

The Influence of Social Media on the Intention of Purchasing Fashionable Clothes: A Study in Colombo District

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ABSTRACT

Due to the popularity of social media, businesses use this platform to promote their products and services among consumers, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. The fashion industry is one such industry that has effectively embraced social media in its marketing strategy. This research primarily focuses on the impact of social media factors on the intention to purchase fashionable clothes and the customer's perception of these factors. A conceptual model was developed based on the literature, and four factors of social media; the efficiency of the social media site/ ease of use, level of trust the consumers have on the social media site, reviews/ratings obtained in social media, and the frequency of interaction in social media were selected as the factors that affect the purchase intention of consumers. Using a structured questionnaire of 308 respondents, consumer perception towards these selected factors was measured. Using mean value and standard deviation, customer perception of social media factors was analyzed. Multiple regression analysis was employed to empirically test the hypotheses of the study. The findings reveal that, out of the four independent variables studied, the efficiency of the social media site or the ease of using the site, the trust in the social media site, and the frequency of interaction in social media have significant positive impacts on the consumers' intention to fashionable clothing. Additionally, the analysis results do not provide sufficient support for the hypothesis that reviews/ratings in social media are related to purchase intentions.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Perception, Fashionable Clothes

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INTRODUCTION

The internet originated to interconnect laboratories engaged in government research. However, it has moved very far since then and now has become a commodity among all sorts of human beings worldwide (Ranjan, 2024; Amponsah & Antwi, 2021). This Internet technology is ever-changing, with so much research being conducted on the evolutionary advancements of the Internet. Social media is one such innovatory step taken to bring people closer.

Social media can be defined as the collective of online communications channels. Nowadays, social media has become an integral part of people's life. Along with the advancement in mobile technology, people have all the information they require at their fingertips, keeping them connected with the world. People use social media for different uses; to obtain knowledge, share information, communicate daily, create awareness among people, and promote goods and services. However, with the surge of Internet usage and mobile usage, social media not only became widely used, but it also became widespread in business. Businesses use social media to promote their products and services (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Dwivedi, et al. (2021) also point out that with very low investment, businesses can create a website and can reach a very large market

directly, faster, and economically, regardless of the size or location of the business, as people all over the world can share their views and opinions using a single click.

Marketing is all about communication between the business and consumers, and the outcome is to persuade consumers to purchase the product or service being sold. With the increased use of social networking, marketers have built new approaches to selling their products and services through online media, known as social media marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The advantage of using social media for marketing is the ease of communication. The buyer or the seller can communicate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, wherever they are. This approach can increase brand exposure and broaden customers' reach. Also, it provides a facility for the consumer to get an in-depth idea about the product through reviews, which may be positive or negative. Sellers can use social media sites to follow threads about the brand and, through this real-time feedback, can respond to problems immediately. The trend of using social media as a marketing tool went through a drastic increase during and after the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. While the majority of the countries were forced to go into lockdown mode and being quarantined, businesses had to shift their offline transactions to online mode, making social media the main platform to promote their businesses (Ranjan, 2024; Chrimes et al., 2022).

Social media have now made the fashion industry, earlier an exclusive industry, more accessible and relatable to everyday consumers. During earlier eras, people tended to create their garments, and with time, they started purchasing necessary clothing from tradespeople. With technological advancement, simple tailoring has evolved into a dynamic industry where fashion has become an at-large world industry. With the internet, people can view and get ideas from fashion experts worldwide. Social media now has taken up informing the public about the latest fashion news, using their influence to drive trends (Durmaz, 2014). People do not pick up printed fashion magazines or papers anymore but go through the new trends online.

