conclusions.

Application of Statistical Tools: To measure the impact of social media marketing activities on purchasing intention, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel were utilized as tools for data analysis, providing a robust platform for analyzing the data effectively and efficiently.

Pre-Assumption Testing: Assumptions for multiple regression, such as linearity, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals, were tested and addressed as necessary to ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis results. This rigorous approach to data analysis was crucial in deriving meaningful insights from the collected data.

4.4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This study gathered 243 valid responses from individuals who use Social Media and implemented thorough data cleansing protocols to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data. Outliers were detected through plot diagrams and graphs, excluding 11 cases determined to be outliers. This process resulted in a remaining sample size of 351 questionnaires, which were subsequently subjected to further analysis. In order to handle the occurrence of random missing values, a mean replacement

technique was utilised, whereby the missing responses were substituted with the average value of the corresponding variable. Boxplot diagrams were employed to verify the integrity of the data, thereby confirming that there were no unaddressed missing values. Furthermore, a small number of outliers were identified, and it was determined that these outliers were isolated instances rather than widespread anomalies throughout the entire dataset. The data-cleaning procedure followed established protocols and statistical assumptions, considering the presence of outliers in the population (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

The research collected data from a sample of 351 individuals who actively use social media platforms in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka, with the primary objective of examining their demographic characteristics. The majority of male respondents accounted for 51.8% of the total sample. The age group of 21-25 years was the most prevalent among the participants, comprising 38.7% of the total sample. Regarding educational attainment, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of participants, specifically 63%, possessed high school diplomas or degrees. This finding suggests a relatively elevated level of education within the sample. Regarding occupation, the largest proportion of individuals belonged to the private sector category, accounting for 41.7%. This was followed by students, comprising 25% of the population. A notable portion of individuals (35.4%) earned less than Rs 40,000, whereas a majority (over 42%) fell within the income bracket of Rs 40,001 to Rs 120,000.

The investigation additionally evaluated the dependability of its measurement scales by employing Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, a statistical measure that assesses internal consistency. All constructs, such as informativeness, trendiness, interactivity, personalisation, word-of-mouth (WOM), and purchasing intention, demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha values that surpassed the threshold of 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

The constructs under investigation were assessed using a set of items. The number of items included in the assessment varied depending on the specific construct. The reliability of the measurement was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The text assigns ratings to different parameters related to the study. In this context, the level of informativeness is rated at 3, with a corresponding score of 0.718. The parameter "trendiness" is also rated 3, with a confidence level of 0.720. Similarly, the level of interactivity in the provided context is rated as 3, with a corresponding value of 0.741. The concept of personalisation, widely recognised as an essential aspect across various fields, pertains to tailoring or customising a product or service. The Women's Olympic Marathon (WOM) achieved a completion rate of 75%, with 3 out of 4 participants successfully finishing the race.

The purchasing intention of the individual is rated at 7, indicating a relatively high level of intention to make a purchase. The correlation coefficient 0.730 suggests a strong positive relationship between the individual's intention.

The results from the reliability test confirm the strength and consistency of the measurement scales employed in the study, ensuring that the items accurately and effectively represent their respective constructs.

The research utilised various statistical analyses to establish the gathered data's credibility and consistency. Initially, the researchers conducted the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) measures and Bartlett's test in order to evaluate the adequacy of the sampling and the sphericity. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values greater than 0.7 were obtained for the dependent and independent variables, indicating satisfactory sampling adequacy. Additionally, the significance values, which were lower than 0.05, provide further evidence supporting the validity of the study sample.

Descriptive statistics were computed to analyse the distribution characteristics of the data, encompassing measures such as the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. All constructs

demonstrated standard deviations that fell within the range of -2 to +2, suggesting an acceptable level of variability for subsequent statistical analyses. The skewness and kurtosis values, which evaluate the symmetry and peakedness of the distribution, were found to be within acceptable thresholds.

