



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO THE FAST-FOOD INDUSTRY IN COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

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This research investigates the impact of social media marketing on consumer behaviour in fast-food restaurants in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The study aims to uncover the correlation between social media marketing and the perception of fast-food brands in Colombo. Preliminary findings suggest that a strategic and positive online presence significantly contributes to an enhanced brand image, fostering brand loyalty and trust among consumers. It reveals that social media significantly influences consumer opinions, loyalty, trust and buying behaviour. The research found out how social media marketing factors have impacted consumer behaviour in Colombo fast-food restaurant patron behaviour. The dependent variable consumer behaviour is correlated with independent variables such as advertisements, market trends, virtual customer relationships and electronic word of mouth. The study used a quantitative approach, focusing on 100 fast-food consumers in Colombo who interacted with the fast-food restaurants' social media pages. The data collected underwent reliability analysis to assess its dependability, while additional statistical techniques such as Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, simple linear regression and descriptive statistics were employed to examine the proposed hypotheses through the SPSS software. The findings suggest that social media can positively influence consumer behaviour towards a brand if organizations effectively use them. However, understanding how to develop effective social media campaigns is crucial for strengthening brand positioning across different countries and generations. The literature in this regard finds that in the Chinese context, understanding the brand is essential for successful brand development activities and strengthening customer relationships. In the Australian context, active corporate involvement is needed for brand development and interaction between brand and customers. In the Indian context, an appropriate social media strategy is needed to improve performance levels and achieve expected outcomes. The study's findings contribute to enhancing academic and research communities' understanding of local social media marketing interactions, potentially impacting customer preferences and digital marketing in cities like Colombo.

Keywords: social media marketing, consumer behaviour, advertisements, electronic word of mouth, virtual customer relationships

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing plays a crucial role in the Colombo fast-food industry, allowing businesses to communicate with the diverse local population through platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Lutkevich, 2024). This interaction allows customers to voice their opinions, request recommendations and participate in the discourse surrounding fast-food selections. However, understanding the impact of social media on customer behaviour is essential for successful marketing campaigns. The fast-paced and dynamic nature of social media interactions raises concerns about the veracity of user reviews, the impact of visual content and the accuracy of information ingested (SCISPACE, 2021). Research is needed to determine how local context and cultural quirks affect the success of social media marketing for the fast-food sector. Addressing these concerns is crucial for both marketers and consumers to navigate the changing digital marketing landscape in Colombo and ensure positive consumer behaviour while maintaining openness and authenticity in the content published on social media platforms. This knowledge can help businesses tailor their online advertising to better appeal to the broad client base, increase brand awareness and empower customers to make more thoughtful and discriminating restaurant choices (SOCIALMEDIA.LK, 2024).

1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main research objective is to identify how social media marketing factors have impacted consumer behaviour in the fast food industry in Colombo. In order, to achieve the main research objective, the paper sets out the following sub objectives:

1. To identify the nature of responses by consumers of social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the fast food restaurants in Colombo.
2. To examine the association between social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the fast food industry in Colombo.
3. To analyse the effect of social media marketing on consumer behaviour in the fast food industry in Colombo.

1.2 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

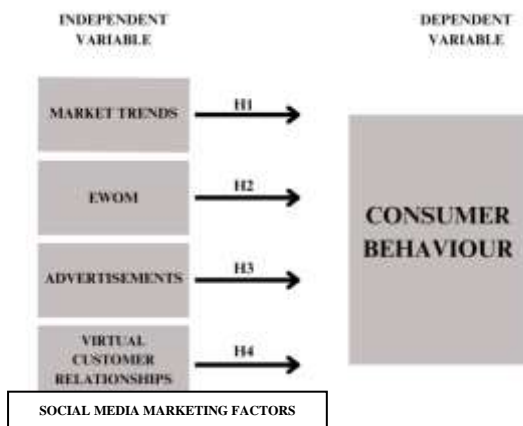
Table 1: Hypothesis Table

H1 (Hypothesis 1)	H1a	There is a positive linear relationship between EWOM on social media and consumer behavior in fast food restaurants.
H2 (Hypothesis 2)	H2a	There is a positive linear relationship between advertisements on social media and consumer behavior in fast food restaurants.
H3 (Hypothesis 3)	H3a	There is a positive linear relationship between trends on social media and consumer behavior in fast food restaurants.
H4 (Hypothesis 4)	H4a	There is a positive linear relationship between virtual customer relationships on social media and consumer behavior in fast food restaurants.