Hope (2016), in her article for BBC News, says that using social media in the fashion industry is a new reality. Her few examples include Burberry, an iconic fashion brand, using Brooklyn Beckham as their photographer for a new ad campaign simply because he has over 5.9 million Instagram followers so that one single photograph of Burberry products will be seen by over 5.9 million within a few seconds which is a reflection of the influence of social media in the fashion industry. Currently, most consumers' selection of what to buy depends on the number of followers on Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, etc. Hope (2016) writes that research conducted by the management consultancy firm McKinsey with 7,000 shoppers has found that three out of four luxury purchases are influenced by what consumers see, do, and hear online.

Meanwhile, due to urbanization, the fashion industry in Colombo, the commercial capital of Sri Lanka, has a large consumer base relatively with vastly different backgrounds, i.e. educational background, lifestyle, etc. Therefore this study particularly aims to understand consumers' intentions in the Colombo district to purchase fashionable clothing by the influence of social media.

Using social media as a marketing tool has become the emerging trend of the millennium (Ibrahim et al., 2024). The fashion industry has embraced social media with wide hands due to the ease of reaching a large customer base within a short time. Fashion can change quickly; thus, a faster communication method is advantageous. With social media becoming a crucial marketing avenue, it is important to see whether it influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Results from such studies can generate new marketing techniques.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the following questions; (1) how the customer perceives social media factors to have an intention of purchasing fashionable clothing; (2) is there a relationship between social media factors and intention to purchase fashionable clothing; and (3) does social media factors have any impact on the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing.

This study is important in several aspects; from businesses' point of view in terms of investment, for marketers, the study results will provide important information to plan their marketing mix to the general public by way of relating to the correct use of social media and also to the academic world to understand the consumer behaviour and new technology (i.e. social media). The results of the study will help us understand the

relationship between social media factors and consumers' purchasing intention, as well as the impact of social media on their intention to purchase fashion clothing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The degree of influence in modern social media sites has increased drastically (Chrimes et al., 2022). People use these sites for various reasons. Some people join social media to connect with like-minded people, whereas others use it just to share memories through photos or videos and there is another category that uses these social media sites for purchasing items. However, the marketing perspective of social media as a viable marketplace is still being studied (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In earlier days, fashion-savvy individuals had to wait for fashion magazines to reach their place of living to gather knowledge on the happenings around the most well-known fashion shows taking place within the prominent cities for fashion such as Paris, New York or London, or either attending these shows. But with the extended use of social media, fashion is accessible to almost everyone, everywhere.

Paquette (2013) states in her study that if the businesses' intended target market is not familiar with social media or they do not use or, on the other hand, if they do not perceive it positively, then their attempt to reach their market through social media will be fruitless. Thus, it is always advisable to analyse their customer attitude towards their marketing approach. This is a valid argument in the fashion industry as well. It is immaterial to have an online catalogue of fashionable clothing on the brand's Facebook page if the number of followers is less compared to non-internet-based customers. Many research studies have been conducted on consumers' purchasing patterns for fashionable items.

Pate & Adams (2013), citing Weigand (2009) indicated in their study that social media can be used to provide instrumental value which helps consumers in making purchasing decisions such as "what product to buy when to buy, and where to buy". Chen (2014) states that "purchase intention" means the consumers' plan to purchase a particular good or service in the future.

Consumers' changing habits regarding how they embrace fashion have been the key to the growth of the fashion industry in recent years. Consumers are becoming more fashion-conscious. They try to keep themselves updated with the latest fashion trends and share notes on new trends with friends/colleagues/etc. With social media, this has become very easy a task. It connects people that may never meet in the physical world, if not in the virtual world of the Internet. Also, the fashion industry is one of the industries where frequent changes occur, and thus social media is considered the most convenient and cheapest means to communicate these changes to its target markets sooner than other conventional media (Ahmad, Salman & Ashiq, 2015).

Mohr (2013) describes in his research on the impact of social media on the fashion industry that businesses benefit by incorporating social media into their business models in order to allow these brands to build strong customer relationships via continuous interaction with each other, which in turn will encourage brand loyalty. The capacity of social networking platforms to have a wider reach to potential consumers and target markets is believed to be a good way to an expansion of business in an interactive environment.