The evaluation of multivariate assumptions encompassed the examination of normality and linearity. The validation of normality assumptions was conducted by analysing symmetry, skewness, and kurtosis, which indicated that the data closely approximated normal distributions. The confirmation of linearity between the dependent and independent variables was achieved through scatter plots and correlation analysis. The intercorrelations among the independent variables revealed that all correlations were below 0.9, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity concerns.

The study employed correlation analyses to assess the associations between the independent variables, namely Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and WOM, and the dependent variable, Purchasing Intention. Significant statistical correlations ($p < 0.001$) were observed between each independent variable and Purchasing Intention, albeit with weak positive associations. The variables of Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) exhibited correlations of 0.389, 0.314, 0.315, 0.389, and 0.366, respectively, with Purchasing Intention.

The obtained correlation results demonstrate a positive association between each dimension of social media marketing: Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and WOM, and consumers' Purchasing Intention. These findings support the study's primary objective of investigating the relationships between these variables.

In general, the statistical analyses conducted in this study confirm the data's quality and support the hypotheses and research objectives. This, in turn, enhances the strength and reliability of the research findings.

Within this section, a linear regression analysis was undertaken to examine the influence of several independent variables (namely, Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and WOM) on the dependent variable, Purchasing Intention. The findings of these analyses are succinctly outlined in the following section.

The results of the regression analysis indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between informativeness and purchasing intention. The coefficient of determination, denoted as R-squared, was 0.120. This value suggests that the variable Informativeness can account for around 12% of the variability observed in Purchasing Intention. The coefficient representing the degree of informativeness (B = 0.217) exhibited statistical significance, as indicated by a p-value of less than 0.001. Consequently, the hypothesis (H1) positing a substantial correlation between Informativeness and Purchasing Intention was deemed valid.

The influence of trendiness on purchasing intention was also statistically significant. The coefficient of determination (R-squared) was found to be 0.099, suggesting that the variable Trendiness can account for approximately 9% of the variability in Purchasing Intention. The statistical analysis revealed that the coefficient for Trendiness (B = 0.203) exhibited a significant relationship with the dependent variable, as indicated by a p-value of less than 0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis (H2) positing a substantial association between Trendiness and Purchasing Intention was deemed valid.

The study revealed that interactivity had a notable influence on purchasing intention. The coefficient of determination (R-squared) was found to be 0.099, suggesting that around 9.9% of the variability in Purchasing Intention could be accounted for by Interactivity. The statistical analysis revealed that the coefficient for Interactivity (B = 0.201) exhibited a significant relationship, as indicated by a p-value of less than 0.001. Consequently, the hypothesis (H3) positing a substantial correlation between Interactivity and Purchasing Intention was deemed valid.

The influence of personalisation on purchasing intention was found to be statistically significant. The coefficient of determination (R-squared) was calculated to be 0.151, suggesting that around 15.1% of the variability in Purchasing Intention can be accounted for by the influence of Personalization. The statistical analysis revealed that the coefficient for Personalization (B = 0.249) exhibited a significant relationship, as indicated by a p-value of less than 0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis (H4) positing a substantial correlation between Personalization and Purchasing Intention was deemed valid.

The Impact of Word of Mouth (WOM) on Consumer Purchase Intention: The analysis findings indicated a noteworthy influence of word-of-mouth (WOM) on individuals' intention to purchase. The coefficient of determination, denoted as R-squared, was calculated to be 0.134. This value suggests that around 13.4% of the variability in Purchasing Intention can be accounted for by Word-of-Mouth (WOM). The coefficient for WOM (B = 0.212) exhibited statistical significance (p < 0.001). Consequently, the hypothesis (H5) positing a substantial association between word-of-mouth (WOM) and purchasing intention has been supported.

The present study examined the influence of Social Media Marketing, encompassing factors such as Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and Word-of-Mouth (WOM), on individuals' Purchasing Intention. The model, when combined, accounted for 19.8% of the variability observed in Purchasing Intention. The statistical significance of the coefficients for all components of Social Media Marketing was observed (p < 0.001). Therefore, the hypothesis (H6) positing a substantial correlation between Social Media Marketing and Purchasing Intention was deemed valid. The present study analysed multicollinearity to evaluate the degree of correlation among the independent variables. All tolerance values exceeded 0.02, and all Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were below 5, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity concerns within the model.

