Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

4th Management Undergraduates' Research Session in Collaboration with Young Scientists Forum (MURS 2022)

"Fostering Agility: Confronting the Uncertainty"

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

18th November 2022
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
Belihuloya, Sri Lanka

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MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR
SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

It gives me a great pleasure to pen this message for the 4th Management Undergraduates' Research Session in Collaboration with Young Scientists Forum (MURS 2022), organized by the Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, themed on "Fostering Agility: Confronting the Uncertainty." I understand the significance of this theme, which is unavoidable for the entire world, where human civilization is progressing in a turbulent economic climate.

The Faculty of Management Studies, the university's largest and oldest faculty organizes this yearly conference, in order to provide management undergraduates, both international and domestic experience, with a prominent forum to present and share their research findings with a larger community. Additionally, the conference will inspire undergraduates to look at local, regional, and international trends in their academic fields while connecting with different disciplines. I firmly believe that this MURS 2022 will strengthen research collaborations among young scientists in the field of management. Moreover, the MURS 2022 is a wonderful venue for an interdisciplinary research and management dialogue, and it will feature keynote addresses and an industry forum from academic and industrial leaders in the field of management, all of whom will help the contributors and participants to expand their insights.

I wish to thank Professor Athula Gnanapala for his leadership as the Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies, as well as the Organizing Committee, for their tireless work to make sure the conference runs well and lives up to everyone's expectations. I also want to express my gratitude to the academics who helped keep the conference's primary values of quality and innovation alive, including the researchers, reviewers, editors, and other experts. All parties' coordinated efforts have been much valued.

Let us join hands to create a better future for all!

Senior Professor R.M.U.S.K. Rathnayake
Vice-Chancellor
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

It gives me immense pleasure and honour to send this message for the 4th Management Undergraduates' Research Session in Collaboration with Young Scientists Forum (MURS 2022) organized by the Research and Publication Unit, Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka on the theme "Fostering Agility: Confronting the Uncertainty". The main objective of this endeavour is to create a standard and friendly platform for young researchers to present their research outcomes and receive constructive feedback to lay a strong foundation at the beginning of their research life.

The Faculty of Management Studies is accredited as an "A" graded faculty, by the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Commission, with "A" grades for all its degree programmes. Being a state university and a consumer of public funds, we are highly conscious of academic excellence. The faculty is dedicated to pursuing an excellent teaching and research culture, to deliver high-quality education in a picturesque and peaceful environment for our students and other stakeholders. We have identified our academic responsibilities by organizing MURS 2022 creating an academic platform for young researchers in different fields to identify and disseminate innovative solutions to emerging issues and challenges.

I take this opportunity to welcome and thank all keynote speakers, distinguished guests and academics for their valuable contribution to the MURS 2022. Also, I express my heartiest gratitude and appreciation to all young researchers who have produced excellent research papers and who have stepped up to explore and present their significant findings at this research platform.

I also take this opportunity to extend my deep appreciation to the conference chair, secretary and other members of the organizing committee for their commitment to ensuring the success of this conference. I wish you all the best!

Professor Athula C. Gnanapala
Dean
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKER
PROFESSOR AJANTHA S. DHARMASIRI
"Reaping the Research Richness"

I am indeed delighted to share my thoughts, when the 4th Management Undergraduates' Research Session (MURS 2022) in collaboration with the Young Scientists Forum of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka takes place on 18th November, 2022. It is a significant step by the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), not only for raising the awareness on research among the undergraduate community but also for showing the way to apply research for upliftment of the socio-economic wellbeing of our nation.

The MURS 2022 comes with an opportune theme "Fostering Agility: Confronting the Uncertainty" that entails the endeavours for which we should strive. As we have often observed, when there is VUCA 1.0 reality (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity), our response should be VUCA 2.0 (Vision, Understanding, Confidence and Agility). A research symposium of this nature fulfils voids in focusing on deeper and broader issues shedding much light through rigorous analysis and right interpretations.

We have an acute gap to bridge with regard to the current and desired levels of engaging in management research, with publishable quality and practical relevance. It is encouraging to note that the FMS is tirelessly pursuing to link research insights to relevant practical implications. It reminds me of my reminiscent memories as the former editor of Sri Lankan Journal of Management (SLJM) published by the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), my employer, which became the first Sri Lankan management journal to be electronically available through EBSCO Host, one of the largest online research databases in the world.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those involved for their committed collaboration in vibrantly showcasing the MURS 2022. Let me wholeheartedly wish this prestigious event a phenomenal success.

Professor Ajantha S. Dharmasiri
Professor in Management
Immediate Past Director
Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM)
University of Sri Jayewardenepura

MESSAGE FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKER
DR. ROSHAN PANDITHARATHNA

With emerging technologies being applied to marketing in unprecedented ways, customers and organisations can exchange value effectively. Prior to the digital revolution, the value was only created by organisations, thus, customers merely were passive users of products and services. Nevertheless, businesses of today are creating value by partnering with their customers and other market actors to maintain long-term relationships. In recent years, digital transformation has allowed organisations to build ecosystems that serve their customers better than ever before, regardless of their size. As a result, employee-facing and customer-facing technologies are becoming more prevalent, enhancing interactions between the parties involved.

In addition to that, with powerful analytics from descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive analytics, organisations are able to understand customer insights that provide personalised services to customers. Consequently, in the future, anyone who can understand and speak data will survive. This suggests that both academia and industry should enhance research-intensive approaches for improving skill sets of employees. MURS 2022's research theme is an excellent way to support and prepare undergraduates for such a future.

As an alumnus of the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, I am delighted to deliver a keynote speech at MURS 2022 which aims to cultivate a research-intensive culture among undergraduates. I always believe research informs learning, thus, the attempt taken by MURS is remarkable. I wish very best for all professors, doctors, and students at FMS to have a great future.

Dr. Roshan Panditharathna
Director of PhD Studies
University of Bolton, United Kingdom

MESSAGE FROM THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE - MURS 2022

It brings us the utmost pleasure, pride, and honour to welcome you to the 4th Management Undergraduates' Research Session in Collaboration with Young Scientists Forum (MURS 2022) of the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka hosted on November 18, 2022, with the theme of "Fostering Agility: Confronting the Uncertainty". We appreciate the presence of the SAGE Publishers as the central academic partner and we admire the contributions of the ICMR 2022 team, the AHEAD project, and all other professional institutes in organizing a conference on this scale.

The MURS 2022 renders a great opportunity for undergraduates to network with research experts, corporate specialists, and peers from multiple institutes and exchange research insights on local, regional, and worldwide trends in their respective fields of study. The keynote addresses by distinguished academics, industry dialogue with corporate leaders, and the technical research sessions on Accounting and Finance, Business Management, Banking, EcoBusiness Management, Human Resource Management, Marketing Management, and Tourism and Hospitality Management are the main categories of the conference. Given that this is our fourth MURS of FMS, it is a remarkable accomplishment that we were able to accept 89 extended abstracts based on the peer-review process to present at this conference. We prioritized the quality of the extended abstracts to ensure the superiority of the scientific output of the conference. Meanwhile, as a responsible institute, we paid our undivided attention to conducting the conference as green as possible.

The conference was enriched by the keynote addresses of Professor Ajantha S. Dharmasiri and Dr. Roshan Panditharathna. Professor Dharmasiri is a renowned researcher, conference speaker, corporate trainer, strategy consultant, author, and academic. He was the Director and Chairman of the Board of Management of the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. Dr. Panditharathna, the Director of PhD Studies at the University of Bolton in the UK, is an emerging academic in the field of marketing with a demonstrated competence in both qualitative & quantitative research methodologies. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Professor Dharmasiri and Dr. Panditharathna for gracing this occasion with excellent keynote speeches.

The industry dialogue of the MURS 2022 fosters the link between industry and the research community by initiating an excellent discussion on the contemporary challenges in the dynamic business sphere and the ways to solve those through research. Mr. Nalin Karunaratne, the CEO of Ceylon Biscuits Limited, Mr. W. K. H. Wegapitiya, Chairman of Laugfs Holdings Ltd., and Mr. Shirantha Peiris, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management, share their insights into the Industry Dialogue of the MURS 2022.

We appreciate the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies for the magnificent support they rendered us making this event a great success. We are also grateful to all of our authors, reviewers, panelists, staff members, and students of the university for their contributions and patronage. In making this endeavour glamorous and meaningful.

We wish you a delightful research experience!

Organizing Committee - MURS 2022
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

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BANKING AND INSURANCE

USE OF PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS IN ISSUING CREDIT CARD SERVICES TO THE CUSTOMERS: EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKA

Samarajeewa, A.K.*, Premachandra, M.A.S., Arangalla, N.M., Gunarathne, P.K.D.U.P., Pathirana, G. and Wickramarachchi, C.N.

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1. Introduction

Predictive analytics describes identifying trends for a large amount of information to assist businesses in recognizing strategic business investments and evaluating customer relationships. With the advancement of technology, financial institutions are using predictive analytics for most of their corporate activities. By using predictive analytics, financial services use predictive analytics to identify past banking patterns of customers, get accurate information about whether their customers are making loan payments on time without delaying payments, and avoid errors. This makes the service safe and efficient (Kikan & Singh, 2019). Since the use of credit cards is also seen in Sri Lanka, the main objective of this research is to study whether the financial institutions that issue credit cards use predictive analytics or not. The top five financial institutions that issue credit cards in Sri Lanka are selected for this purpose. Accordingly, the factors that lead to the use of predictive analytics in issuing credit cards to customers and the factors that cause if predictive analytics is not used are investigated through other research objectives. It's possible to determine what key elements financial institutions analyse when issuing credit cards. When referring to past literature, it is said that predictive analytics is used for credit scoring, risk management, fraud detection, etc. However, researchers could not find any previous literature from Sri Lanka because the researchers considered whether or not to use more predictive analytics when issuing credit cards. Furthermore, a customer can have a thorough understanding of what financial institutions require before issuing a credit card. Currently, researchers are trying to determine whether financial institutions use predictive analytics when issuing credit cards. According to that, financial institutions use predictive analytics to provide credit card services to their customers (Torvekar & Game, 2019) but, such research papers have yet to be discovered in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

The qualitative method was used to achieve the research objectives of this study, and the purposive sampling method was used as the sampling method. The researchers used financial institutions as sampling units based on the research problem. In this study, five financial institutions were selected as the sample size, and permission was obtained from the officials first to conduct interviews for data collection. Afterward, the researchers collected data mainly through in-depth interviews of about five minutes. Additional questions asked by the researchers included whether the bank considers the spending habits of customers when using predictive analytics while issuing credit cards and whether predictive analytics is practical. In this study, NVivo software was used as a data analysis tool, and the recorded audio clips were transcribed and entered into this software as an application to obtain the final result. In order to achieve the research objectives, the researchers categorized themes and codes. After solving the primary research problem of whether financial institutions in Sri Lanka use predictive analytics, thematic analysis was used to identify the determinants that lead to predictive analytics if it is used and the challenging elements that precede it if predictive analytics is not used.

3. Findings and Discussion

Objective 01: To analyse the use of predictive analytics when issuing credit cards to customers in Sri Lanka.

Based on the information obtained, two financial institutions confirmed that they use predictive analytics, while the other three confirmed that they do not. A knowledge gap exists as sufficient research papers were limited to substantiate the predictive analysis of credit card issuance in a Sri Lankan context.

"Our bank is using predictive analytics when issuing a credit card to our customers."

"No, we do not use predictive analytics."

Objective 02: To analyse the factors that influence whether or not financial institutions in Sri Lanka use predictive analytics when issuing credit cards to customers.

The financial institution faces a risk if the borrower fails to pay the total amount within the stipulated period after issuing the credit card. Thus, a credit scoring system is used to stop credit defaults. Therefore, financial institutions use predictive analytics as they always need to analyse past data about the customer (Torvekar & Game, 2019). We have verified from financial institutions that we can analyse credit card applicants' spending patterns using predictive analytics. When this analysis is used, it is possible to get a proper understanding of the customer on how to use the loan amount obtained (Silva & Patabendige, 2021). Such a study can determine whether the credit card buyer will continue to call the financial institution. The results revealed that financial institutions issue credit cards to high-income or middle-income customers (Velananda, 2020). Thus, the income level is considered to determine whether the loan amount taken can be repaid within the agreed period. Financial institutions issue credit cards without predictive analytics to high-profile professionals (doctors, lawyers, and executives). Financial institutions hope that low-income people will default on their credit amount, but that is not the case (Dewri et al., 2016) Financial institutions consider CRIB while issuing a credit card, and if it is in good standing, it can be easily obtained without any problem. Here the past data of the customer is entered. Thus, predictive analytics is used to reduce default risk and find out the spending pattern of customers, and financial institutions that do not use predictive analytics focus on the points as mentioned above.

Figure 01: shows the factors that lead to financial institutions use and non-use of predictive analytics in issuing credit cards.

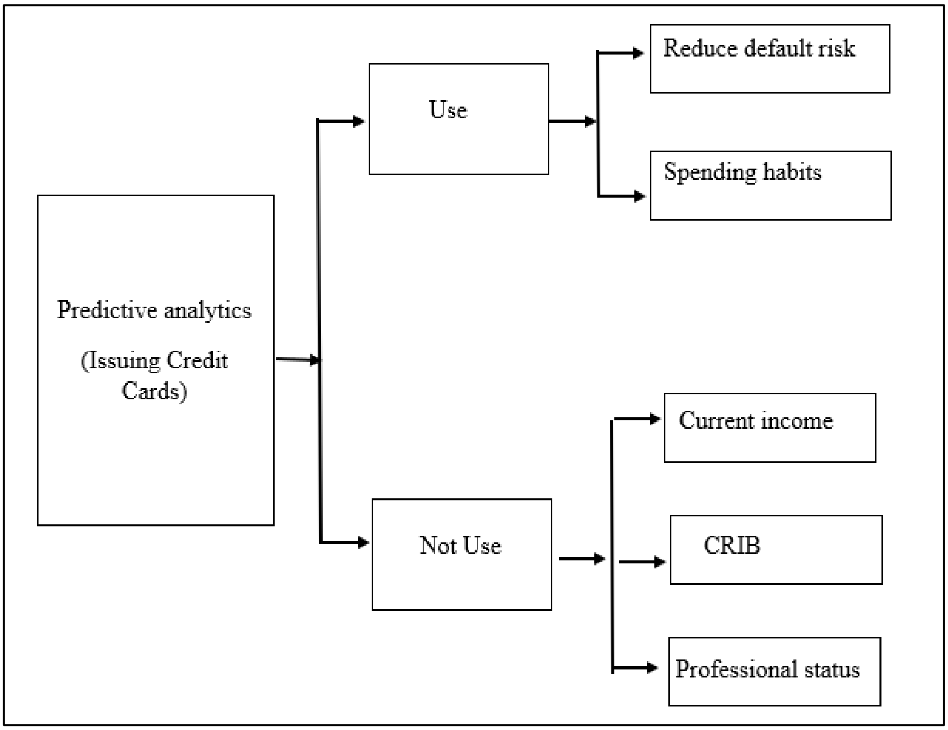

Figure 1: Predictive Analytics (Issuing Credit Cards)

4. Conclusion and Implications

The study revealed whether financial institutions in Sri Lanka use predictive analytics when issuing credit cards to their customers and the factors leading to it. Consequently, researchers achieved other research objectives. Out of these, five financial institutions in Sri Lanka, two institutes use predictive analytics, and the other three did not. Financial institutions utilize predictive analytics to understand their customers' spending habits. Thus, one of the reasons why Sri Lankan financial institutions do not use predictive analytics when issuing credit cards is that when issuing credit cards, financial institutions consider the customer's income level, CRIB status since it focuses on the customer's career. Overall, it can be concluded that financial institutions in Sri Lanka do not use predictive analytics in issuing credit cards to customers. Accordingly, predictive analytics in financial institutions can be used as a guide for practitioners. The results presented in this paper can be used for further research paper studies.