According to Cívico's (2014) study, their data reveals that of those individuals who are active on social media, around 85% are following at least one kind of fashion brand on social media. These people are motivated to get more information about the brand they like and entertain themselves. Businesses target their social media marketing to this segment of consumers. Social media is a very efficient communication channel when compared to other traditional communication channels. Hence industries are encouraged to engage with social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter (currently known as X), MySpace, etc. to overcome competition (Vinerean et al., 2013). Hudson et al. (2014) have conducted three studies to explore how individual and national differences influence the relationship between social media use and customer brand relationships in France, the U.K., and U.S.A. The findings indicated that social media use was positively related to the brand relationship.

Consumer decision-making process involves a very wide variety of personal and situational variables. Loh (2011) examines models that illustrate the different stages of the decision-making process that go through the mind of the consumer from the initial ignorance of a particular brand or product or service to the actual purchasing behaviour. He concludes in his study that social network sites possess an excellent dimension for businesses to market their products and recognizes the importance of managing brand reputation in social network sites.

Technology gives consumers the power to investigate products label them and criticize them in equal measure, and more. Therefore many companies today have pages on social networks to complement the information held about products, held by the feedback of consumers about products, and tend to relate more to a company after reading various reviews.

One of the advantages of online social networks compared with real-life networks is the communication and spread speed. Contents published on social media platforms are instantaneous and are available to everyone in the network as soon as they are published (Chen, 2014). Heinrichs, Lim & Lim (2011) show that, high-usage groups have the highest mean values for the perception dimension of ease of use for social networking sites. Also, they suggest that organizations should invest more resources in their social media sites to facilitate interaction and information sharing.

Few supporting literature on how social media influences fashion clothing marketing from Gul, Shahzad & Khan's (2014) study are stated as follows. According to a study conducted by Jonas (2013), out of 146 German managers to be questioned, 89 % of the respondents named social media as one of the most important entrepreneurial challenges over the next few years. While Greco & Paksoy (1989) have stated that fashion-conscious shoppers rely more on mass media information sources, Ross (2000) says that the Internet may also become a viable source of fashion information.

Social media being one of the mediums which most often used by consumers to obtain knowledge on fashion trends, the awareness about online fashion apparel advertisements on social media is rapidly increasing. Studies were done by Gul, Shahzad & Khan (2014) to check whether the factors of social media such as reviews/ ratings on social media, the style, brand, frequency of interaction (networking), and price of the product have a significant positive relationship with fashion consciousness of consumers.

Ibrahim et al. (2024) discuss the importance of the usability of the business's social media site in shaping consumers' online clothing purchase intentions. According to the researchers, the consumers put more value in the ability to browse and shop easily at any time, and they highlight the advantage provided by such platforms, where the consumers could conveniently access the online platforms any day, any time (24/7 access) compared to limited retail hours of onsite shopping. Ibrahim et al. (2024) point out that having features such as clear product categories, detailed descriptions, and smooth checkout processes enhance the website usability, and thus, it significantly influences the consumers' purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the study concludes that when consumers tend to find the online shopping process easier, it is more likely that the consumer complete the purchase, rather than only browsing, which makes the platform usability a critical factor for these businesses.

Hajli (2014), through his study, tried to demonstrate the role of social media in the development of e-commerce into social commerce. The data he gathered, gives rise to the conclusion that social media facilitates the social interaction of consumers which leads to increased trust and intention to buy. The results of his study show that trust and perceived usefulness of a social networking site have significant direct effects on the intention to purchase. According to Ahmad, Salman & Ashiq (2015), customers are comfortable buying products from retail sites that they can trust. Nasriya (2014) in her study cites Solomon et al. (2002) and according to the past literature, it is a well-known factor that consumers evaluate several alternatives prior to selecting which products and services satisfy their needs the best and generally, this purchasing decision will be influenced by factors such as previous shopping experiences, trust on the product that was created by advertisements so on and so forth.