Ha – Alternative Hypothesis



1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



2. METHODOLOGY

The study explores the influence of social media on patron behaviour in Colombo's fast-food restaurants. A cross-sectional design was employed, with a sample size of 120 regular fast-food eaters using social media platforms. Purposive random sampling was employed to gather data on the correlations between customer behaviour and social media involvement. A questionnaire was distributed on WhatsApp to the targeted population, and a QR code was distributed inside the restaurants for purposive sampling. The study used descriptive statistics and inferential analysis to identify patterns and numerical insights. Variables such as fast food decision-making, preferred platforms and social media participation frequency were included. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' open-ended remarks. SPSS software was used to analyze the data, using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Spearman correlation and multiple linear regression analysis. Scatter plots and standardized residuals were used to represent data points, and a model summary was created to explain variance. These statistical techniques allowed for a comprehensive examination of the data, revealing trends, connections and important predictors.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Measures		Virtual	Add	EWOM	Trend	Consumer
N	Valid	120	120	120	120	120
	Missing	1	1	1	1	1
Mean		3.2778	3.45	3.5278	3.6667	3.7083
Standard Deviation		1.2916	1.24771	1.33514	1.23528	1.31894
Skewness		-0.154	-0.362	-0.398	-0.679	-0.645
Standard Error of Skewness		0.221	0.221	0.221	0.22	0.221
Kurtosis		-1.291	-0.888	-1.087	-0.559	-0.762
Standard Error of Kurtosis		0.438	0.438	0.438	0.437	0.438

The researcher found that virtual consumer relationships and advertisements have mean values of 3.27 and 3.45, respectively, which are neither agree nor disagree levels. Other variables, such as EWOM and trends, have mean values closer to the interval scale point 4, indicating they are in the agree level. Consumer behaviour has a mean value of 3.7, also in the agree level. The standard deviation of these variables was tested, with the minimum standard deviation of 1.23 for social media trends and the highest standard deviation of 1.33 for EWOM. The coefficient of skewness values

were between -1 and +1, indicating that the variables are approximately normally distributed, allowing the researcher to apply parametric techniques.



3.2 RELIABILITY TESTING

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number Of Items
Trends	0.970	3
EWOM	0.917	3
Advertisements	0.976	3
Virtual Customer Relationships	0.959	3
Consumer Behavior	0.982	3

The researcher has used reliability analysis as the first step of analyzing the data. According to the reliability analysis, the researcher tested internal consistency of interval scale items. As the variables for the reliability analysis researcher applied the variables trends, EWOM, advertisements, virtual customer relationships and consumer behaviour. These variables were through the conceptual framework and with respect to the interval scale questions. All the variables were analyzed having internal consistency because all Cronbach's Alpha values were more than 0.9 for all the variables and

therefore, the interval scale was having internal consistency among its variables. This means that the interval scale items were following the same direction. In relation to these interval scale items, the researcher operationalized corresponding variables. After that, the objectives have been addressed.

3.3 PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient and coefficient analysis have been utilized to address the second purpose, which is "To identify the association between social media marketing and consumer behaviour." Using Pearson correlation analysis, the researcher has examined the relationship between customer behaviour and social media marketing parameters to identify the relationship between social media and consumer behaviour.

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis

		Virtual	Add	EWOM	Trend	Consumer
Virtual	Pearson Correlation	1	0.931**	0.965**	0.912**	0.908**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Add	Pearson Correlation	0.931**	1	0.963**	0.924**	0.917**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
EWOM	Pearson Correlation	0.965**	0.963**	1	0.963**	0.960**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120	120
Trend	Pearson Correlation	0.912**	0.924**	0.963**	1	0.959**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	120	120	120	121	120
Consumer	Pearson Correlation	0.908**	0.917**	0.960**	0.959**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	120	120	120	120	120

According to the correlation analysis, probability of the relationship between virtual customer relationship and consumer behaviour is 0.000 and coefficient of correlation is 0.908. This says that there is a high significant positive relationship between virtual customer relationships and consumer behaviour. Probability of advertisements and consumer behaviour is 0.000 and coefficient of correlation is 0.917. This says that there is a highly significant positive relationship between these two variables of advertisements and consumer behaviour. Probability and the coefficient of correlation between EWOM and consumer behaviour are respectively 0.000 and 0.960. This also says that there is a highly significant positive relationship between EWOM and consumer behaviour. Trends and consumer behaviour are also

having a highly significant positive relationship as the P value is 0.000 and coefficient of correlation is 0.959. With regards to this analysis, the researcher identified that all the factors of the social media are having a highly significant positive relationship with consumer behaviour.

3.4 MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL

The below table shows R and R square values which are coefficient of determination and adjusted coefficient of determination.