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Keywords: Credit card services, Financial institutions, Predictive analytics, Sri Lanka

CREDITWORTHINESS AND ACCESS TO FINANCE: EVIDENCE FROM THE SRI LANKAN BATIK INDUSTRY

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1. Introduction

Small organizations are integral to every country's prosperity. The SME's creditworthiness can be measured using the 5Cs of credit: capacity, capital, character, collateral, and condition (Wasiuzzaman et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study is conducted on the Sri Lankan batik industry. In Sri Lanka, the batik industry is still in the infant stage. Because of some reason producers turn to financial institutions to get financing. Therefore, creditworthiness and access to finance should be investigated in the Sri Lankan context. In the Sri Lankan context, creditworthiness and access to finance research were low, especially in the batik industry. Batik producers face various difficulties in getting financial facilities, and the current economic crisis has also made their earnings uncertain. Therefore, the problem of the study is whether the batik industry's SMEs' creditworthiness impact access to finance. The main objective of this study is to examine the significant impact on creditworthiness and access to finance of the Batik Industry. The secondary objectives are to examine the significant impact of credit capacity, capital, character, collateral, and condition on access to the finance of the Batik Industry. The results of this study will be important to numerous parties. Therefore, a study of this kind is both timely and necessary.

2. Research Methodology

The study's purpose was to examine the impact on creditworthiness, the 5Cs of credit, and access to finance in the Sri Lankan batik industry. For this, the researcher used the below-mentioned model (Figure 1)

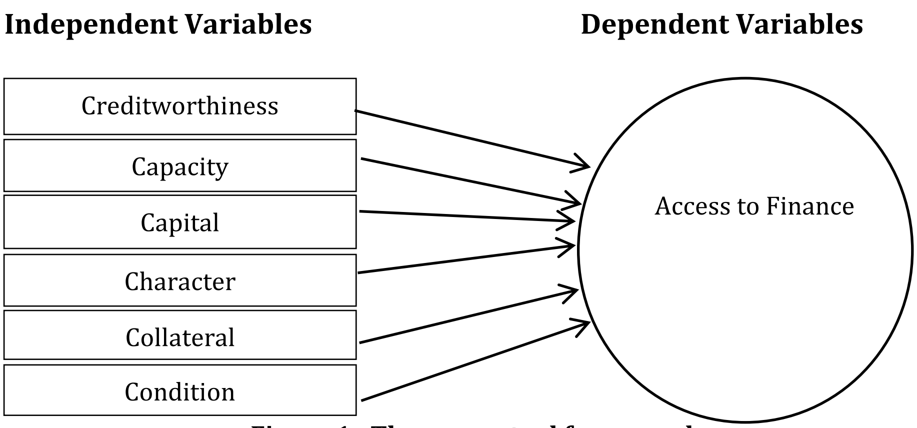

Figure 1: The conceptual framework
Source: (Wasiuzzaman et al. 2020)

The target population was 803 whole batik producers registered in the National Craft Council. The sample size was 261 batik producers according to 803 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The simple random sampling method was utilized, and an online questionnaire was used to collect the data from 261 registered batik producers. Simultaneously, the SPSS software was used to test multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between the variables.

3. Findings and Discussion

According to the reliability analysis, all of Cronbach's alpha values were greater than 0.7. The researcher used KMO and Bartlett's test to measure the validity. According to the results, all reliable items were significant, and all KMO and Bartlett values were greater than 0.5 at an acceptable level. In the descriptive analysis, access to finance has the highest mean value of 2.7450 with a 0.64677 standard deviation, and condition had the lowest mean value of 1.9913 with a 0.63472 standard deviation. According to the Pearson's correlation coefficient, all the independent variables significantly correlated with access to finance. Similarly, the variables positively impacted access to finance. The multiple regression analysis was used to determine the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. According to the regression analysis model summary, the R2 = 46%, indicating that these independent variables had a 46% impact on access to finance. The regression model was statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 27.439. The final model had P values less than 0.05, which means the regression model is said to predict the dependent variable as statistically significant (P = 0.000). Thus, the model was accepted.

Table 1: Coefficient Table

Model	(Constant)	Creditworthiness	Capacity	Capital	Character	Collateral	Condition
B	0.773	0.284	0.234	-0.071	-0.238	0.470	0.117
Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.362	0.007	0.000	0.126

Source: (Survey Data, 2022)

Regression equation,

$$\mathbf{Y}_{\text{(Access to Finance)}} = \mathbf{0.773} + \mathbf{0.284}_{\text{(Creditworthiness)}} + \mathbf{0.234}_{\text{(Capacity)}} + \mathbf{-0.238}_{\text{(Character)}} + \mathbf{0.470}_{\text{(Collateral)}}$$

According to the regression Analysis, creditworthiness has β = 0.284, P = 0.000 means, there is a significantly positive impact on creditworthiness and access to finance. The capacity has a significantly positive impact on access to finance since (β = 0.234, P = 0.022). The capital and access to finance were negative (β = -0.071 and P = 0.362) with an insignificant P value. Therefore, the batik producer's capital retention did not impact finance access. The character had a significantly negative impact on access to finance since (β = -0.238, P = 0.007). Collateral has a significant positive impact on access to finance since ($\beta = 0.470$, $P = 0.000$). The condition had a positive beta value, but it had an insignificant P value ($\beta = 0.117$, $P = 0.126$). Therefore, the condition did not impact access to finance for the batik industry. Finally, the researcher concluded that creditworthiness, capacity, character, and collateral were strong elements that help batik producers gain access to finance.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The overall objective of the study was to examine the significant impact on creditworthiness and access to finance of the Batik Industry. In this study, the creditworthiness, capacity, and collateral were significantly positive, and character had a significant negative impact on access to finance. Based on the overall findings, the researcher concluded that access to finance in the batik industry is determined by creditworthiness, capacity, character, and Collateral. Capital and condition have an insignificant impact on access to finance. Therefore, capital and condition were not sufficient for improved access to finance. As a result, this study provides knowledge to banks, batik producers, and government agencies on the critical issue of creditworthiness and access to finance. Batik manufacturers should get financial facilities if they want to expand their production. Accordingly, batik would be an ideal source of income for Sri Lanka to earn dollars in this economic crisis.

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Keywords: Access to finance, Creditworthiness, Small and medium enterprises, 5Cs of credit

THE IMPACT OF E-BANKING ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN PRIVATE COMMERCIAL BANKS IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

E-banking refers to the need for information technology and telecommunication to allow financial transactions to be completed over the phone or computer instead of physically or in person. The primary goal of e-banking solutions is to offer service to clients significantly speedier or for a lower operational cost. For a considerable period, electronic banking has existed in the shape of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and smartphone transfers. Considering the current scenario, the internet has evolved into an innovative delivery mechanism that facilitates monetary operations between clients and banks (Nitsure., 2003). When compared with other counties, Asians do not have well-developed technology, but Asian customers are rapidly adopting electronic services (Barquin, 2015). From the perspective of bank managers, learning about e-banking processes is critical, and they should have a better understanding of the prevailing technological enhancements in the banking sector to obtain a steady direction of growth. Moreover, banks should focus on customer value creation rather than profit maximization. The accomplishment of requirements and desires of customers to make their living standards higher is one of the objectives of a commercial bank. Hence, it is vital to obtain a deeper understanding of customer satisfaction with respect to the services provided by the bank to retain customers. With respect to the local context, relatively few studies have paid attention to the concepts of electronic banking service quality and customer satisfaction (Buddhika, 2020). Hence. the researchers conducted a study to inspect the effect of E-banking service excellence and customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan Commercial Banks.

2. Research Methodology

The researchers have adopted the deductive method as the approach for this study. The research is mainly based on primary data, which was examined quantitatively. The responses were graded using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5(very satisfied) to 1(very dissatisfied). Accordingly, the researchers collected 120 responses from customers of commercial banks in Sri Lanka. While conducting this study, the researchers considered customer satisfaction as the dependent variable and Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, and Empathy as the independent variables. Each of the above dimensions were regarded as critical for assessing customer satisfaction in the banking business. As the analyzing tools, researchers have adapted descriptive and inferential statistics such as factor analysis and multiple regression analysis for this study. Descriptive statistics were adopted to review the sample information of the sample while multiple regression was used to find out the effect between independent and dependent variables. Moreover, factor analysis was used to recognize the original factors which could measure the aspects of an independent and dependent variable based on their importance and adequacy. Further researchers used Cronbach's Alfa value, Skewness and Kurtosis values, normality, and multicollinearity of primary data, which for the study.

3. Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer satisfaction (A)	1.00	4.67	2.2028	0.78537
Reliability (B)	1.00	5.00	2.4500	0.66573
Response (C)	1.00	5.00	2.2850	0.80321
Assurance (D)	1.00	5.00	2.4393	0.77944
Empathy (E)	1.00	5.00	2.4472	0.86592

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

The maximum and the minimum values of customer satisfaction were 4.67 and 1 respectively as descriptive analysis. The mean value was 2.20, and it can be changed to 0.78 negatively or positively. The maximum and the minimum values of Reliability, Responses, Assurance, and Empathy were 5 and 1 respectively. The mean value of Reliability was 2.45, and it can be changed to 0.66 negatively or positively; Response was 2.28, and it can be changed to 0.80 negatively or positively; Assurance is 2.43, and it can be changed to 0.77 negatively or positively; and Empathy is 2.44, and it can be changed to 0.86 negatively or positively.

Researchers have used principal component analysis by considering the dependent and independent variables and performed the varimax rotation. As per the findings, all the factor loadings and the communalities exceeded 0.5. As a result, the sampling is adequate because KMO values were between 0.6 and 1.

Table 2: Normality Test

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	P-value
Customer satisfaction (A)	0.935	0.169
Reliability (B)	0.814	0.222
Response (C)	0.870	0.197
Assurance (D)	0.928	0.140
Empathy (E)	0.920	0.181

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

The Shapiro-Wilk test statistic measures how closely the sorted and normalized sample values fit the standard normal distributions. It was evident that the P-value is higher than 0.05, and the data set is normally distributed.

Table 3: Test of Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer satisfaction (A)	0.947
Reliability (B)	0.939
Response (C)	0.927
Assurance (D)	0.929
Empathy (E)	0.95

Source: SPSS Data Analysis (2022)

As per the findings, the Alpha value was above 0.7 and it could be concluded that the data was reliable to conduct the research

Table 4: Test of Multicollinearity

Variables	VIF
Customer satisfaction (A)	4.05
Reliability (B)	2.3
Response (C)	2.38
Assurance (D)	1.33
Empathy (E)	4.77

Source: SPSS Data Analysis (2022)

The Variation Inflation factor of all the variables was below 5, and supports the conclusion that there is no multi-collinearity in the records.

Table 5: Results of the Multiple Regression

Variables	Coefficient	P-Value
		<0.05
Constant	0.68	0.686
Reliability (B)	0.297	0.049
Response (C)	0.344	0.190
Assurance (D)	0.188	0.184
Empathy (E)	0.066	0.041

Source: SPSS Data Analysis (2022)

The P-value of reliability and empathy was 0.049 and 0.041, which implies a significant level. However, P-values for response and assurance was 0.190 and 0.184, which was above the significant value and did not significantly impact customer satisfaction. As per the output of the regression analysis, the final fitted regression model is as follows:

Customer Satisfaction= 0.680+ 0.049x1 + 0.041x2 + ε ………(1)

4. Conclusion

This study focused on the impact of E-Banking on Customer Satisfaction in Private Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka. Mainly, the researcher has focused on the factors that have an impact on the change in customer satisfaction. Accordingly, the researchers considered customer satisfaction as the dependent variable and Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, and Empathy as the independent variables. Simultaneously, the researchers adopted the deductive method for this study, and primarily based on primary data that has undergone quantitative analysis. According to the findings of the study, reliability, and empathy significantly impact, while response and assurance did not significantly impact customer satisfaction. More findings on other nations and analyses of E-Banking distinctions would be the focus of future investigation. Furthermore, other variables might be included in the research to ensure a substantial stability in study findings.

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Keywords: Customer satisfaction, E-banking, Private commercial banks, Sri Lanka

INTENTION TOWARDS ADOPTING GREEN BANKING INITIATIVES IN COMMERCIAL BANKS IN SRI LANKA: AN ANALYSIS OF BANKERS' PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

Climatic change has become a global concern, and everybody has the prime responsibility for mitigating climate change issues. As a part of the economy, the banking sector is also responsible for global warming in case of rising greenhouse gas emissions. It indicates that banks have to play an intermediary role between economic growth and environmental protection via managing banking activities. The banks play an important role as financial intermediaries. Being a responsible entity in the economy, banks should adopt green banking practices to their internal operating system, investment, and financing portfolios in the public interest. Accordingly, the environment-pollution-free banking that uses bank products, activities, and necessary instruments that do not harm the elements of our environment is called green banking (Mehedi et al., 2017). Green banking allows customers to enjoy their banking services without being present at the counter. Thus, green mortgages, online banking, mobile banking, online accounts, green loans, and paperless banking statements are a few examples of green bank initiatives. The emerging trend of greening is that it diminishes the image of the banks due to the unfulfilling of environmental responsibilities of banks, which will be very expensive to repair. In the developing world, conventional banks should launch new banking products that inspire sustainable practices and need to reform their in-house operations to implement environmentally friendly practices (Ginovsky, 2009). The Green banking initiatives of a bank will be favourable not only for the green environment but also drives cost reductions in banks. Thus, green bank initiatives of a bank take the green transformation of internal operations and environmentally responsible financing, which are essential to achieve the bank's sustainability and sustainable economic development (Wijethunga & Dayaratne, 2018). Consequently, Sri Lanka has experienced a series of extreme weather conditions over the last decade. Currently, Sri Lanka has ranked as the second most vulnerable country to climate change in the World (Long-Term Climate Risk Index, 2019). In consequence, climate change, warming, and environmental deprivation are becoming major challenges to sustainable development in the Sri Lankan economy. The banking sector in Sri Lanka accounts for the largest portion of the total assets in the financial system of the country. Many banks and other financial institutions are operating in the economy and financing individuals, the government sector, and the private sector, including multinational companies. The operational activities of grantees support the economic value-addition process to a greater extent and reversely contaminate the surroundings because of their profit motives. Ultimately, it will create massive environmental issues in the country. Thus, the banking sector and other financial institutions are directly responsible for the environmental degradation activities of grantees. Therefore, in this context, it is imperative to study bankers' intention toward adopting green banking initiatives because bankers have a crucial role in the green transformation process. Hence, this research primarily attempts to explore the Bankers' intention to adopt green banking initiatives in Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka. Further, this study aims to analyse the influential factors for bankers to implement the different aspects of green banking initiatives.