The regression analysis conducted on the different dimensions of Social Media Marketing (SMM) and their impact on Purchasing Intention provides valuable findings regarding the effects of these factors on consumer behavior. The impact of various dimensions, such as Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and Word-of-Mouth (WOM), on consumers' purchase intentions is significant.

The coefficient of Informativeness (β = 0.347) demonstrates a positive relationship between the level of informative content in social media marketing and Purchasing Intention, suggesting that an increase in informative content leads to a significant positive impact on the likelihood of making a purchase. Consumers exhibit a higher propensity to engage in purchasing behavior when they encounter product or service information that is both comprehensive and valuable.

The concept of trendiness refers to the state or quality of being fashionable or popular within a particular period of time. The variable of trendiness demonstrates a statistically significant positive effect (β = 0.314) on the intention to make a purchase. This implies that individuals are susceptible to the impact of prevailing trends disseminated via social media marketing. The implementation of a strategy that is in line with prevailing trends can greatly increase the probability of consumers engaging in a purchase. The dimension of Interconnectivity exhibits a significant positive impact (β = 0.315) on Purchasing Intention. This highlights the significance of cohesive and interconnected experiences across diverse social media platforms in influencing consumer behavior. The presence of a positive coefficient (β = 0.389) in the context of Personalization suggests that customizing content and experiences based on individual preferences has a favorable impact on the intention to make a purchase. The implementation of a tailored strategy in social media marketing plays a substantial role in influencing consumer decision-making processes. The influence of Word-of-Mouth on Purchasing Intention is substantiated by empirical evidence, demonstrating a significant positive effect (β = 0.386). The purchasing decisions of consumers are significantly impacted by the opinions and recommendations of others, highlighting the influential role of social interactions in this process.

In general, social media marketing encompasses various strategies and techniques employed by businesses to promote their products or services through online platforms. The overall impact of all dimensions encompassed by Social Media Marketing is significant ($\beta = 0.445$). This finding supports the notion that a comprehensive and efficient social media marketing approach, encompassing multiple facets, has a substantial impact on and can serve as a predictor of consumers' purchase intentions.

Table: Summary of Regression Results for Independent Variables on Purchasing Intention

Independent Variable	Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	t-statistic	F	Sig.
Informativeness	0.347	0.120	0.117	0.41460	5.612	31.495	0.000
Trendiness	0.314	0.099	0.955	0.41992	5.016	25.1560	0.000
Interconnectivity	0.315	0.099	0.905	0.41961	5.028	252.80	0.000
Personalization	0.389	0.151	0.145	0.40723	6.407	41.047	0.000
WOM	0.386	0.134	0.130	0.41146	5.958	35.503	0.000
Social Media Mktg	0.445	0.198	0.193	0.39597	7.528		

The regression analysis reveals that the R-squared values are low, indicating the complex relationship between social media marketing and its influence on purchasing intention. The dimensions that have been chosen, namely Informativeness, Trendiness, Interactivity, Personalization, and WOM, are important but may not fully encompass the wide range of factors that impact consumer decisions in this complex and ever-changing field. The study acknowledges that there are external variables, such as economic conditions, cultural influences, and competitive factors, which were not within the scope of the study but could have a significant impact on purchasing intention in Sri Lanka's current economic crises.

The intricate nature of social media marketing implies that the involvement of interactions and moderators assumes a crucial significance. The efficacy of personalization, for instance, may depend on variables such as the nature of the product and the demographic characteristics of the target audience. The omission of these interaction terms may potentially contribute to the observed low R-squared values. Moreover, the intrinsic variability in consumer behavior, which is influenced by a multitude of factors, presents difficulties in accurately predicting and comprehensively explaining purchasing intention.