Similarly, based on the study by Rachmiani, Oktadinna & Fauzan (2024), product ratings and online reviews have a major impact on consumer trust and customers' purchasing decisions within the fashion industry. The results indicate that positive reviews enhance the trustworthiness of the product/business which results in lowering the perceived risk. The study also shows that negative reviews tend to reinforce consumer uncertainty. Rachmiani, Oktadinna & Fauzan (2024) also focus on the ratings by the customers and explain that ratings are recognized as a proxy for quality, and that higher rating often attracts more customers. Ultimately the study observes that reviews and ratings of the site are crucial to digital consumer behaviour and that businesses are required to put more effort into actively engaging with customer feedback.

Loh (2011) points out that trust comes into play as a solution for specific problems of risk and he administers to investigate the relationships of this factor with consumers' intention and decision to purchase. In Loh's (2011) study, trust is viewed as a central concept and is essential in developing not just the types of interactions but also the depth of relationships among users and businesses. Trust results in loyalty to companies and repeated purchases. Consumers recommend products and brands that they trust. Individuals' beliefs will influence their behavioural intentions. Thus, it can be argued that consumers' trust in social media will affect their perceived value and purchase intentions (Chen, 2014).

An important aspect of social media related to consumers preferring it over standard marketing is that social networking sites are perceived as useful and easy to use. Also, the diversity of consumers who use social media sites is another important aspect that social media marketing is more popular among businesses as most target markets can be reached (Paquette, 2013).

Sano (2015) has studied the dimensions of social media marketing activities and the effect on customer satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and commitment in one of the high-perceived risk services - indemnity insurance service in Japan. He also cites Kim & Ko (2012) to provide literature support on how social media marketing activities enhance customer equity in terms of luxury fashion brand and how brands and customers communicate with each other without any constraint in time, venue, and medium.

Ioană & Stoica (2014) studied the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. They referred to the online feedback trust of the respondents and if they bought the products of a company posted/recommended on their Facebook page in the questionnaire that they used in their survey, to which 33% said they had purchased such products. Also, they questioned on the fact that whether the respondents checked the available information about a product on the official website or another information source (other reviews posted by other consumers online) before purchasing it. The majority (39%) agreed with the statement that social networks have a role in influencing the behaviour of consumers in the virtual environment.

Creating social media sites for a business has its advantages. It provides widespread opportunities by increasing visibility with consumers and thus increases further communication with existing and potential new consumers. Also, this provides a platform for anyone to relate their opinion on the products/services in a semi-public setting where numerous people can view it. There may be both positive and negative attitudes regarding the brand, which will be communicated to a majority of viewers through social media. (Simmons, 2017)

According to Simmons (2017), social networking provides the consumer, access to lots of information about a product/service, which is not only from the business itself but also information from other users as well. As such, consumers are now accessing this information before making a purchase. Also, Ray (2017) states, that when consumers search for a particular brand on social media they often find reviews online. Ray also points out that the effect of the reviews is greater since social media is very fast and she cites in her article that according to marketing consultants at The Conversation Group, "65% of consumers who receive a recommendation from a contact on their social media sites have purchased a product that was recommended to them. Friends and family are making those recommendations, too. Nearly 93% of social media users have either made or received a recommendation for a product or service."

Consumers are more expected to look for blog reviews and ratings and follow the likes and dislikes of their friends via Facebook, Instagram, etc. Ahmad, Salman & Ashiq (2015) cite Michault (2009) in their article and he has given an example that demonstrates the influence and impact of social media in the fashion industry.

During a round of fashion shows in 2009, because of one tweet (a message on Twitter) by Lady Gaga, Alexander McQueen's fashion show became the most viewed show live, and due to the unstoppable traffic, the site's server crashed.