2. Research Methodology

Previous scholars have attempted to explain the intention of adopting different green banking products using several dimensions. The empirical review of the previous studies contributed to developing a conceptual model which needs to analyse the bankers' intention toward green banking initiatives. The dependent variable is the banker's intention to adopt green banking. Intention toward adopting green banking initiatives was selected as the dependent variable for the study as it is a critical indicator of bankers' intention when adopting green banking initiatives in their banks. Three independent variables were identified in this study, namely, (1) bank-specific factors; (2) regulatory & legal factors; (3) stakeholder pressure. Moreover, in this study, bank-specific factors were measured through the attitude of the bankers, the commitment of the top management, and the bank's policies. In addition, the pressure from customers, competition in the industry, and pressure from the international organization are considered proxies for measuring stakeholder pressure. To collect the necessary data for analysis, researchers developed a structured questionnaire. In total, 200 questionnaires were distributed to bankers from March 2022 to August 2022.However, the sample size was limited to 60 because of the inadequate responses rate of the bankers. A multiple regression model was used to analyze the collected data of the survey.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The reliability of the data was initially explored using Cronbach's alpha test to examine the internal consistency of the seven dimensions and dependent variable. Thus, Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than or equal to 0.6 will be considered high internal reliability (Ritter, 2010). All the factors had Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0. 6 which reflected high internal reliability.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha

Attitude	.641
Commitment of the top management	.855
Policy of the bank	.897
Regulatory & legal factors	.943
Pressure of customers	.741
Competition in the industry	.678
Pressure from civil society & International organizations	.733
Intention	.757

Source: Data analysis, (2022)

KMO and Bartlett's test is used to measure sample adequacy. Kaiser (1974) recommends accepting values greater than 0.5. Further, the sample adequacy of each variable was also examined, and it also proved that sample adequacy is enough for each variable; attitude (.724), the commitment of the top management (.735), policy (.819), regulatory & legal factors (.831), industry competition (.578) and pressure from international organizations and civil society (.665) and intention (.730) respectively. Then, factor analysis was used to reduce data to a smaller set of variables and to discover the underlining structure of the data. The factor loading values of all the variables were higher than 0.5 except for the variable competition in the industry. Henceforth, the factor analysis of this study derived two variables for the competition in the industry and labelled them as "existing competition in the industry" and "future potential competition in the industry."

Table 2: Results of the regression analysis

Coefficient	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**t value**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Err.**		
β_0	-0.0001	.090	.000	1.000
Attitude	.368	.123	2.997	.004*
Commitment	.333	.158	2.107	.040*
Policy	-.116	.137	-.843	.403
Regulations	-.123	.140	-.882	.382
Customers Pressure	.182	.132	1.380	.174
Existing completion in the industry	-.159	.105	-1.51	.137
Future potential competition in the industry	.585	.132	4.431	.000*

Pressure from civil & International Organizations	.171	.145	1.182	.243

Note: * indicates significance at a 5% significant level
Source: Data analysis, (2022)

Finally, researchers employed a multiple linear regression analysis to evaluate the factors affecting the bankers' intention toward adopting green banking practices in Sri Lanka. The adjusted R-squared value of the fitted regression model was 76.3%, which emphasized that the banker's intention for green initiative adaptation can be explained by the eight variables. The results of regression analysis showed that bankers' attitudes, the commitment of the top management, and future potential competition in the industry have a statistically significant impact on the bankers' intentions to adopt green bank initiatives.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Accordingly, bankers have a pivotal role in converting the banking process into a green process. This study manifested that bankers' attitudes, the commitment of the top management, and future potential competition in the industry (PIC) revealed a significant positive impact on bankers' intention towards adopting green bank initiatives in the banking sector of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, to the successful adaptation of the green banking initiatives to the banking sector, raising awareness of the bankers on green banking is essential to change the bankers' attitudes.

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Keywords: Bankers' intention, Bank-specific factors, Green banking, Regulatory and legal factors, Stakeholder pressure

ECOBUSINESS MANAGEMENT

DETERMINANTS OF PURCHASE INTENTION FOR UPCYCLED CLOTHING: A STUDY OF GENERATION Z CONSUMERS IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Upcycled clothing is a process in which used materials are converted into higher value or quality products to gain interest as a new eco-business avenue (Jayasinghe et al., 2021). In contrast to recycling, upcycling adds value to materials by transforming them into new forms. At the household level, upcycling includes redesigning and remaking used clothing into accessories and pieces of metal, plastic, or fabric into ornaments. Clothing that has been upcycled saves money and helps conserve natural resources like water and energy (Assoune, 2022). The Sri Lankan apparel industry is steadily growing and gradually expanding manufacturing facilities (Export Development Board, 2020). With ever-increasing production volumes, managing post-industrial textile waste has become a critical issue, primarily due to the lack of an effective waste management system. Moreover, managing post-industrial textile waste is difficult due to material complexities and non-biodegradability (Dissanayake & Weerasinghe, 2021). Currently, municipal councils are not responsible for collecting textile waste from manufacturing. In Sri Lanka, due to the lack of facilities for textile waste collection, disposal has a significant negative impact on environmental pollution (Dissanayake & Weerasinghe, 2021). This study considered the purchase intention of upcycled clothing among generation Z consumers who are more educated, well-behaved, and born between 1995 and early 2010 (Chaturvedi et al., 2020). They have an increasing preference for green products and intrinsic motivation to behave in an environmentally friendly manner (Chaturvedi et al., 2020). This study utilized the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the theoretical underpinning for the current study. The major objective of the study is to investigate the determinants of purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka. In order to achieve the major objective of the study, four specific objectives have been developed as follows.

1. To determine the influence of environmental concern on purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka.
2. To determine the influence of personal norms on purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka.
3. To determine the influence of willingness to pay a premium on purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka.

4. To determine the influence of perceived value on purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka.

2. Methodology

This study employed a deductive approach to find purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers. The survey strategy was used with minimal interference and in a non-contrived setting. This is a cross-sectional study. The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire as the primary source to collect quantitative data to achieve the research objectives. The sample size of the study is 384. The sampling element was identified as the Generation Z consumer purchasing or willing to purchase upcycled clothing products. The unit of analysis is an individual consumer. Since there is no credible source to get the total number of Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka, the population is unknown in the current study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to collect data from the sample. 309 usable responses were received and used for the analysis. Correlation and regression analyses have been conducted to analyze the collected data.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that environmental concern, perceived value, and personal norms have a significant positive impact on purchase intention of upcycled clothing among generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka, while willingness to pay a premium does not have a significant effect on purchase intention for upcycled clothing among generation Z consumers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	
Constant	1.014	.156	.000
Environment Concern	.238	.059	.000
Personal Norms	.130	.048	.007
Willingness to Pay Premium	.103	.056	.066
Perceived Value	.250	.041	.000

Source: Survey Data, (2022)

According to Table 1, the beta value of environment concern is 0.238, personal is 0.130, and perceived value is 0.250. Since those three variables have positive beta values and a significance value of less than 0.05, it can be concluded that environmental concern, personal, norms and perceived value have significant positive impact on purchase intention of upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers. Chaturvedi et al. (2020) also confirmed the positive impact of environmental concern, personal norms and perceived value on purchase intention of recycled clothing. The p-value of willingness to pay a premium is 0.066, which is greater than 0.05. Hence, the developed hypothesis was not supported in this study. Similarly, Chekima et al. (2016) revealed that people are becoming less willing to pay more for green products.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of the study was to investigate the determinants of purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka. Environmental concern, personal norms, and perceived value have a significantly positive impact on purchase intention for upcycled clothing among Generation Z consumers in Sri Lanka. The findings of this study have implications for Sri Lankan product manufacturers, designers and policymakers at the national level to design attractive and effective marketing strategies which can be talked to the inner mind of consumers.

Marketers are advised to pay special attention to upcycled clothing products. For that, they should create exciting promotion schemes that highlight the benefit of upcycled clothing towards the environment and finally lead to green consumption patterns. Also, the findings can be considered when the government develops and implements new rules and regulations. Further government can discuss with relevant authorities and add environmental and conservation problems to the school curriculum to enhance environmental concern, personal norms, and perceived value among the school community. Then existing and potential consumers in the upcycled clothing sector will be ready to defend the environment.

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***Keywords*:** Generation Z consumers, Purchase intention, Upcycled clothing

IMPACT OF CONSUMPTION VALUES ON PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF GREEN HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS: WITH REFERENCE TO WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The rapid economic growth has led to environmental degradation which has given rise to major environmental issues (Luo et al., 2022). Thus, human behaviour needs to be changed and hence consumers are now moving towards green purchases. Recently, Sri Lanka has identified a growth in green FMCGs due to environmental problems and high consumption of household activities, which reduces the negative impact. Green FMCGs can be seen in the supermarkets in Western province which has the highest GDP share. Since green FMCGs have high prices, consumers in Western province have a high capacity to purchase. Although, green FMCGs are growing, actual green FMCG purchasing is low (Lee, 2021). Even though 54.2% Sri Lankans consider change for green, 40% actually consumed. A recent survey stated 65% of consumers wanted to purchase sustainable brands but actually 26% purchased. Following that, researchers identified green purchase behavior will be mostly dependent on consumption values which determine the reasons behind consumer purchase behavior. Whilst researchers applied the theory of consumption values to study purchase behavior, many studies haven't used all variables and explored limitedly in Sri Lanka. Most studies conducted under FMCG have focused on products like organic products, personal care, green cosmetics, consumer electronics. Researchers have concluded that understanding of green product in many contexts remained under-developed. Green household cleaning products are growing in Sri Lanka and more studies should be conducted to analyze the user behavior due to less adoption in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to identify the impact of consumption values on purchase behavior of green household cleaning products. The FMCG marketers can emphasize consumption values in their offerings while developing strategies to enhance value perception of consumers which increase green purchasing.

2. Research Methodology

For this study the researcher applied the conceptual framework developed by Wang et al. (2018) based on the theory of consumption values. The study followed a deductive approach under quantitative study. A positivist researcher develops hypotheses based on previous research and existing theories. Hence, this research uses positivism as the research philosophy. The researcher used a survey strategy to collect data from consumers who purchase green household cleaning products in Western province. The unit of analysis of this study was individuals. The researcher has selected a sample of 384 respondents based on Cochran's formula since the target population is unknown. To collect data, a structured questionnaire was developed with three sections. For instance, Lee (2021) have also used questionnaires to obtain data. As the sampling technique, the convenience sampling method was used. From the sample, 326 effective responses were selected for further analysis after the data cleaning. All the items in the questionnaire were measured by using a five-point Likert scale. Further the validity and reliability were tested by applying KMO test and Cronbach's alpha values. Finally, the hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis.

3. Findings and Discussion

All the variables were reliable and valid as all alpha values were above 0.8, KMO values were above 0.5 and Bartlett's test of sphericity values were less than 0.05. Under the multiple regression, the model summary showed the adjusted R square value is 0.513 which explained 51.3% of the variance in green purchase behavior is explained by consumption values. The output of the ANOVA test p- value is 0.000. It is less than 0.05. Therefore, at 95% confidence interval, the regression is statistically significant. Based on the coefficient table, the p – value of functional value is 0.001 (<0.05). The unstandardized beta coefficient is 0.111 (positive). Therefore, functional value has a positive impact on purchase behavior of green household cleaning products and consistent with what was discovered in previous studies (Danish et al., 2019). The p- value of social value is 0.206 (>0.05) and b value is – 0.064. Hence, the impact is not significant. This finding is equivalent with few literature (Wang et al., 2018). Wang et al. (2018) stated that social pressure doesn't affect the purchase behavior. The p-value of conditional value is 0.000 (<0.05) and b value is 0.226 (positive). Hence conditional value has a positive impact on purchase behavior of green household cleaning products. The existing literature provides support where Wang et al. (2018) found the same. Similarly, Danish et al. (2019) found conditional value positively influences on green purchasing of consumers. The p- value of epistemic value is 0.000 (<0.05) and b value is 0.358 (positive). Therefore, epistemic value has a positive impact on purchase behavior of green household cleaning products. This showed the highest impact. The findings of Wang et al. (2018); Lee (2021) showed the same. The p – value of emotional value is 0.084 (>0.05) and b value is 0.077 (positive). Hence, emotional value has a positive impact, but it is not significant. This finding is contradictory to previous research of Danish et al. (2019); Lee (2021). However, this is aligned with findings of Adithya and Astuti (2019); Wang et al. (2018) which stated consumers are rational and they might not be susceptible to emotional factors. When buying a household cleaning product, it will not touch the emotional side of consumers as they see it as a fulfillment of a need.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The findings of regression analysis revealed functional, conditional, epistemic value positively and significantly impacted on purchase behavior of green household cleaning products whereas social value had a nonsignificant negative impact. However, emotional value also was not significant although it showed a positive impact. The researcher identified the direct impact between values and green FMCG purchase behavior as many researchers have focused only few values. Hence, this study helps widen the literature regarding green studies and provides a platform to future researchers.

The findings enable FMCG marketers to develop strategies to increase green purchasing. Since epistemic value shows the highest impact, marketers should convey environmental benefits while improving the product design which motivates consumer desire for knowledge. They can improve their quality standards of green household cleaning products as functional value positively impacts. The government can also promote the production of green FMCG products. Moreover, the companies can increase purchasing by providing discounts and by conducting promotional campaigns as conditional value has a positive impact. Since different conditions affect consumer purchasing decision and searching of the green products, the government can also implement policies where it is mandatory for companies to have relevant standards like ISO environmental certifications.

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Keywords: Consumption values, Green FMCG, Household cleaning products, Purchase behaviour, Sri Lanka

FACTORS INFLUENCING MILLENNIALS' PARTICIPATION IN PLASTIC WASTE RECYCLING UNDER THE EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLOMBO DISTRICT

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1. Introduction

With the continued development and rising living standards, urbanization and the population growth have led to the rise in solid waste generation. Plastics, the third largest municipal waste source, consumption of plastic surpassed 297.5 million in2016. It was estimated that 55 percent of global plastic waste was thrown away into landfills, 25 percent was incinerated, and only 20 percent was recycled in 2015. Thus, the management and disposal of plastic waste have become a major concern globally.

As a developing country, Sri Lanka also faces issues regarding plastic waste management at present. About 1.6 million MT of plastic waste is generated each year, out of which 15% is composted, 10% is recycled, and 75% is thrown into landfills. Recycling as one of the approaches to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is considered an effective waste management strategy. Thus, the success of these initiatives could be achieved with the participation of the community or the consumers. Since the consumers' participation in recycling is said to be low, the researcher explored the factors that would motivate consumers' participation in plastic waste recycling. Based on this objective, the study is developed to identify the factors influencing consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling and to investigate the impact of environmental knowledge, behavioural attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and economic incentives on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling. The findings of the study would benefit many stakeholder groups like municipalities, policymakers, recyclers, consumers, and many more. Further, the study will contribute to the literature on plastic waste recycling under the EPR system. This would be a useful material for academics to conduct future research.

