

Power of Electronic Word of Mouth: How Online Opinions Shape Consumer Purchase Intentions in Western Province of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

With digital platforms increasingly shaping consumer interactions, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become a critical driver of purchasing behaviour, yet limited research in Sri Lanka has examined its specific influence on consumer decision-making. This study investigates the impact of eWOM on purchase intentions among consumers in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, addressing a gap in the literature on local digital commerce practices. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were gathered through a structured self-administered questionnaire from 385 e-commerce consumers, the sample was selected using a stratified sampling method to ensure representation across demographic categories. Results reveal strong positive relationships between key eWOM factors Ease of Navigation, Information Quality, Information Credibility, Needs of Information, and Information Usefulness and consumer purchase intentions, with Ease of Navigation emerging as the most influential determinant. The demographic profile of the study sample, dominated by young, educated female respondents, particularly students residing in Colombo, further elaborates the practical implications of the study findings, as female group represents one of the most active segments in Sri Lanka's online marketplace. The study contributes theoretically by extending the literature of the study area, emphasising the role of localised digital experiences in shaping purchase decisions. Practically, the findings suggest that businesses and marketers can strengthen consumer engagement and boost purchase intentions by improving website navigation, ensuring the quality and credibility of information, and tailoring content to consumer needs. Overall, the research underscores the dual significance of eWOM as both a theoretical construct in consumer psychology and a practical tool for advancing digital commerce in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, e-commerce, electronic word of mouth, purchase intention, Sri Lanka, Western province