The results obtained from the study conducted by Karamian, Nadoushan & Nadoushan (2015) show that consumers would be more likely to purchase items rated positively by others on social networking sites. They have provided literature to support this theory as well. The majority of consumers nowadays research products online before they purchase. The internet has become a useful tool for performing research and allowing consumers to be armed with information before they pay for the product. According to the literature, reviews and ratings for such products have influenced the purchasing decisions of consumers (Karamian, Nadoushan & Nadoushan, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

Many researchers have realized the importance of practicing social media in marketing. However, it is not easy to evaluate how effective social media is. According to the reviewed literature on the subject, this study was conceptualized in the framework explaining the impact of the selected independent variables (the efficiency of the social media site/ ease of use, level of trust the consumers have on the social media site, reviews/ratings obtained in social media, and the frequency of interaction in social media) and the dependent variable, the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing. Based on the literature reviewed, the above-mentioned factors of social media have a great impact on the purchasing intentions of fashionable clothing.

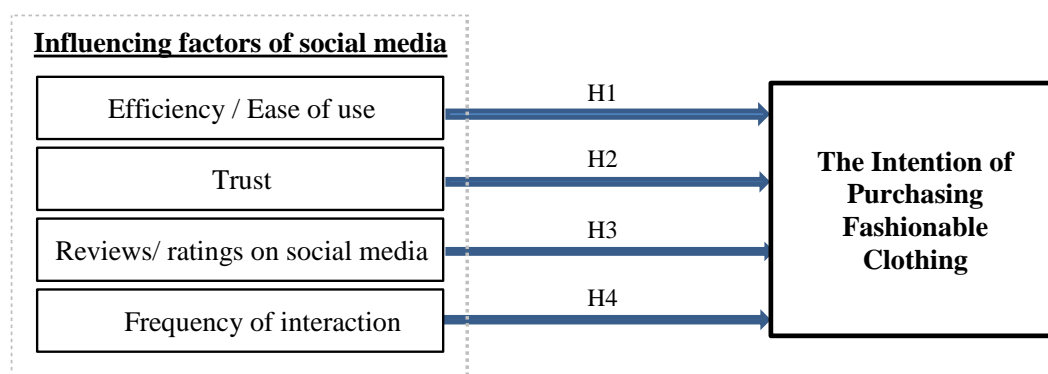


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

(Source: by the Author)

Four hypotheses were developed to understand the present study based on the conceptual model in Figure 1. The rationales behind the development of the hypotheses are as follows.

The efficiency or ease of use of social media has been sought to be recognized by Ibrahim et al. (2024), Paquette (2013), and Vinerean et al. (2013) as factors that have considerably helped user behaviour, particularly in making purchasing decisions. Ease of use through streamlined user interfaces and functional efficiency encourages positive consumer intentions and therefore justifies the relationship between ease of use and purchasing fashionable clothing. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows.

H1: Efficiency/Ease of use has a positive impact on the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing

Similarly, Ahmad, Salman & Ashiq (2015), and Hajli (2014) also talked about how trust in social media platforms - provided through constant positive experiences and safe attributes - increases consumers' trust. These studies confirm that trustworthiness will be a key driver of consumer purchase intentions, mainly about fashionable garments. Hence the second hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Trust has a positive impact on the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing

Rachmiani, Oktadinna & Fauzan (2024), Ahmad, Salman & Ashiq (2015), and Karamian, Nadoushan & Nadoushan (2015) argue that positive feedback and high ratings on social media sites impact consumer perception and behaviour. Thus, the above two studies give grounds to the hypothesis that the frequency of feedback through social media may affect fashion purchasing decision significantly.

H3: Reviews/ Ratings on social media have a positive impact on the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing

Gul, Shahzad & Khan (2014) and Mohr (2013) explain that more frequent interactions via social media raise contact and give depth to the relationship between consumer and brand. The frequency of exposure to fashion-related content on social networks is also likely to enhance purchasing intent as the frequency of contact strengthens the level of familiarity and, therefore, trust in the platform. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Frequency of Interaction has a positive impact on intention of purchasing fashionable clothing.