2. Research Methodology

With the identified area of the problem in the study, the researcher developed a conceptual framework for the study by referring to previous studies to examine the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. Based on the conceptualization, the researcher developed five hypotheses to achieve the study's objectives. The researcher has adopted the positivist, deductive quantitative approach to test the formulated hypotheses. Quantitative research is a means of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among the variables.

Research design is necessary to enable smooth sailing of the various research procedures, thereby designing the research as professionally as possible, yielding maximum information with minimum effort, time, and cost (Akhtar, 2016). Accordingly, the explanatory research design was used as the research design for the study. Once the sample size was determined, the sample was identified based on the convenience sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method where the people are being sampled because they are convenient sources of data for the researcher. Primary data was collected using questionnaire surveys through social media from 235 millennial consumers in Colombo District.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The data collected were analysed using IBM SPSS statistical software to test the developed hypotheses, and all five hypotheses were validated using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The hypotheses developed based on the literature review can be tested using the p-value (significant level) and the regression coefficient. In order to accept the hypotheses, the coefficient value should be positive, and the p-value should be equal to or less than the significant level of 0.05 at a 95% confidence interval.

As per the results of this study, the p-value for environmental knowledge, behavioural attitude, subjective norms, and economic incentives were less than 0.05, and the coefficient values were positive. Therefore, it indicated that environmental knowledge has a significant impact on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling. Moreover, the results of this study emphasised that the impact of environmental knowledge on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling is positive. Similar studies explained that citizens who are more informed about recycling are likely to participate in recycling (Vicente & Reis, 2008). Besides, the findings of this study revealed that there is a significant positive impact of behavioural attitude on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling, which is in line with the findings of other similar studies. A study conducted by Bezzina & Dimech (2011) concluded that there is a strong, positive, and linear relationship between recycling participation and personal attitudes. As per the study results, subjective norms have a significant positive impact on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling. Afroz et al. (2017) stated that the influence of friends, neighbours and family members is a key predictor of recycling behaviour. Results showed that economic incentives have a significant positive impact on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling. Few studies recommended that financial or economic incentives can increase household participation in recycling (Afroz, Rahman, Masud, & Akhtar, 2017). Since the p-value of perceived behavioural control was greater than 0.05, and the coefficient value was negative (-0.028), it revealed that there is an insignificant impact of perceived behavioural control on consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling. Further, a few studies found that perceived behavioural control does not affect behavioural intention (Khan et al. 2019). In addition, some studies discussed that perceived behavioural control is an insignificant predictor of recycling intention.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Henceforth, a study was conducted to identify the factors that would motivate people to engage in plastic waste recycling, by obtaining data from millennial consumers in Colombo District. The results of the study revealed that only four hypotheses were accepted, and accordingly, environmental knowledge, behavioural control, subjective norms, and economic incentives were found to have a significant influence on millennial consumers' intention to participate in plastic waste recycling.

The present study contributes to the literature on plastic waste management and extended producer responsibility by studying the role of end consumers in supporting the recycling initiatives undertaken by the producers to contribute to reducing wastage. Moreover, this study expands the literature by discussing the application of the theory of planned behaviour precisely within the context of recycling behaviour, hence, by studying different types of recycling behaviour of the end consumers while managing plastics. The researchers and policymakers can use these findings to confront the environmental and economic exposures of developing countries. Additionally, the study is vital in making consumers aware of recycling behaviour. The findings even have implications for businesses seeking to possess returns of used goods from consumers and improve their reverse logistics performance.

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Keywords: Extended producer responsibility, Municipal solid waste, Plastic waste, Recycling

DRIVERS, BARRIERS, AND OPPORTUNITIES ON E-WASTE MANAGEMENT SRI LANKA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WESTERN PROVINCE

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1. Introduction

E-waste (electronic waste) is one of the fastest growing waste streams worldwide due to high consumer demand for the new featured products, technology uptakes, and a shorter replacement cycle of Electronic and Electrical Equipment (EEE). Global e-waste generation was recorded at 53.6 million metric tons (Mt) in 2019. Most of the e-waste is mainly generated in Asia, which is 24.9 Mt of the global e-waste generation. EEE contains many hazardous substances and non-hazardous valuable substances. These substances impact the health and environment. Mainly, e-waste contains 60% heavy metals, 30% non-degradable plastic, and 2.70% hazardous metals. The growth of e-waste creates a new environmental challenge called e-waste management. Sri Lanka is now dealing with this massive problem, both locally generated and internationally imported. In 2019, Sri Lanka contributed 138 (Mt) of e-waste to Asian e-waste. The quantity of e-waste in Sri Lanka was 95 (Mt) in 2016, and 87 (Mt) in 2014. So, according to the above factors, an obvious idea can be taken about the quantity of e-waste in Sri Lanka in the past few years. The government and non-government organizations have introduced methods for upstream reduction of e-waste through different strategies, but they have still not been properly implemented. Consequently, a large volume of e-waste is still disposed into garbage, dumps, and unclean landfills. A thorough understanding of the opportunities, drivers, and barriers related to managing e-waste is necessary to establish an efficient e-waste management system. Therefore, this study aims to identify drivers, barriers, and opportunities to e-waste management with special reference to the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Further, this study focused on drawing the attention of policymakers and waste planners to ensure proper e-waste management in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

This study was conducted based on the positivist philosophy, and the deductive approach was used. According to the research philosophy, the researcher analyses and measures, and the conclusion is drawn based on calculations of the study. As a deductive study, the researcher explored research objectives using quantitative variables. Problems and phenomena were described and evaluated by using collected data and numerical form. Simultaneously, descriptive statistics were employed in the research design. The closed-ended five-point Likert scale questionnaire was created using the results of the literature as a guide. The broad spectrum of relevant parties comprised electronic equipment importers, recyclers, resellers, collectors, consumers, non-government organizations, policymakers, and implementers. This study selected electronic equipment consumers as a sample. The sample was selected from the Western province of Sri Lanka because the e-waste generation of the Western province compared to other provinces was high. The researcher used the convenience sample technique under the non-probability sample techniques since it is cost-effective and more convenient than other sample techniques. The researcher used an online questionnaire with three sections (Section A -Demographic characteristics, Section B - statement on e-waste knowledge and perception, and Section C – Variables) to gather primary data from the sample. Gathered primary data were analysed using Excel, SPSS statistical software, and a Relatively Important Index (RII) to achieve research objectives.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

This research was designed to discover the drivers, barriers, and opportunities for e-waste management. Results were obtained by analysing the collected responses from the selected sample of the study (254 respondents to the online survey). The respondents' demographic data, their knowledge level, and their perception of e-waste were analysed. It could be concluded that a significant number of respondents from total respondents have an idea about electronic waste and have knowledge and awareness of the environmental and health hazards of e-waste, even though they were not educated about e-waste. Reliability and validity tests were conducted using SPSS software at the beginning of the analysis to check the data set's stability, consistency, and accuracy. Accordingly, descriptive statistics were used to describe the nature and magnitude of sensory characteristics, and it was analysed via SPSS statistical software. From the descriptive statistic result, the researcher concluded that the performance of the factor is at a standard level, and the variation of the data set is at a low level.

In this study, the Relative Importance Index (RII) was selected to rank the criteria according to their relative importance level. The potential market for recycling products was stated as the first rank in the overall ranking. It was 0.844 in RII value. Efficient waste management institutions and human behaviour and behavioural changes were identified as the second and third significant drivers of adaptation of e-waste management according to the RII results. They were 0.838 and 0.836 respectively. The finding supports Kwabena et al., 2018 which showed driving factors for e-waste management in many countries.

The study identified that the lack of rules and regulations on electronic equipment users, lack of funds and investment in e-waste management, and lack of industrial knowledge on e-waste management were significant barriers to adapting e-waste management in Sri Lanka. RII values for the significant factors were 0.844, 0.822, and 0.822 respectively. Previous researchers have found that lack of funds and investment in e-waste management, rules and regulations on electric equipment consumers, and lack of industrial knowledge on e-waste as the most significant drivers of e-waste management. (Ahirwar & Tripathi, 2021; Herat & Agamuthu, 2012; Wath et al., 2011).

RII value for the energy savings from recovery material was 0.833, which was ranked first by looking at the overall ranking. New business opportunities were the second rank among the overall ranking. It was 0.828 in RII value. Third, among the overall ranking economic value of recovery material was identified as opportunities for e-waste management. The finding supported the study by Chandrasekaran et al., 2018; which showed the main opportunities for e-waste management.

4. Conclusion and Implication

As per the study's objectives, the researcher could find out the drivers, barriers, and opportunities to e-waste management in Sri Lanka, with reference to the Western province. The study finding was based on an analysis of empirical data from 254 electronic item consumers. The potential markets for recycling products, efficient waste management institutions, and human behaviours and behavioral changes in e-waste management were identified as the most critical drivers of adopting e-waste management. The study found that lack of rules and regulations on electronic equipment users, lack of funds and investment in e-waste management, and lack of industry knowledge were the most significant barriers to e-waste management. On the other hand, energy saving from the materials, new business opportunities, and economic values of recovery materials were considered as highly important opportunities compared to other opportunities.

This study added new knowledge to the existing literature. Moreover, it is helpful to the stakeholders engaging and making decisions on e-waste management in Sri Lanka. This research finding can be used to identify the drivers which positively impact, the barriers which negatively impact, and the main opportunities which are on e-waste management. As per the findings, the government and the regulatory bodies should pay attention to e-waste management because of the rapid increase in economic growth and changing needs of the consumers.

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Keywords: Barriers, Drivers, E-waste management, Opportunities

FINANCE

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN E-GOVERNMENT AND ATTRACTION OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Lack of capital is a major obstacle to the economic development of developing countries. That is, these countries have a gap between savings and investment. Globalization has created a system in which capital flows from capital-surplus countries to capital-deficient countries using Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), loans, and aid. Global FDI flows rose modestly in 2021 following the sizable decline registered in 2020. At USD 1.58 trillion, inflows were 3% up because of the successful merger and acquisition market and quick expansion of global project finance (World Bank, n.d.). Primarily, how governments communicate with individuals with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly changed the society. Al-Azzam and Abu-Shanab (2014) identified that developing e-government services is a strategy that helps eliminate FDI barriers. On the other hand, citizens, investors, businesses, and communities get benefits from e-government such as increased accountability, transparency in the government administrative system, less corruption, capability of promoting trust, encouraging e-participation, and the improved quality of service delivery (Al-Azzam & Abu-Shanab 2014). The availability and accessibility of electronic services also increase the host country's competitiveness by increasing efficiency and effectiveness and reducing time consumption. Numerous empirical research, worldwide papers, and surveys have examined the significant role that e-government efforts play in helping the economy recover from the financial crisis (United Nations, 2020). Simultaneously, the survey conducted by OECD recommended using e-government efforts to promote and attract foreign investment into host countries and territories to recover from the crisis. This study's aim is to examine how the growth of e-government has affected Sri Lanka's ability to draw FDI. Thus, the research objective is to investigate the relationship between e-services, empowered human capital, and telecommunication infrastructure with the quantity of FDI inflows in Sri Lanka. This study's findings will offer new perspectives on e-government and FDI to policymakers and researchers. Consequently, it will be beneficial for them to identify barriers in attracting FDI to the development of Sri Lanka.

2. Methodology

This study applied a quantitative and secondary research approach. Statistical analysis was conducted with the statistical package R (Version 4.1.2) using correlation analysis to test hypotheses. Data used in this study was from 2003 to 2020. Accordingly, FDI inflows data were collected from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) and United Nations E-government Development Index (EGDI), and E-participation Index (EPI) for e-government development in Sri Lanka. Based on the research objective, the following hypotheses were derived: Main hypothesis: H_0: FDI no relation to EGDI, Sub hypotheses: H_{0a}: FDI no relation to EPI, H_{0b}: FDI no relation to Online Service Index (OSI), H_{0c}: FDI no relation to The Human Capital Index (HCI), H_{0d}: FDI no relation to Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII).

3. Results and Findings

The panel data set was created for Sri Lanka from 2003 to 2020, and the total observations in the data set were 10, which spans 10 years.

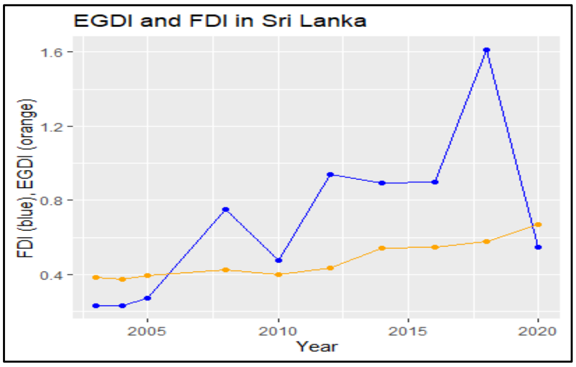

Figure 1: EGDI and FDI in Sri Lanka

Figure 1 shows the graphical relationship between EGDI and FDI in Sri Lanka. Up to 2019 EGDI is increased and FDI also trends toward growth.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix – Sri Lanka

	FDI	EGDI	OSI	HCI	TII
EGDI	0.553*				
OSI	0.655**	0.961***			
HCI	-0.769**	-0.716**	-0.806**		
TII	0.491	0.964***	0.867***	-0.687**	
EPI	0.513	0.903***	0.922***	-0.663**	0.810**

***p < .01, **p < .05, *p<.1 and probability values are in parenthesis
Source: Author's calculation

Consequently, there was a positive correlation between EGDI and FDI at a 90% confidence level using data from Sri Lanka (r=.553). However, HCI and FDI showed a more negative correlation in Sri Lanka (Table 1). Similarly, sub-indexes of TII and EPI did not have a significant relationship with FDI. As a result, findings pertaining to the Sri Lankan context also implied the relationship between the growth of e-government and its ability to attract FDI.

4. Conclusions

This study's major objective was to evaluate how Sri Lanka's e-government system affected its ability to draw foreign direct investment. Using data from 2003 to 2020, this research examined the correlation between E-Government Development (EGDI) and FDI flows. The findings demonstrated a favorable correlation between FDI and Sri Lanka's e-government progress. When looking in more detail at EGDI sub-indicators, this study revealed that OSI and FDI tend to be positively correlated while, HCI and FDI are negative in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the Sri Lankan e-government should improve the two sub-indicators of TII and EPI. To accomplish the e-government projects of Sri Lanka, the government must focus on increasing all sub-indicators of EGDI, not just two or three, to reach the predicted FDI for Sri Lanka. Without it, Sri Lanka cannot create an e-government and attract the desired FDI.