Table 5: Model summary

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.969 ^a	0.94	0.938	0.32887	2.5
a. Predictors: (Constant), Trend, Virtual, Add, EWOM					
b. Dependent Variable: Consumer					

The model's summary coefficient of determination is 0.94, indicating that 94% of consumer behaviour is explained by the model, with a perfect fit of over 60%. The adjusted coefficient of determination is 0.938, indicating that 93.8% of consumer behaviour can be described by the regression model. The researcher chose relevant variables for social media marketing, and the multiple correlation is 0.969, indicating a strong correlation between social media factors like Trend, Virtual, Add, and EWOM with consumer behaviour. The Durbin-Watson statistic is 2.5, indicating independent residuals and a more valid model.

Table 6: ANOVA

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	194.576	4	48.644	449.768	.000 ^b
	Residual	12.438	115	0.108		
	Total	207.014	119			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trend, Virtual, Add, EWOM						

Regression ANOVA result is provided by Table 6. In the regression, ANOVA probability of F statistic is 0.000. This is highly significant. This means that the model is jointly significant. Accordingly, regression model is more valid. It indicates that all the social media factors Trend, Virtual, Add, EWOM jointly influence on consumer behavior.

Table 7: Beta value summary

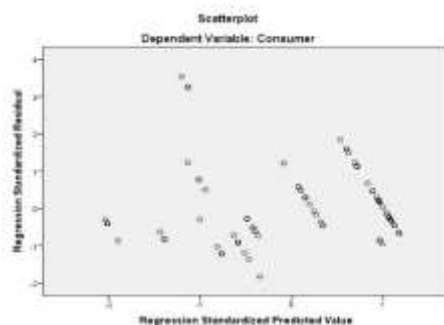
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.152	0.101		1.499	0.137
	Virtual	-0.155	0.091	-0.152	-1.701	0.092
	Add	-0.092	0.09	-0.087	-1.018	0.311
	EWOM	0.773	0.16	0.783	4.839	0
	Trend	0.452	0.094	0.423	4.811	0

According to the individual beta value, the probability of the EWOM is 0.000; this is highly significant. The individual beta value is 0.773; this says that EWOM has a highly significant positive effect on consumer behaviour. Probability of trend is 0.000; this also is highly significant. Individual beta value is 0.452. This means that this trend also has a highly significant positive effect on consumer behaviour. Other two factors are individually insignificant as the probability value is more than 5%. Therefore, virtual customer relationships and advertisements do not influence individually on consumer behavior but they influence jointly. According to the

standardized coefficients of beta, the most influencing factor is the EWOM followed by trend which is the second influencing factor.

3.5 HOMOSCEDASTICITY

Figure 1: Scatter plot summary



The researcher provided the scatter plot to identify the residuals behaviour. Standardized residuals are being presented against the standardized predicted values. All the residuals are distributed without having a systematic pattern. Therefore, variance of residual is constant. No systematic pattern also means no funnel shape of the residual. Linear model doesn't change into non linear. It means that there is no heteroscedasticity problem. Hence, the model is more valid.



3.6 VALIDITY TEST

Table 7: Validity test

Social media		Standardized Residual
Virtual	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	120
Add	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	120
EWOM	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	120
Trend	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	120

Based on the correlation between social media marketing factors and standardized residuals, all the P values are extremely significant with a value of 1.00. Consequently, there is no correlation between the independent variables and residuals, indicating a high level of validity for the model. As a result, all variables exhibit a positive linear correlation with the dependent variable, consumer behaviour. Therefore, all the H_n hypotheses are accepted, while all the H_o hypotheses are rejected based on the findings, confirming the high validity of the models.

4. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The research journey's conclusion about the influence of social media marketing on fast food restaurant patron behaviour in Colombo brings us to an important point: the synthesis and interpretation of the data collected. This chapter delves into the most important conclusions that have been drawn from the thorough investigation of social media's impact on customer preferences and decision-making processes in relation to Colombo's fast-food consumption through the study's objectives, research questions and findings. The data collected were analyzed and hence the research's four hypotheses were accepted as the variables EWOM, Virtual Customer Relationships, Adds and trends had a high positive significant influence on the dependent variable consumer behaviour. In conclusion, this study showed that social media marketing has a significant impact on how customers behave in the fast-food sector in Colombo. The results highlight how crucial strategic social media participation is influencing consumer preferences and decisions within the Colombo's dynamic fast-food restaurants.

5. REFERENCES

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6. ABBREVIATION

- Add/ Adds – Advertisement
- App – Application
- EWOM – Electronic word of mouth
- P value – probability
- SM – Social media
- SMA – social media advertisement
- SMT – social media trend
- VCR – virtual customer relationship