METHOD

This study concentrates on the influence of social media on the purchasing decisions made by fashionable clothing consumers in the Colombo district. A quantitative approach was used in this study where categorical data were collected and analyzed to measure the decisions made by consumers in the Colombo district on purchasing fashionable clothing and the population of this study is consumers who purchase fashionable clothing in the Colombo district.

The sample size was calculated as 308 consumers using the Krejcie-Morgan Formula. The convenience sampling method was used in this study, mainly due to the convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Well-known fashion stores in several major shopping areas in the Colombo District were identified as sampling sites. These places were identified based on the availability of frequently visited and well-established fashionable clothing stores. The top five fashion clothing stores which have the highest ratings in terms of “likes” and “follows” on Facebook were selected as the research sites. Therefore, the sample for this study was randomly selected at these identified sites for convenience, similar to the method used by Nasriya (2014).

This study was based on primary data where the required data were gathered directly from the respondents. A standardized questionnaire was developed to collect the necessary responses from the consumers of fashionable clothing regarding the effect of social media on their decision-making, the method adopted by Gul, Shahzad & Khan (2014). The questionnaire comprised statements with Likert scale-type answers (a 5-point scale with options, where “strongly disagree” has a value of “1” and “strongly agree” is valued at “5”, to capture the consumer perception towards these factors.

Correlation analysis was carried out to check the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Also, using ordinal regression analysis, the impact of social media factors on the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing was measured. The analysis results were interpreted to form inferences about the populations.

DATA ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS

Normality and Reliability Tests

The normality of the data was accessed through skewness and kurtosis tests (Lakmali & Kajendra, 2021). While the skewness values for all variables fell within the acceptable range, the kurtosis value obtained for the efficiency variable was 4.29, which exceeds the recommended range of -2 to 2. Despite this, the dataset was deemed suitable for further analysis, as the sample size was sufficiently large to mitigate minor deviations from normality. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was also conducted to confirm the measurement validity of the constructs. The analysis revealed that most factor loadings exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.5,

indicating the adequacy of items in measuring their respective constructs. However, one item under the efficiency construct (e4, sub-question for efficiency variable) demonstrated a low standardized factor loading (0.101). The fit indices indicated moderate model fit, with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) at 0.836 and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) at 0.103. The reliability of the constructs was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the dataset was 0.919, ensuring the internal consistency of the measurement items. Despite minor concerns with the normality and fit indices, the constructs were deemed valid and reliable for further analysis.

Sample Description

The majority of respondents were between 22 – 30 years of age. From the collected questionnaires, 65% of the respondents belonged to this age category. Also, there were 19% of consumers between 31 – 40 years of age. The rest of the sample consisted 8% of 41 – 60 year-olds, 2% over 61 years, and 6% were less than 21 years old. It was offhandedly observed that shoppers in the Colombo district were mainly young adults. The sample does reflect this observation. According to the analysis, there were 60% of females and 40% of males among the respondents of this study. It was observed that during peak hours there were almost equal proportions of both genders in fashionable clothing shops.

Questions were included in the distributed questionnaire to collect data on consumers' use of social media. It was intended to gather data on the social media networks used daily by the respondents and also to know whether these sites are used by them to collect information on fashionable clothing. According to the results, only 6% of the respondents were not using any social media networks, while the majority (88% of the respondents) were using Facebook. Instagram is the second highest-used site having a proportion of 41% respondents. Pinterest, SnapChat, and WhatsApp are the answers that respondents have supplied under the “other” category.

According to the respondents, the majority of them use social media pages of these fashionable clothing brands to find new products/styles (58% of the respondents) or to find out about a certain product/style (52%) of the respondents). Also, 20% of the respondents have mentioned that they visit these pages to discuss or to give feedback about products/styles, while 11% of them visit in order to connect with like-minded fellow consumers.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis is done to understand the customer perception of social media factors that influence the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing. According to the conceptual framework followed in this study, there are four factors identified as independent variables ass efficiency of the social media site/ ease of use, trust of the social media site, reviews/ ratings in social media, and frequency of interaction in social media and dependent variable as intention of purchasing fashionable clothing.