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Keywords*:* E-government, Foreign direct investment, Online services, Sri Lanka

IMPACT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ON THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are already a substantial element of Sri Lanka's economy, and they have a great deal of potential for the country's economic growth. There is a pressing need to increase the inherent capacities and competencies of SMEs for them to be successful suppliers. The government's participation in bringing this industry to that position is critical. However, SMEs don't realize their full potential for contributing to Sri Lanka’s economic growth although Sri Lanka has a significant number of SMEs industrial establishments (Welmilla et al., 2011). The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between SMEs and economic growth in Sri Lanka. While the impact of SMEs on economic growth has received increasing empirical attention in the literature, there have been few studies in the Sri Lankan context, specifically on their impact on the country's economic growth. Vijayakumar (2013) has researched the association between SMEs and the economic growth of Sri Lanka and analysed the relationship between economic growth, poverty, and SMEs using a simple multiple regression model. However, most of these previous studies, especially in the Sri Lankan context, have ignored the time series properties of data, employed a limited sample size, and used the ordinary least squares method (OLS) in the analysis. Nevertheless, OLS model is not appropriate in the analysis if the data are non-stationary. Accordingly, this study addresses such methodological issues in the previous studies on the relationship between SMEs and economic growth and applies the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model in the analysis. Numerous authors have highlighted the advantages of the ARDL model. A non-stationary time series, as well as time series with mixed order of integration, can both be used with an ARDL model, which is an OLS-based model. In a general-to-specific modelling framework, this model has enough lags to capture the process of data generation. ARDL also calculates dynamics over the short and long runs. It takes care of the endogeneity problem and avoids issues like spurious relationships coming from non-stationary time series data.

2. Research Methodology

As a secondary approach, this study analysed time series data from 1995 to 2019. Real GDP per capita, gross capital formation, and population growth were collected from World Development Indicators (WDI) of the World Bank, whereas SMEs’ output (industry sector) was collected from the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS). This study employed a real GDP per capita as the dependent variable. The independent variables were

Gross Capital Formation (GCF), Population Growth (POPG), and SMEs' output (industry sector) (SMEO). Further, the study adopted the neoclassical growth model. The basic model is stated as follows:

$GDP_t = f\ (GCF_t, POPG_t, SMEO_t)$ -- (1)

The data are transformed into natural logarithms, and the equation was obtained (2).

$LGDP_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LGCF_t + \beta_2 LPOPG_t + \beta_3 LSMEO_t + U_t$ ------------------ (2)

$LGDP_t$, $LGCF_t$, $LPOPG_t$, and $LSMEO_t$ were the natural logarithms of GDP per capita, gross capital formation, population growth, and SME output (industry sector), respectively. The error term is U_t. The researchers employed the autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model developed by Pesaran et al. (2001).

The equation of the ARDL model is as follows:

$$\Delta LGDP_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LGDP_{t-1} + \beta_2 LGCF_{t-1} + \beta_3 LPOPG_{t-1} + \beta_4 LSMEO_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{p} ø1\ \Delta LGDP_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{p} ø2\ \Delta LGCF_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{p} ø3\ \Delta LPOPG_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{p} ø4\ \Delta LSMEO_{t-1} + U_t \quad \text{----------------------------- (3)}$$

The first step was to check the stationarity of the variables in the model. Accordingly, the study employed the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and the Phillip Perron (PP) unit root tests. The cointegration relationship between the study variables were then examined. In the case of cointegration, error correction models were essentially built to discover further short-run relationships. Finally, diagnostic tests evaluated the goodness of fit of the estimated model.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The unit root test results indicated that population growth was stationary at the level, but GDP per capita, gross capital formation, and SMEs' output were stationary after being differenced. Based on the Akaike information criterion, the appropriate lag was selected automatically, and the selected ARDL model was (6, 1, 2, 2). The estimated values of R-squared and adjusted R-squared were 0.99 and 0.99 respectively. This indicated that about 99% of the dependent variable in this study is explained by the selected independent factors. The value of the Durbin–Watson test was 1.854315, meaning there was no issue of autocorrelation in the data. ARDL bound test results revealed that the F-statistic value (7.449279) was greater than the upper bound critical value (4.66) at a 1% significance level. The results confirmed that a significant long-run relationship existed between variables, rejecting the null hypothesis of no co-integration between variables at a 1% level.

Long Run Model - Table 1 shows the coefficient values of the variables in the long run. Most importantly, empirical results indicated that the SMEs' output has a positive and significant effect on GDP per capita. The coefficient for the SMEs' output was positive and significant at a 1% level of significance. A 1% increase in SMEs' output will increase GDP by 0.24%.

The results were consistent with those of Mujahid et al. (2019) and Manzoor et al. (2021) but not limited to those studies.

Table 1: ARDL Long-run Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
LGCF	0.804655	0.086145	9.340673*	0.0007
LPOPG	-0.223548	0.036311	-6.156414*	0.0035
LSMEO	0.240742	0.012158	19.80049*	0.0000
C	-0.930419	0.156334	-5.951502*	0.0040

Source: Author's computation (2022)

ECM or Short Run Model - The coefficient values of the variables in the short run explained that there is a mixed influence on SMEs' output and economic growth in Sri Lanka. The current period value of SMEs' output has a significant positive relationship with economic growth, whereas the one-period lagged value of SMEs' output has a negative relationship with Sri Lankan economic growth. The estimated coefficient of error correction term ECM (t-1) was negative and statistically significant at a 1% level. The value of ECM (t-1) for the model was -0.426057, which indicated that if any disequilibrium arises in the short term, it will be corrected over time at a rate of 42.6% each year.

Diagnostic Test - The diagnostic tests' results in table 2 revealed that the selected ARDL model passes every test for serial correlation, heteroscedasticity, misspecification, and non-normal errors. The Cumulative Sum (CUSUM) and Cumulative Sum of Squares (CUSUMS) for the parameter stability test plot in figure 1 show that the estimated parameters within the sample considered were stable.

Table 2: Diagnostic tests results

Test	F-Statistic	Probability
LM test	0.042543	0.6062
Heteroscedasticity test	1.087525	0.3750
Normality test	0.228015	0.892251
Ramsey RESET test	1.360093	0.3278

Source: Author's computation (2022)

(a)

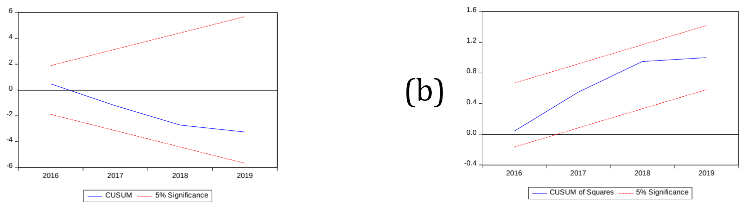

Figure 1: Stability test according to (a) CUSUM and (b) CUSUMSQ

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study analysed the impact of SMEs on the economic growth of Sri Lanka using the ARDL model. The results confirmed that a positive and significant long-run relationship exists between SMEs' output and GDP per capita. According to the literature, SMEs are not entirely using their potential to contribute to Sri Lanka's economic growth and employment (Welmilla et al., 2011). Strong SMEs could support Sri Lanka's efforts to achieve prosperity and generate employment. Therefore, to accelerate economic growth, Sri Lanka must adopt policies which are likely to result in the promotion of SMEs and thereby overcome the problems that are faced. Based on the results obtained from this study, it is recommended that SMEs should be promoted more widely since this will increase their contribution to the economic growth of the nation.

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Keywords: Autoregressive distributed lag model, Economic growth, SMEs, Sri Lanka.

DETERMINANTS OF STOCK MARKET DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LITERATURE

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1. Introduction

The stock market is the reflector of the economic performance of an economy, and stock market development is a key ground for fostering economic growth (Demirguc-Kunt & Levine, 1996). Especially, the stock market promotes the economic growth of a country by mobilizing savings, facilitating investment avenues, and providing a pathway for risk diversification. Thus, many scholarly works have been conducted considering the factors of the stock market development with the evidence of developing and developed economies. As per the existing scholarly works, banking sector development, inflation rate, interest rate, exchange rate, and private capital flows can be identified as fundamental macroeconomic factors in determining the degree of stock market development. Further, legal origin, legal protection, corporate governance, financial market liberalization, stock market integration, privatization, financial liberalization, sovereignty credit ratings, and trade openness can be identified as the institutional factors determining the development of the stock market. However, there is a dearth of scholarly works which have scrutinized the existing theoretical and empirical works on causes of stock market development since existing studies are mainly focused on macro variables and institutional factors separately or simultaneously for analysing the focus. Further, there is no conclusive theoretical or empirical evidence in this regard. Therefore, this study will make an effort to provide a comprehensive analysis of the literature on the determinants of stock market development, synchronizing both theoretical and empirical literature, and identifying all key factors which are significant in stock market development. Accordingly, this study will help to ensure easy access to the information for the scholars who are willing to further research in this regard. In addition, this study will provide facts to the policy makers in making decisions on the stock market to boost investments and economic growth.

2. Methodology

Research articles were searched from Google Scholar regarding the determinants of stock market development for the analysis, and 93 articles from developed and developing contexts were filtered and considered to conduct this study. When searching the research articles, "Determinants of stock market development" were used as the keyword. Next, filtered papers were classified into theoretical and empirical literature. Consequently, the significant findings of those studies were analysed and compared under macroeconomic and institutional factors that determine the stock market development. Finally, the conclusion was drawn based on the derived information through this investigation.

3. Findings

When considering the key determinants of the stock market development, economic development was an influential factor in the financial system in both developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, the links between the financial system and the economy demonstrated a complex relationship, according to the literature. Further, the relationship between banking sector development and stock market development has been objected to largely inconclusive arguments. Further, the interest rate and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) were key determinants of stock market development. However, the findings of previous researchers carried controversial opinions about developing and developed economies regarding the impact of those on the stock market development. When considering the association between stock market performance and exchange rate behaviour, a strong association can be identified in both developed and developing economies with evidence from previous studies. Moreover, according to the scholarly findings, the relationship between inflation and the stock market development was highly non-linear for all relationships except for stock market volatility with inflation. Considering the key institutional factors, legal origin, market liberalization and trade openness were significant in fostering the stock market development. Therefore, according to the literature, there is a significant association between Foreign Direct Investment, banking sector development and trade openness, and the stock market development in developing regions, such as Sri Lanka, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Philippines. When considering developed countries such as the USA, UK, and European countries, there is a significant relationship between the stock market development and the factors such as liquidity ratio, saving rate, and monetization ratio. Further, macroeconomic factors such as inflation rate, GDP, and exchange rate are significant for the stock market development in both developing and developed regions. When referring to the literature, in most cases, controversial findings can be seen in both developing and developed regions since various researchers have provided different opinions and views regarding the determinants of stock market development based on their research evidence and findings.

4. Conclusion

The motivation behind this study was to investigate the findings of existing theoretical and empirical research related to developing and developed countries to provide a comprehensive review of the literature hence analysing the key findings of the existing scholarly works based on the determinants of the stock market development. Indeed, this paper reviewed the determinants of stock market development based on the theoretical and empirical literature, classifying the determinants into two groups, macro-economic and institutional factors respectively. The theoretical models related to the determinants of stock market development contained many determinants, in which it was difficult to find some information regarding the stock market. Nevertheless, empirical studies have contained a lot of variables that will help combine the other literature, and help to understand the determinants of stock market development. According to the literature, there was a significant association between Foreign Direct Investment, banking sector development and trade openness, and stock market development in developing regions. When considering the developed countries, liquidity ratio, saving rate, and monetization ratio were significant. Further, macroeconomic factors such as inflation rate, GDP, and exchange rate were significant in both developing and developed regions. However, the findings were controversial in most cases.

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Keywords: Determinants, Developing and developed economies, Stock market development

IMPACT OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND DETERMINANTS ON DIVIDEND POLICY: EVIDENCE FROM LOCAL LICENSED COMMERCIAL BANKS IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The most effective policy on corporate governance is the dividend policy. Corporate governance is a framework that governs both the organizational direction and the behavior of the individuals. Corporate governance is one of the basic elements in achieving effective management and performance control over a company. When the dividend policy comes refers to the Board of Directors' explicit or implicit decision on the number of residual profits to be allocated to the company's shareholders. A banking sector in any country is essential to the smooth operation of the financial system since it transfers resources from surplus to deficit units. Hence, any weakness or collapse of financial organizations caused by the unethical and immoral behavior of corporate executives may cause significant losses for the shareholders and reputational damage. There is a lack of hard evidence addressing how corporate governance structures affect the dividend payout practices of commercial banks, despite the significance of banking institutions to the financial system, depositors, and shareholders. Most of the prior research on corporate governance and dividend policy was conducted in highly developed nations and largely depended on non-banking corporations. Rajput and Jhunjhunwala, 2019; Bokpin, 2011), stated that there is a positive correlation between board size and dividend payout ratio. Additionally, Al-Kahmisi and Hassan (2018) found a negative relationship between the dividend yield and board independence. On the other hand, Fernando et al. (2021) claimed that the board size, board meetings, board independence, board gender diversity, and leverage have no significant impact on the dividend policy. Consequently, there has not been any focused research on this topic up to date, especially in the Sri Lankan context. Due to the significance of a dividend policy for shareholders, this study's significance is derived from its objective of contributing to the dividend literature by analyzing the relationship between corporate governance characteristics and the dividend payout policy of local licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

Accordingly, the researcher selected the 13 local commercial banks registered under the Banking act as the sample out of the 26 commercial banks registered in Sri Lanka. Cargills bank was excluded because it started operating in 2013, and Pan Asia Bank was also excluded due to the unavailability of data. Hence, the research was conducted on the 11 local commercial banks registered in Sri Lanka for ten years from 2012 to 2021.

Researchers used the quantitative and deductive approaches as this study was conducted to investigate the impact of Corporate Governance on Dividend Policy by testing hypotheses, while the explanatory design was used as it provides objectives for the final analysis of data.

Conceptual Framework

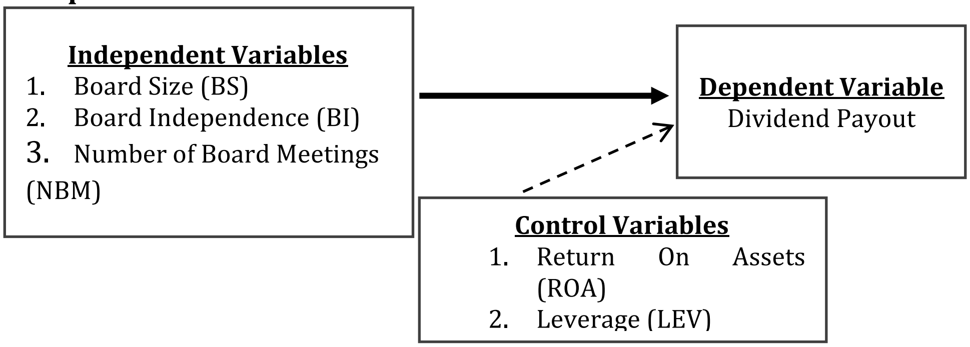

Figure 1: Conceptual-Framework

Source: Researcher Constructed (2022)

Secondary data was collected from the banks' annual reports for the past 10 years to meet the objectives of the study. Further, the data were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Analysis, and Panel Data Regression Analysis using E-Views software and Microsoft Excel.