Acknowledging the multi-stage nature of the purchasing intention decision-making process, the study acknowledges that the dimensions selected primarily pertain to the stages of awareness and interest. The current model may not fully incorporate factors that hold greater significance in later stages, such as consideration and purchase.

In summary, the relatively low R-squared values indicate constraints in the current model's ability to explain the observed data, but they also indicate potential for additional investigation. Future research endeavors should aim to broaden the range of variables under investigation, enhance the precision of measurement instruments, and adopt a comprehensive perspective on consumer behavior within the realm of social media marketing. This methodology will facilitate a more nuanced and comprehensive examination of the complex dynamics that impact consumer purchasing intentions.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research examined the correlation between social media marketing endeavours and the intention to purchase within the T-shirt sector in Sri Lanka. The study results indicate that engaging in social media marketing activities favours consumers' intention to make a purchase. Although the overall impact was substantial, it only explained a proportion of less than 20% of the variability observed in purchasing intention. The dimension of social media marketing identified as having the most significant impact on purchasing intention is Word of Mouth. This implies that the utilisation of social media marketing can serve as a viable strategy for businesses operating in the T-shirt industry to engage potential customers and stimulate their inclination to make purchases, although it should be noted that it is not the exclusive factor influencing consumer behaviour.

This study has two main implications. First and foremost, it highlights the significance of integrating social media marketing initiatives into the marketing tactics of enterprises operating in the T-shirt sector within Sri Lanka. Although social media marketing may not be the exclusive determinant of purchasing intention, it nevertheless holds considerable influence. It can serve as a cost-efficient strategy for attracting and retaining customers.

Additionally, the research emphasises that businesses must consider other factors impacting consumers' purchase intention. In order to optimise customer conversion, it is imperative to prioritise factors such as customer trust and website security within a comprehensive marketing strategy.

Some certain constraints or restrictions need to be acknowledged and considered in this study.

It is essential to acknowledge the presence of various limitations in this study. The sample size used in this study was relatively limited, potentially limiting its ability to comprehensively capture the diverse characteristics of the T-shirt industry in Sri Lanka. The scope of data collection was limited to the Colombo District, thereby constraining the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other geographical areas. The utilisation of convenience sampling resulted in the possibility of selection bias. Furthermore, it is important to note that the study assumed the stability of various other factors that could impact purchasing intention. However, considering that this assumption may not necessarily align with real-world conditions is worth considering.

Implications:

The study underscores the critical importance of integrating social media marketing into the overarching strategies of T-shirt businesses operating in Sri Lanka. Recognizing social media marketing as a cost-effective avenue for both attracting and retaining customers, the study advises businesses to allocate resources towards building a strong online presence. This involves leveraging popular platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Notably, the study identifies Word of Mouth (WOM) as the most impactful dimension, emphasizing the influential role of social interactions and recommendations in shaping consumer decision-making. To capitalize on this, businesses are encouraged to actively foster positive WOM through customer reviews and social media engagement.

Furthermore, the study underscores the need for businesses to consider a spectrum of factors within comprehensive marketing strategies, highlighting the pivotal roles of trust and website security. While social media is a potent tool, it is essential to recognize that consumer purchasing intention is influenced by a multifaceted set of factors. The study acknowledges the necessity for future research to delve into external variables, including economic conditions, cultural influences, and competitive dynamics, to provide a more nuanced understanding.

Despite these insights, the study acknowledges its limitations, including a relatively small sample size, geographical constraints, and the potential for selection bias resulting from convenience sampling. To address these limitations and enhance the applicability of findings, the study advocates for future research with larger and more diverse samples. Additionally, the study recognizes its focus on the

awareness and interest stages of the purchasing intention decision-making process. It suggests that future research should encompass consideration and purchase stages to offer a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior.

In conclusion, the study encourages businesses to adapt continuously in response to evolving trends, consumer preferences, and technological advancements in the dynamic landscape of social media marketing. By heeding these recommendations, T-shirt businesses in Sri Lanka can optimize their strategies, leveraging social media as a potent tool within a broader marketing framework.

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