As shown in Table 1, the efficiency of the social media site and the ease of use have obtained a mean of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.87. This indicates that the consumers perceive this particular factor in a somewhat positive frame of mind. Also, the results indicate that trust in the social site has a neutral perception with a mean of 3.36 by consumers, and the factor, “reviews/ ratings in social media” has obtained a mean of 3.54 with a standard deviation of 1.08. This indicates that the consumers perceive this factor also in a positive frame of mind. The consumer perception of the frequency of interaction in social media also has is neutral with a mean value of 3.41. Also, the results indicate that consumers' perception of the impact of social media on the intention of purchasing fashionable clothing is agreeable (Mean 3.69).

Table 1: Summary of the Descriptive Statistics of Independent and dependent Variables

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Efficiency of the social media site/ ease of use	3.75	0.87
Trust of the social media site	3.36	0.88

Reviews/ ratings on social media	3.54	1.08
Frequency of interaction in social media	3.41	1.00
The intention of purchasing fashionable clothing	3.69	1.06

Relationship between factors of social media and consumer intention to purchase fashionable clothing

Table 2 explains how strong a linear relationship is between two variables, with a value between -1 and +1. The closer the correlation is to +/-1, the closer to a perfect linear relationship. According to the data in Table 2, there is a significant positive relationship between consumers' purchasing intention and the efficiency of the social media site, its ease of use, the trust in the social media site, and the frequency of site usage, with correlation values of 0.749, 0.859, and 0.832 respectively, at 0.01 significance level. Additionally, reviews and ratings also show a moderately positive relationship (0.646) with consumers' purchasing intentions, at a 1% significance level.

Table 2: Correlations among the Variables

		Efficiency	Trust	Reviews	Frequency
Purchasing_Intention	Pearson Correlation	.749**	.859**	.646**	.832**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	308	308	308	308

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

The optimal scaling regression (categorical regression) method was used to analyze the hypotheses as the data collected were ordinal variables. This approach transforms an ordinal variable into an interval variable monotonically, so the linear effect on the variables is maximized. By using this approach, a regression analysis could be conducted on the ordinal dataset.

Table 3: Categorical regression results

3a: ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression		284.680	8	35.585	456.251	.000
Residual		23.320	299	.078		
Total		308.000	307			
3b: Model Summary						
Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Apparent Prediction Error			
.961	.924	.922	.076			
3c: Summary of the Results of Ordinal Regression Analysis						
	Standardized Coefficients		df	F	Sig.	
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error				
Efficiency	.244	.060	2	16.683	.000	

Trust	.600	.062	2	93.365	.000
Reviews	.065	.046	2	1.999	.137
Frequenc y	.166	.027	2	36.668	.000
Dependent Variable: Purchasing_Intention					
Predictors: Efficiency, Trust, Reviews, Frequency					

ANOVA (Table 3b) is used to test the fitness of the regression model. The fitness can be tested using an f-test for the set of data using the p-value approach. With the results obtained, it can be concluded that a significant relationship exists between the dependent variable and the independent variables at a 5% significance level ($f = 456.251$, $p > 0.05$).

A model summary (Table 3b) is used to measure the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The R^2 value (.924) indicates the coefficient of determination and it reports the proportion of total variation in the dependent variable explained by all independent variables taken together. According to the table value ($R^2 = 0.924$), 92.4% variance of the consumers' intention of purchasing fashionable clothing is explained by the consumers' perception towards the efficiency of the social media site/ ease of use, trust of the social media site, reviews/ ratings in social media and frequency of interaction in social media.