Regression model developed:

$$MVPS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BS + \beta_2 BI + \beta_3 NBM + \beta_4 ROA + \beta_5 LEV + \varepsilon \text{ --- (1)}$$

3. Findings and Discussion

The researcher performed the F test, LM (Breusch and Pegan's Lagrange Multiplier) test, and Hausman test to select the most efficient model for the study. The significance value of the F statistic, which is Prob>F, tested the null hypothesis, and the regression coefficients in the model were zero against the alternative hypothesis while at least one of the coefficients was non-zero. According to the results of this research, the Prob>F=0.0682. Therefore, the model was not significant at a 95% confidence level.

Table 01: F Test

Variable	Probability
F Test	1.82
Prob>F	0.0682

Source: Stata Output (2022)

The LM test has been applied to select the most appropriate model from the random effects and pooled OLS regression models. The null hypothesis of the LM test was pooled OLS regression model, and the random effect model was considered the alternative hypothesis. According to the result, the Prob>chi 2 value was 0.3993, hence, the fixed effect model was selected.

Table 02: LM Test

	Var	sd = sqrt(Var)
DPY	284.1119	16.85562
E	284.1119	14.84298
U	5.528367	2.351248

Source: Stata Output (2022)

Test: Var(u) = 0

chibar2(01) = 0.07
Prob > chibar2 = 0.3993

Finally, the Hausman test was applied to compare the random effect model with the fixed model. According to the result, the fixed effect model was selected as the appropriate hypothesis. Results showed that the calculated p-value of ROA was lesser than 0.05, and the association between DPR and ROA was statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. Accordingly, the research results were consistent with the research results of Nguyen et al. (2020). In addition to the ROA, other independent variables were not statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. This finding supported the view of Fernando et al. (2021).

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study experimented the role of corporate governance through five variables in influencing the dividend policy of local licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka for the 2012-2021 period. Future researchers can increase the good fit of the model by introducing more variables. As the theoretical and practical implications, this study is vital for future studies, changes in academic theories, and understanding of corporate governance and dividend policy. The analysis and results of this study can be applied to theory development, local and international future research initiatives, and to compare the actual policies of licensed local commercial banks in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the study will be beneficial to researchers to better understand good corporate governance and implement modifications to established theoretical structures and procedure adjustments. Finally, it could be concluded that there is a significant impact of corporate governance on dividend policy.

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Keywords: Corporate governance, Dividend policy, Licensed commercial banks, Panel data regression

DETERMINANTS OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF LICENSED COMMERCIAL BANKS IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Banks are important financial intermediaries in every economy because of their contribution to the economy. Various researchers paid attention to identifying and analyzing the determinants of the financial performance of commercial banks such as internal bank-specified determinants and external bank-specified factors. Most of the studies were based on the internal factors affecting financial performance (Kamande, 2017). Although no research study focuses on the impact of the determinants of bank performance and internal bank-specified factors in Covid-period, there were research conducted already in the Sri Lankan context based on the internal and external determinants such as bank size, liquidity risk, operating cost, capital adequacy, credit risk management efficiency, asset quality, earning ability, deposits, ownership structure, non-interest income, cost efficiency, off-balance sheet activities, and macro -specific factors GDP growth rate, Interest Rate (Weerasainghe & Perera, 2013; Usman 2019). Therefore, no researcher has conducted their research with a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative) in Sri Lankan context. This research aims to examine what determinants impacts on the financial performance of Licensed Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka, to examine the impact of bank-specified determinants on the financial performance of Licensed Commercial banks in Sri Lanka, to assess the relationship between independent variables on the dependent variable of Licensed Commercial banks in Sri Lanka and to identify the significant impact on financial performance during the covid19 situation respectively. This empirical study is related to the determinants of the financial performance of commercial banks in Sri Lanka, is beneficial for different stakeholders. This research benefits the bank managers and other parties related to the banking sector by giving due emphasis to the management of relevant specialized determinants and providing the understanding of activities and changes in the banking environment that improve their financial performance. On the other hand, this study not only benefits managers but also researchers, government, and policymakers. In addition, this study can be referred by other researchers to conduct their research helping to minimize the research gap.

2. Research Methodology

This research study examined the determinants of Financial Performance of Licensed Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka by using panel data for 6 years starting from 2016-2021 by carrying out secondary data from the CSE website. The quantitative approach was used and 13 banks were selected as the sample. Further, the study used a mixed method, which included both have been quantitative and qualitative techniques. The researcher used secondary data from annual reports and conducted interviews with bank managers to collect primary data. This research study was investigated as a quantitative study and used hypothesis testing. It aimed empirically to examine hypotheses by looking at the significance of capital adequacy, asset quality, management efficiency, liquidity, and bank size (independent variables) on the ROA (dependent variable). Meanwhile, panel data were used as the secondary data in this research. The researcher has carried out the qualitative method to enrich this research study. Further, the sample consisted of 10 licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka and interviewed bank managers (managerial level) to gather information to achieve the sub-objective, which is to identify the significant impact on financial performance during the covid19 situation.

3. Results/Findings and Discussion

The results of the study indicated that the fixed effect model was better than the random effect model. Capital adequacy ratio, liquidity ratio, management efficiency ratio, asset quality ratio and bank size were identified as independent variables, and financial performance as the dependent variable was measured by return on asset. The findings of this study stated that capital adequacy, management efficiency and asset quality had positive effects on financial performance, still liquidity and bank size had a negative effect on financial performance. According to research, the qualitative model stated that every bank-specified factor affected financial performance during the Covid period. It resulted in additional determinants impacting the financial performance of banks like non-performing loan ratio, net interest margin and earning ability.

Most of the studies conducted in Sri Lanka are based on the determinants of bank profitability of commercial banks in Sri Lanka but there are very few studies on the determinants of the financial performance of licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka. In this study the researcher collected secondary data from only 13 banks (02 state banks and 11 local banks) out of 24 licensed commercial banks in Sri Lanka because of the different customer bases, revenue levels, bank size and different models using those international banks.

4. Conclusion and Implication

This research area is significant for all the interested parties of licensed commercial banks policies. The findings of the study can also be used by policymakers and regulators. This research is expected to provide both practical and knowledgeable implications since there is no similar studies conducted regarding the impact of Covid 19 on determinants of financial performance in commercial banks in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study can improve the understanding of bank-specified determinants of financial performance and how the Covid pandemic changed the financial performance of commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

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Keywords: Asset Quality Ratio, Bank Size, Capital Adequacy Ratio, Liquidity Ratio, Management Efficiency Ratio, Return on Assets (ROA)

IMPACT OF FIRM PERFORMANCE ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN FINANCIAL SECTOR COMPANIES LISTED IN COLOMBO STOCK EXCHANGE: PRAT MODEL APPROACH

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1. Introduction

The notion of sustainable growth was introduced by Higgins (1977). Sustainable growth is a crucial concept that firms strive to achieve while planning for a long and strategic existence. It is the greatest rate a company can increase sales without exhausting all its resources (Higgins, 2016). Each company needs to prioritize sustainable growth because firms cannot last long without it. This is directly influenced by firm performance factors (Altahtamouni et al., 2022; Mat Nor, 2020; Rahim, 2017). However, attaining sustainable growth in a dynamic, competitive, and political environment is exceedingly difficult, specifically in today's extremely global and Sri Lankan contexts. Besides, the financial sector is a significant driver of each country's economy. There have been few studies that showed the impact of company performance on the sustainable growth rate in the financial sector. As a result, the true impact of firm performance on sustainable growth rate in the context of Sri Lanka's financial sector is still unexplored. The problem arises whether the company's PRAT component and liquidity have a significant impact on the Sri Lankan financial sector firms. Accordingly, the current study investigates the firm's performance impact of SGR using PRAT model components and liquidity relevant to financial sector firms listed in the Sri Lankan context. The study was based on five firm performance indicators: profit margin (P), retention rate (R), asset turnover (A), financial leverage (T), and financial liquidity (FL), including firm size as a control variable, and their impact on sustainable growth rate (SGR). The study also compares the average actual sales growth rate (AAGR) and the average sustainable growth rate (ASGR) in listed financial sector firms based on Higgins's theory. Consequently, the study provides a novel perspective on a topic of practical importance and effectiveness of the Higgins sustainable growth framework. Finance professionals, decision-makers, government representatives, employees, and investors will benefit from the findings of the study to make decisions and adopt policies for long-term sustainable growth.

2. Research Methodology

The research is based on deductive reasoning, and quantitative research approaches were used to determine how firm performance components of net profit, retention rate, asset turnover, financial leverage, and financial liquidity, as well as control variable of firm size, impact the company's sustainable growth rate in Sri Lankan financial sector firms. The study was conducted using secondary data. A purposive sampling method was used to pick the sample, which consisted of 35 out of 65 financial sector firms listed on the CSE from 2017 to 2021. The data source for this study were, published annual reports of Sri Lankan financial sector firms listed on the CSE. Consequently, the research explored specific explanations or hypotheses to emphasize the link between independent variables and the dependent variable. Moreover, the study used descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and panel data regression to analyze the cross-sectional and time series data. The study's final research objective was to compare the average sustainable growth rate and the average sales growth rate across the financial sector companies to determine the proportion and category throughout using average value analysis according to theory.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

In the panel data analysis, the best-fitted random effects one-way model showed the impact of firm performance on the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) in the context of listed financial sector companies. Table 1 indicates that the company's operating performance indicators of profit and asset turnover positively and significantly impacted the sustainable growth rate. Simultaneously, Table 1 highlights that both companies' financial policy indicators of retention rate and financial leverage demonstrated a significant and positive contribution to the sustainable growth rate. In line with the PRAT model components, the profit margin was the most influential component, while financial leverage(T) was the least influential component in Sri Lankan financial sector firms. Further, the findings showed that the effect of operating components on the sustainable growth rate was greater than the effect of financial policy indicators in listed financial sector firms. The study also discovered that financial liquidity has a negative impact on the sustainable growth rate, but it was not significant in the context of listed financial sector firms. The PRAT model component outcome is in line with (Rahim, 2017; Altahtamouni, et al., 2022). However, the liquidity showed a negative impact on the sustainable growth rate in line with (Rahim, 2017), which provides a different viewpoint from the literature that suggested the bigger the company's liquidity, the higher the sustainable growth rate (SGR). Furthermore, the study results suggested that the control variable of firm size (LNFS) has a significant impact on the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR), although its influence is smaller than other PRAT model components in Sri Lankan listed financial sector firms. The researcher compared the average actual sales growth rate and the average sustainable growth rate to determine which category the Sri Lankan listed financial sector firms fall according to Higgins' theory. According to Higgins' theory, 34.29% of Sri Lankan listed financial sector firms had demonstrated a lack of value for shareholders because their Average Sales Growth Rate (AAGR) exceeds the Average Sustainable Growth Rate (ASGR). In contrast, 65.71% of these companies had demonstrated excess cash because their AAGR was less than the ASGR, allowing the corporation to increase dividends, obtain stock returns, or make new corporate investments.

Table 1: Results of the one-way random effect model

Variable	Coefficient	Robust Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
Profit Margin	0.8645	0.0521	16.5871	0.0000*
Retention Rate	0.1185	0.0184	6.4403	0.0000*
Asset Turnover	0.2984	0.0377	7.9015	0.0000*
Financial Leverage	0.0110	0.0014	7.7495	0.0000*
Financial Liquidity	-0.0028	0.0087	-0.3202	0.7491
Firm Size	0.0058	0.0036	1.6196	0.1072**
C	-0.3719	0.0973	-3.8222	0.0002*

* and ** indicate significance at 1% and 10%, respectively.

Source: EViews (2022)

4. Conclusion and Implication

The company’s operating performance and financial policy indicators positively and significantly impact the sustainable growth rate of financial sector firms in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the results of this investigation demonstrated that the effect of operating components on the sustainable growth rate is greater than the effect of financial policy indicators in financial sector businesses. It suggested that, establishing the company's operating performance and profitability development strategies in the Sri Lankan context may significantly boost sustainable growth. The study discovered that financial liquidity has a negative impact on the sustainable growth rate, but it is not significant in the context of Sri Lankan listed financial sector firms, whereas the control variable of firm size (LNFS) has a significant positive impact on the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR). The study highlighted that the sustainable growth concept is crucial in financial planning, and firm performance drives sustainable growth. Managers, financial experts, and policymakers must focus on financial and operational decisions to ensure long-term viability in the financial sector in developing standards and procedures to sustain their overall value since sustainable growth companies achieve their predicted potential of becoming the next fast-developing contributors to the Sri Lankan economy. The findings helped current and potential investors to decide on which fundamental aspects of sustainable growth to consider while investing in the Sri Lankan listed financial sector firms.

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Keywords: Firm performance, Higgins's theory, "PRAT" approach, Sustainable growth rate

THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION ON RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION IN SRI LANKA: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BADULLA DISTRICT

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1. Introduction

Financial inclusion is a broad concept. As defined by Sarma (2008), financial inclusion is the process of ensuring that everyone in an economy can easily access and use the available formal financial system. Apparently, poverty is a multi-dimensional issue. Any society's economic, social, and political elements directly lead to increasing and eliminating poverty (Maduwanthi & Haleem, 2020). Financial inclusion is critical as increasing the poor's access to financial services is often considered an effective tool that can help reduce poverty and lower income inequality (Williams et al., 2017). According to the Department of Census and Statistics- poverty indicators 2019, the contribution of the rural sector to total poverty is higher in comparison with other sectors; the estate sector and urban sector. Therefore, rural poverty is more important and considerable. According to this report, Uva province poverty is 28.3%, and Badulla district poverty is 32.3%. Hence, the researcher selected the Badulla district. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of financial inclusion on rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. The study focused on the impact of all financial inclusion dimensions; access, usage, and quality on rural poverty reduction, Accordingly, the study adopted the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Vulnerable Group Theory with evidence from the Badulla district. Moreover, the current study adopted the Sri Lankan definition of financial inclusion. In addition, to the researcher's best knowledge, there is a dearth in the literature on the selected research area, and the current study will contribute to the existing literature while filling the empirical gap in the Sri Lankan context. Further, this study will be a useful source for the Sri Lankan government and policymakers, formal financial institutions, researchers, and readers interested in this area.

2. Research Methodology

Rural poverty reduction was considered a dependent variable of the study, and financial inclusion was an independent variable. Under the financial inclusion, access, usage, and quality variables were included. Based on the conceptual framework, three hypotheses were developed as there is a significant impact of access, usage, and quality of formal financial services on rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. The researcher followed the Descriptive Statistics research design and collected primary data from the respondents using self-administered close-ended structured questionnaires. Further, secondary sources of data were mainly gathered from Central Bank Annual Reports, Reports of the Department of Census

Statistics, Journal Articles, and Web sources. The target population was all the savings or loan account holder adults' households in Badulla District. In selecting the sample, a multi-stage random sampling technique was followed. Simultaneously, the study used the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics version 21, and multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to find the impact of access, usage, and quality of financial services on rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka.