Table 3c summarises the result of the regression analysis. Hypotheses H1, H2, and H4 were found that the efficiency of the social media site or the ease of use of the site, the trust of the social media site, as well as the frequency of interaction in social media have a positive impact on consumers' intention of purchasing fashionable clothing. The impact of each factor found that efficiency (0.244, $p < 0.05$), trust (0.600, $p < 0.05$), and time (0.166, $p < 0.05$). However, according to the findings of this study, the reviews/ ratings in social media (0.065, $p > 0.05$) become a statistically insignificant factor. Therefore, H3 was not accepted.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature on consumer behaviour by empirically examining the influence of social media factors - the efficiency of the social media site/ ease of use, level of trust the consumers have on the social media site, reviews/ratings obtained in social media, and the frequency of interaction in social media - on the intention to purchase fashionable clothing in the Colombo district.

To achieve the first research objective of understanding consumer perceptions of these factors, descriptive statistics were analyzed. The findings indicate that consumers generally perceive these factors positively, as evidenced by mean values above 3.0 for all variables, with efficiency scoring the highest mean ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.87$). In relation to the second research objective of examining the relationships between social media factors and purchasing intention, correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between efficiency ($r = 0.749$, $p < 0.01$), trust ($r = 0.859$, $p < 0.01$), and frequency ($r = 0.832$, $p < 0.01$) with purchasing intention. Reviews, while moderately correlated ($r = 0.646$, $p < 0.01$), showed no significant impact in the regression analysis. The final objective, to evaluate the impact of social media factors on purchasing intention through hypothesis testing, was achieved using categorical regression analysis. Efficiency ($\beta = 0.244$, $p < 0.05$), trust ($\beta = 0.600$, $p < 0.05$), and frequency ($\beta = 0.166$, $p < 0.05$) were found to positively influence purchasing intention, confirming H1, H2, and H4. However, reviews ($\beta = 0.065$, $p > 0.05$) were statistically insignificant, leading to the rejection of H3.

In summary, this study highlights the importance of efficiency, trust, and frequency of interaction as key drivers of purchasing intention in the context of social media marketing for fashionable clothing, while the role of reviews remains limited. These findings contribute to the growing literature on social media's impact on consumer behaviour and provide actionable insights for marketers in the fashion industry.

Implication For Future Research

Future directions for this study would be to go more in-depth with the variables. Since key components affecting profitability were highlighted, the next direction would be to question why these components impact consumer behaviour. Also, other variables apart from the four selected under this study could be included to increase the breadth of the research factors. Investigating more characteristics such as geography, perceived risk, and education level also would be important in future studies. This particular study focused only on the Colombo district. It would be beneficial if further studies could be conducted in all areas of Sri Lanka. It would be recommended for future research in social network sites to employ random sampling with a larger response base to obtain more accuracy and representation of the population.

Another promising avenue for further research is to examine the longitudinal effects of social media engagement on consumer loyalty and repeat purchasing behaviour. Questions such as, whether consumers are more likely to stay loyal to brands that consistently provide an efficient and trustworthy online experience, and how initial perceptions of trust and efficiency evolve with repeated social media interactions, are some possible avenues for future inquiries. Furthermore, future research could adopt mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative methods such as focus groups or interviews, to gain deeper insights into consumer motivations and attitudes.

Management Implication

There are several key implications of these findings for fashion marketers and businesses using social media platforms. Given that the efficiency/ ease of use of the official social media site, trust, and frequency of interaction by the users drive purchase intention, businesses need to make sure that their social media platforms are user-friendly and reliable. Confidence among consumers will have to be developed through open communication and safety in online spaces. Besides, regular and interactive consumer-brand exposure will establish brand relationships, which then inspire buying behaviour. Fashion companies should lead the way in the creation of seamless, reliable, and engaging social media experiences that can enhance customer interaction, hence their revenues. While reviews and ratings proved to be well less efficient, they are not completely useless but still can play a supporting role in forming consumer perceptions.

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