The regression equation is as follows:

$POV = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ACC + \beta_2 USG + \beta_3 QTY + \varepsilon$ ………………………………………….. (1)

3. Findings and Discussion

Table 3.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.841[a]	0.708	0.703	0.508

Source: SPSS Output

Table 3.2: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	D	Mean Square	F	Sig
1 Regression	123.926	3	41.309	159.896	0.000[b]
Residual	51.153	198	0.258		
Total	175.079	201			

Source: SPSS Output

ANOVA table shows that the developed regression model is a highly significant predictor of rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka.

Table 3.3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.161	0.167		0.961	0.338
	Access	0.289	0.101	0.254	2.858	0.005
	Usage	0.217	0.123	0.194	1.768	0.079
	Quality	0.487	0.104	0.428	4.686	0.000

Source: SPSS Output

As a dimension of financial inclusion, access to financial products and services is statistically significant in this model as its p-value (0.005) was less than the significance level of 0.05. Further, the coefficient of access to financial products and services was 0.289, and implied a positive relationship between access to financial products and services and rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. The quality of financial products and services is another significant variable affecting rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka, as its p-value (0.000) was less than the significance level of 0.05. In addition, the coefficient of quality was 0.487. Thus, it implied a positive relationship between the quality of financial products and services and rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. According to the above multiple linear regression results, the usage of financial products and services was not a statistically significant factor when determining rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka.

Based on the derived multiple linear regression results, the best fitting for predicting rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka would be a linear combination of the constant usage and quality of financial products and services. Therefore, the regression equation can be written as follows.

$POV = 0.161 + 0.289\ ACC + 0.487\ QTY + \varepsilon$ …………………………………….. (2)

The study used hypothesis (H_1), stating that access to financial products and services has a significant impact on rural poverty reduction. Accordingly, this finding is in line with the findings of Zahidi and Khan (2019) because they also investigated a significant relationship between poverty and access to financial services. Further, they revealed that individuals and households could get more benefits from economic opportunities if they have more access to financial services. Hence, money can be saved, loans can be repaid, participate in economic activities and hence reduce their poverty. Moreover, the results of Bhandari (2009) were not in accordance with the current study because it was presented that access to banking services was not significantly associated with the reduction in the poverty line population in India. Further, it revealed that providing banking services to a maximum number of people is unsuccessful as a strategy for poverty reduction. The second hypothesis that was developed (H_2), stating that there is a significant impact of usage of financial services on rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka was rejected. This result is consistent with the study of Zahidi and Khan (2019), who found that the usage of financial services has no significant impact on poverty alleviation. It also emphasized that the usage dimension does not play a significant role when considering poverty alleviation. However, this argument was not consistent with the findings of Maduwanthi and Haleem (2020). Accordingly, the results of this particular study showed that financial inclusion significantly affects the relationship between the usage of financial products, services, and poverty reduction. The third hypothesis $H_{3;}$ predicting the significant impact of quality of financial products and services on rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka was accepted. This result was also in line with Zahidi and Khan (2019), who found that the quality of financial services has a significant positive impact on poverty alleviation. This also revealed that the poverty rate among individuals and households could reduce by providing diversified, convenient, and quality financial products and services.

4. Conclusion

The study examined whether financial inclusion has a significant impact on rural poverty reduction. Employing a multiple regression analysis, the researcher found a significant positive relationship between financial inclusion and rural poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. This study serves as one of the quantitative research studies concerning access, usage, and quality of financial inclusion affecting rural poverty reduction in the Sri Lankan context, considering the Badulla district. The study found access to and quality of financial products have a significant impact on rural poverty reduction, and also, usage of financial products had no significant impact on rural poverty reduction. Consequently, the findings of this study will be beneficial for the management, financial institutions, and other interested parties in different ways. The study recommends that the policymakers of the country should design and promote effective financial inclusion programmes among the poor rural households, and financial institutions should provide explicit knowledge and awareness about financial products and services to the poor rural households.

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Keywords: Access, Financial inclusion, Quality, Rural poverty reduction, Usage

THE IMPACT OF BOARD GOVERNANCE CHARACTERISTICS AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON FIRM FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE WITH EARNINGS MANAGEMENT AS A MEDIATOR: EVIDENCE FROM FOOD BEVERAGE & TOBACCO INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

When entities grow in size, a gap between ownership and management of the organization arises, resulting in an agency problem. In the event of an agency crisis, the existence of strong corporate governance, also known as good corporate governance, is undeniably mandated by contemporary business entities. On the other hand, a weak board governance system could lead to a company's demise, which would cause enormous losses to both investors and the economy. This study examines the effect of board governance and CSR on financial performance by integrating earnings management as a mediation variable. A better corporate governance mechanism comprising an effective board of directors and a higher external audit quality would minimise the managers' earnings management practices due to an enhanced level of supervision. As a result, the managers must enhance operational efficiency to meet the performance indicators. Accordingly, research studies on the effect of corporate governance on firm performance have been explored widely. Most of them revealed that a firm's governance characteristics are crucial to organizational viability and higher performance (Puni & Anlesinya, 2020). However, surprisingly no study has been performed to examine the effect of good governance, including board governance practices, on firm performance through earnings management in the Sri Lankan context; instead, most of the corporate failures occurred due to earnings manipulation practices (Kumari & Pattanayak, 2017). Rarely research studies have examined how corporate social responsibility and board governance practices affect financial performance and earnings management on a local and international scale. Thus, it is essential to investigate how earning management affects the relationship between board governance and financial performance in the Sri Lankan context. Accordingly, this research study is attentive to examining the following problem statement.

Whether there is a mediating effect of earnings management on the impact of board governance characteristics on financial performance and the impact of corporate social responsibility of firms operating in the food and beverage industry in Sri Lanka?

The main objective of this study is to investigate the mediating effect of earnings management on both the impact of board governance characteristics on financial performance and the impact of corporate social responsibility on the financial performance of firms operating in the food and beverage industry in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

This study, which is based on the positivist paradigm, examines the effects of earning management on board governance traits and CSR on the financial performance of companies in Sri Lanka's food and beverage industry. This research study adopted a deductive approach since it uses four theories to develop conjectural statements, and then the rest of the study was focused on attaining the research goals by evaluating the acceptance or denial of the hypotheses, and this study adopted a quantitative design. The population of this study consisted of all the food, beverage, and tobacco Companies on the Colombo Stock Exchange in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the author had chosen a convenience sampling method under non-probability sampling techniques to select the 47 companies as the sample of this study. The study covers the recent seven-year period from 2015 to 2021 as its sample period. The research study gathered the required data through the audited annual reports published in the CSE from 2015 to 2021 (Secondary data).

The Stata 14.2. statistical Package was used to examine data acquired from published annual reports of public limited companies listed in the CSE. The data was examined utilizing both descriptive as well as inferential statistics (Central Tendency, Correlation Analysis, and Structural Equation Model). Moreover, the Sobel-Goodman test was conducted to recognize the mediating effect of earnings management on the direct associations.

3. Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Structural equation Model – ROA

ROA	Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	P>|z
Da	-0.36204	0.0531052	-6.82	0.000
BG	0.13930	0.0154428	9.02	0.000
CSR	-0.010488	0.0140911	-0.74	0.457
Size	0.0002643	0.0013583	0.19	0.846
_cons	0.0052831	0.0336114	0.16	0.875
EPS				
DA	-8.5939	4.075	-2.11	0.035
BG	1.878	1.185	1.58	0.113
CSR	1.2706	1.0813	1.18	0.240
Size	0.00527	0.1042	0.05	0.960
_cons	5.250	2.579	2.04	0.042

TBQ				
Da	-3.041	0.734	-4.41	0.000
Bg	1.0388	0.2137	4.86	0.000
Csr	-2.601	0.195	-1.33	0.182
Size	-0.0022	0.0187	-0.12	0.903
_cons	0.2763	0.465	0.59	0.552

Source: Stata Output, (2022)

ROAit = β0 + β1 BG) + β2 (CSR) + β3 (Size) + eit... (1)

ROAit = 0.00528 + 0.1393BG) – 0.01048(CSR) – 0.0002(Size) + eit....... (1)

EPSit = β0 + β1 BG) + β2 (CSR) + β3 (Size) + eit... (2)

EPSit = 5.25+ 1.878 BG) + 1.27(CSR) + 0.0052(Size) + eit........................... (2)

TBQit = β0 + β1 BG) + β2 (CSR) + β3 (Size) + e it.. (3)

TBQit = -0.276+ 1.038BG) – 0.260(CSR) – 0.0023(Size) + e it.................... (3)

Both corporate social responsibility and board governance traits were significantly and insignificantly associated with financial performance. Board governance characteristics significantly impacted ROA (p- 0.000). On the other hand, Board Governance characteristics have an insignificant impact on EPS (p- 0.113). Meanwhile, Board Governance characteristics significantly impacted TBQ (p- 0.000). CSR had an insignificant impact on ROA (p- 0.457) and an insignificant impact on EPS (p-0.240). Similarly, CSR had an insignificant impact on TBQ (p- 0.182).

Puni and Anlesinya (2020) found board meeting generally has a positive impact on financial performance. Further, Assenga et al. (2018) revealed that there is no significant connection between corporate governance characteristics and firm financial performance.

Accordingly, both Board Governance characteristics and corporate social responsibility had no significant impact on financial performance through earnings management. According to Kumari & Pattanayak (2017); Muttakin, Khan, & Azim (2015), corporate social responsibility and board governance characteristics significantly impact financial performance through earnings management. This study showed that there is an insignificant impact of both board governance on financial performance (ROA, TBQ, and EPS t-values are 0.391, 0.057, 0.015 respectively) and CSR and financial performance through earning management (ROA, TBQ, and EPS t-values are 0.0478, 0.053, 0.0145 respectively).

4. Conclusion and Implications

The study's primary goal was to examine how earnings management mediates the relationship between corporate social responsibility, board governance, and financial performance in the Sri Lankan food, beverage, and tobacco industry. According to the analysis, CSR found to that earning management is insignificant towards ROA, TBQ, and EPS. Board governance mediating with earning management had an insignificant impact on ROA, TBQ, and EPS. The findings showed that board governance directly impacted financial performance, and CSR showed an insignificant impact on financial performance. However, CSR and BG had no -significant impact on financial performance through earning management in the food, beverage & tobacco industries in Sri Lanka. Financial performance is a key factor in determining economic growth and has the potential to organize, control, and plan other production aspects to increase production in developing nations, including Sri Lanka. Accordingly, policymakers should pay close attention to firm performance. Finally, this study conveys information to decision-makers about improving financial performance through CSR disclosure and board governance.

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Keywords: Corporate board governance, Corporate social responsibility, Earning management, Financial performance, Food beverage & tobacco industry

EXPLORING FINANCIAL WELL-BEING OF ACADEMICS: EVIDENCE FROM SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Financial well-being is one of the major benchmarks which decide individual satisfaction and peace of mind. Accordingly, financial well-being means that the person can fully meet the present and ongoing financial requirements and obligations at the moment. On the other hand, it is viewed as financial stability and less financial burden, and it could be established by proper budget planning. Parag et al. (2003) said that financial well-being is the overall satisfaction of an individual, not only financial worry or unhealthiness. Nevertheless, financial well-being can be determined by a person's expenditure, savings, and other financial practices. Financial well-being is not just included in monetary terms but also consider the individual's mental and economic conditions. In recent decades many researchers have focused on financial well-being and financial state of mind. It is a tool that can estimate who is keeping well in financial health. In the Sri Lankan context, the current economic crisis negatively impacts individuals. All levels of income earners are facing huge financial burdens. Due to poor financial conditions, people attempt to access finance from any source. Consequently, it is considered that the University lecturers know how to tackle their finance compared to illiterates. Thus, this research aims to explore financial well-being. To maintain proper financial status, one needs skills and knowledge about monetary management. The principal objective of the study is to identify the determinants of the financial well-being of the lecturers and aware all people of financial well-being. The well-being could be improved by establishing and committing to a budget, keeping emergencies reserved, consistent saving models, paying bills in the proper manner and limits of loans, setting financial goals, trimming expenses, and stopping using credit cards for everything. Hence, the researcher attempts to investigate financial well-being using the variables such as money attitude, financial practices, and financial self-efficacy. These are the main pillars of this research to determine the financial well-being of the lecturers.

2. Research Methodology

Accordingly, out of the 500 lecturers at the university, 120 lecturers were only selected for data collection based on Krejurs and Morgan's table. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The questionnaire was sent individually to every lecturer, and the questions for the questionnaire were adopted from already conducted research papers. The questionnaire was divided into six segments, and was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5. Respondents were required to answer with their attitudes and patterns of monetary management. This research used SET (Bandura, 1977) and financial wellness theory (Seligman, 2011) to justify the concepts and models. Accordingly, the Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) states how the individual completes a particular task with the way of performance and attitude. This makes judgments with performance outcomes, physiological feedback, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experience. Thus, this theory helped to build the framework of the research. Financial wellness theory (Seligman, 2011) explains a positive philosophy which is identified as the "PERMA" model. Accordingly, the model includes Positive emotions, Engagement as positive character and strength, Relationships that people build social capacity, Meaning, and Achievement, respectively. The suggested conceptual framework was created with two theories, and it shows how money attitude, financial practices, and self-efficacy (independent) impact Financial well-being (Dependent).

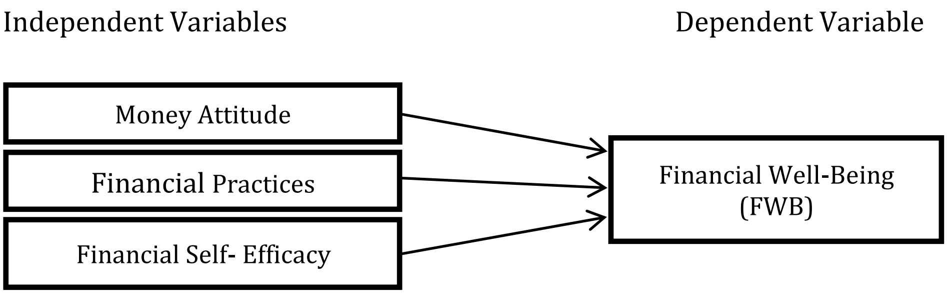

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: Sabri, Wijekoon, & Rahim (2020)

The theoretical framework of this study was derived using SET and WBT theories.

3. Results and Findings

This section will provide the results and findings of the qualitative data analysis research. For a better sense of data analysis, SPSS statistical software was used. The calculation of the correlation range was between -1.0 to 1.0. In this study, the relationship between FWB and other independent variables can be understood. There was a moderate positive relationship between financial practices and financial well-being (r=.480 and p=.000) and a weak and positive relationship between financial well-being and money attitude (r=.398 and p=.000). Reliability statistics table shows the overall dimension of the reliability and acceptable level of the variables. Accordingly, it showed the internal consistency of Cronbach's Alpha .480 with a good level. A value greater than 0.5 is barely acceptable in KMO results, and the study's KMO value was 0.612(Kaiser, 1974). Further, the Bartlett test was used to measure the equality among the variance in different populations. It indicated a null hypothesis, and thus null hypothesis should be rejected, and should be less than 0.05 (significant

$p<0.05$). The model regression table shows the predictors of the data set. It explains the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The value of R (.526) was the multiple correlation coefficient. It's a moderate value indicating an average relationship between variables. R square value (.277) was the coefficient of the determination.

A regression equation can be formed according to the coefficient table and justification

$Y_{\text{(Financial wellbeing)}} = 0.677 + 0.074_{\text{(s/e and demographic)}} + 0.214_{\text{(Financial Attitude)}} + 0.412_{\text{(Financial Practices)}} + 0.110_{\text{(Financial Efficacy)}}$

According to the obtained results, financial attitudes and practices positively and significantly impact financial well-being. In contrast, other factors were insignificant.

4. Conclusion and Implication

This study analysed the determinants of financial well-being among the lecturers of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka using regression analysis. Accordingly, some of the necessary practices to manage better financial health were discovered in the study. The first finding was that a positive money attitude boosts better financial wellness. The higher-income lecturers also have to keep a good money attitude, like controlling monthly expenses, establishing monthly financial targets and budgets, and maintaining emergency expenses reserved since money attitude is one of the significant variables which decides FWB. If the lecturers follow these things, they can reach a high level of FWB. Second finding was that financial practices significantly determine the FWB. Thus, lecturers must follow savings, timely payment, comparison of expenses, getting help from spouse and children, and the amount of money for emergency purposes. These factors support becoming financially healthy. Sound financial practices are important because they give alternative options to maintain financial security and mitigate the monetary risk of lecturers. Overall, the study helps to better understand FWB and its key dimensions to improve the FWB. It could be stated that the money attitude and financial practices are the prime pillars for lecturers' Financial Well-Being. The way of positive attitude regarding financial self-efficacy is also a factor that encourages lecturers to manage effective financial wellness. FWB is the overall satisfaction of the individual. In conclusion, FWB significantly depends on better financial practices and money attitude.

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Keywords**:** Emotion coping, Financial practices, Financial well-being, Financial wellness, Money attitude, Self-efficacy

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTION OF FUTURE ECONOMIC RECESSION AND THE WAY FORWARD IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Currently, Sri Lanka is facing the biggest economic crisis the country has ever faced. It has paved the way for adverse effects in almost all sectors of the economy and the lives of common Sri Lankans. This can be identified as a long-term result of taking short-sighted decisions by relevant authorities of the country for past years. Moreover, many other reasons or root causes have caused the crisis: political instability, debt burden, corruption, and lack of auditing. Hanke's inflation dashboard states the monthly inflation rates in Sri Lanka rose from 3% (January 2021) to 132% (March 2022). WFP Sri Lanka Situation Report has stated that 4.9 million Sri Lankans will be in an insecure food condition by June 2022. The inability to meet daily essentials have been arisen because of high prices and product shortages. Further, the fuel problem has affected industrial sector's transportation. Educational, healthcare, investment, and business sectors began to be affected and collapsed day by day due to this situation in the country. Therefore, it is identifiable Sri Lanka is in a very critical condition and the severity of the economic crisis. Therefore, it is urgent to take immediate necessary actions to recover from this crisis. Undergraduates must have a sharp knowledge of economic conditions because they have to face it and are the qualifiers to handle this situation in the near future. Accordingly, this study aims to find the awareness and understanding of Sri Lankan undergraduates and their perception regarding the future economic recession and the way forward in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative basis, and all the primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. 135 undergraduates from different streams across the country were taken as respondents based on the convenient sampling technique. The study was designed to obtain insights and undergraduates' perceptions regarding foreign exchange rate behavior, hyperinflation and family consumption capacity, job security and income distribution, and government intervention in policy generation. , The researchers adopted demographic, descriptive, factor, and frequency analyses to interpret the data.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data of the sample. Moreover, the demographic information was analyzed using demographic analysis. Principal component analysis along with the varimax rotation was conducted to determine the importance of the outlying factors and adequacy of the sample to proceed with analyzing. The results of the factor analysis suggested that all the outlying factors are important since the loading and the communalities exceeded 0.7, and the sample was adequate since the KMO value exceeded 0.6.

3.1 Frequency Analysis

Table 1: Perception regarding consequences of foreign exchange rate behavior

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

	Very much	**Some what**	**Not at all**	**Does not know**
How much do you think the current dollar value will affect Sri Lankans' consumption capacity?	85%	10%	5%	0%
How much do you think the current dollar value will affect job creation in the country?	70%	24%	5%	1%
How much do you think the current dollar value will affect Sri Lankan product sales?	75%	21%	4%	0%
How much do you think the current dollar value will affect the number of tourists that visit?	55%	38%	3%	4%
How much do you think the current dollar value will affect the country's income from apparel?	70%	27%	1%	2%

According to the collected data, Table 1 shows that respondents believe that the foreign exchange rate behavior heavily affects the future economic recession in higher percentages. Although few of them didn't have an idea, the majority gave an opinion on the foreign exchange rate behavior. 85% of respondents think the current dollar value will significantly affect Sri Lankans' consumption capacity, and 70% think the current dollar value will affect job creation in the country predominantly. Accordingly, it is identifiable that respondents' perception is at a high level on foreign exchange rate behavior.

Table 2: Perception regarding inflation and family consumption capacity

	Higher	Some	Less	Does not know
Compared to this year, how do you think the price	84%	10%	4%	2%

increase will be next year?				
How do you think your purchasing power will be next year?	14%	15%	68%	3%
How do you think your consumption capacity will be next year?	13%	19%	68%	0%

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

According to table 2, the majority believed the prices would be higher next year compared to this year, while few thought prices would remain unchanged. Thus, the majority perceived a negative perception of their future purchasing power and about the consumption capacity for next year.

Table 3: Perception regarding job security and income distribution

	Yes	No
Do you think the jobs of those who live and work here are secure?	18%	82%

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

Table 3 shows the respondents' perceptions regarding their job security. The majority's perception was that the jobs of those who lived and worked here are not secure. It was 82%. Therefore, it is identifiable that respondents' perception is negative, and it is at a high level.

Table 4: Perception regarding income distribution

	Higher	The same	Less	Deos not know
How do you think your family income will be next year?	8%	30%	53%	9%

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

Table 4 represents the respondents' perception regarding their family income in the next year. 53% of respondents think that their family income will decrease in the next year, , in contrast, 30% think it will remain the same for the next year. It indicates that most of them have a negative perception of future economic conditions in the country. Even though 9% of the percentage did not have an idea in this regard, the majority had a higher perception of income distribution.

The fifth section focuses on Government intervention in policy generation.

Table 5: Perception regarding government intervention in policy generation

	Good / Better	Normal / The same	Bad/ Worse	Does not know
The government is taking over necessary steps to overcome the prevailing crisis	5%	9%	84%	2%
The government has intervened to solve the crisis by implementing proper strategies and policies	5%	9%	84%	2%

Source: SPSS Data Analysis 2022

Table 5 shows the respondents' perception of government intervention in policy generation. 84% of respondents believed that the government has failed to implement the necessary steps to overcome the prevailing situation. The same percentage also thinks that the government has not intervened to solve the crisis and did not take proper strategies and policies to solve the situation in the country. The majority had negatively perceived government intervention in policy generation.

4. Conclusion and Implications

As well-educated and responsible citizens, undergraduates must have a clear idea of the current situation of the country. It will significantly impact their employment, career life, and decision-making process and management functions of the country because they will handle those functions in the near future. From an overall view of the primarily collected data, respondents had a negative perception of the future economic condition of the country. It can be identified that a major percentage of undergraduates had an uncertain perception of the condition of the country. This may lead the graduates to leave the country. Thus, it will impact the country because there are no knowledgeable people to overcome this crisis.

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Keywords: Economic recession, Future, undergraduates' perception

THE EFFECT OF TAX AVOIDANCE AND BOARD INDEPENDENCE ON INCOME SMOOTHING OF SRI LANKAN COMMERCIAL BANKS

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1. Introduction

Income smoothing is called a customary action taken by management whereby they produce a report that the level of earnings fluctuations is at a small value and is considered normal for the company in a certain period. Investors are attracted to companies that have a smooth income rather than those that have a fluctuating income. Managers do their best to reach a target level of earnings and make these earnings stable to reduce risk by accounting methods called income smoothing. Income smoothing is one of the most common earning accounting methods used by companies for reducing taxes, attracting investors, and as part of a business strategy. In the current context, Sri Lankan Commercial banks use loan loss provisions to smooth their income. Factors that influence a bank's income smoothing practices are very diverse. The dominant factors that influence income smoothing are tax avoidance, public ownership, cash holding and managerial ownership. When managerial ownership increases, there is a corresponding increase in managerial ability to modify the company's revenue through accounting policies. Social networks among board members and CEOs weaken the monitoring system, even if they are independent Krishnan and Yang (2011). Companies will conduct income smoothing to reduce tax without violating the legal provision to satisfy the interest of shareholders. The intended objective of the study is to examine the effect of board independence and tax avoidance on income smoothing. The findings are favourable in the financial sector, insurance sector, tax preparers, government and researchers.

2. Methodology

The researchers have adopted the deductive approach for the study and the quantitative analysis techniques have been followed. The secondary data has been collected from the annual financial statements of the Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka for a period of ten years from 2012 to 2021. The sample of 04 Commercial Banks has been considered based on the highest market capitalization and the data availability criteria. Tax avoidance and board independence have been considered as the independent variable while income smoothing has been considered the dependent variable for the study. Income smoothing has been calculated by using the Eckel Index which was developed in 1981 (Emad et al, 2020). The dependent and the independent variable have been calculated below.

Income Smoothing =Co-efficient variation of profit change/ Co-efficient variation of sales change

Board Independence = Number of independent directors/ Total composition of directors

Tax avoidance = Tax paid/Pre-tax income

The study has adopted the Descriptive Analysis and the Panel Data Regression (Ordinary Least Squares) Method to do the analysis. The researchers developed the following regression model for the study purpose.

Income Smoothing = $\beta0 + \beta1$ TA + $\beta2$ BI + Ɛ

Where;

IS: - Income Smoothing

$\beta0$: - Constant

$\beta1$, $\beta2$: - Coefficients

TA: - Tax Avoidance

BI: - Board Independence

Ɛ: - Error term

3. Discussion of the Results

The descriptive statistics has conducted to summarize the information in the sample prior to moving to inferential statistics.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Board Independence	Income Smoothing	Tax avoidance
Mean	3.758	3.658	3.456
Maximum	6.789	5.345	6.458
Minimum	1.346	2.456	1.694
Std. Dev.	0.944	0.910	0.834
Variance	0.892	0.823	0.768

Source: Eviews output, (2022)

As per table 1, the maximum and the minimum value for the board independence was 6.789 and 1.346 respectively. Its mean value was 3.758, and it could be changed either negatively or positively by 0.94. In addition, the maximum and the minimum value for the income smoothing was 5.345 and 2.456 respectively. Its mean value was 3.658, and it could be changed either negatively or positively by 0.910. Further, the maximum and the minimum value for tax avoidance was 6.458 and 1.694 respectively. Its mean value was 3.456, and it could be changed either negatively or positively by 0.834.

Results of the Panel Regression (Ordinary Least Square)

Table 2: Results of Panel Data Regression (OLS)

Independent variable	OLS
Intercept	5.645 (0.568)
Board Independence	0.485 (0.689)
Income Smoothing	0.364 (0.003)***
Adj.R^2	0.49
F-statistic	10.86
Number of observations	40

Source: Author calculations (2022)

As per table 2, board independence and income smoothing were considered as the independent variables, while tax avoidance was considered as the dependent variable. As per the results obtained from the OLS, there was a significant effect of income smoothing on tax avoidance since the P- value was 0.003(< 0.05), and there was no significant effect of board independence on tax avoidance since the P-value was 0.689 (> 0.05). Hence the fitted model can be demarcated as below to comply with the findings.

Income Smoothing = 5.645 + 0.485 TA + Ɛ

Where;

IS: - Income Smoothing

$\beta 0$: - Constant

$\beta 1$: - Coefficients

TA: - Tax Avoidance

Ɛ: - Error term

4. Conclusion

This study explained the effect of tax avoidance and board independence on Income smoothing of Commercial Banks in the Sri Lankan context. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant impact of income smoothing on tax avoidance, and no significant impact of board independence over tax avoidance. The results aligned with the empirical findings, and these findings will be beneficial for policymakers to make decisions in the banking sector of developing countries like Sri Lanka.

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Keywords: Board independence, Commercial banks, Income smoothing, Tax avoidance

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

TEAM MEMBER PROXIMITY TOWARDS VIRTUAL TEAM CREATIVITY; WEB DEVELOPMENT TEAMS IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Virtual team creativity has been defined as the perceived invention of creative, unique, organizationally beneficial items or concepts by geographically dispersed members who cooperate through an online platform (Bodiya, 2010). Proximity is one of the most crucial elements of virtual team creativity which is a sense of relational closeness that is both cognitive and affective (Hofeditz et al., 2020). Accordingly, though the literature and practical shreds of evidence portrayed a positive association, to oppose the above literature, some existing literature contends that the high level of proximity adversely impacts virtual team creativity through team member distraction and creativity blocking. Even though the above-mentioned contradictory relationship has been investigated, none of the studies has emphasized how to effectively manage team members' proximity in enhancing virtual team creativity (Davidavičiene et al., 2020). Therefore, this study investigates how to manage different levels of proximity among team members to accomplish virtual team creativity. Hence, there are three major objectives of this study. First, to explore how to manage low proximity levels among team members toward virtual team creativity. Second, to explore how to manage the high level of proximity by eliminating team member distraction to achieve team creativity. Third, to explore how to manage the high level of proximity by eliminating creativity blocking among the team members to achieve team creativity respectively. The findings of this study commit to contributing novel contextual knowledge through composing proper guidance to manage proximity among web development team members.

2. Research Methodology

This study incorporated an interpretivism paradigm with an inductive reasoning approach as proximity, a human construct that depends upon subjective perspectives and beliefs and engages in multiple realities. Qualitative methodology was the best match since the study focused on non-numeric, social, and cultural phenomena such as virtual team members' feelings, beliefs, and behaviours. As the multidisciplinary IT designers generate visual concepts by assisting innovation for different categories of tasks, web development virtual teams of the top 57 IT companies registered with the Sri Lanka Export Development Board were considered as the unit of analysis. The convenience sampling technique was employed with the expectation of choosing those cases haphazardly which are most convenient and easiest to obtain for the sample through LinkedIn and the website directory. In-depth and trustworthy details of virtual team members' views, behaviour, and proximity experiences were gathered using seven semi-structured interviews. The seven audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and open-coded.

3. Findings and Discussion

According to the content analysis technique, the findings of the study were as follows; **To manage the low level of proximity among team members toward virtual team creativity,** strategies, namely, team members' proximity, can be ameliorated by implementing virtual functions such as virtual meetings, virtual coffee, tech talks, and virtual games; Physical functions such as outings, physical games, get-together functions, trips, union parties, and introduction meetings; facilitating a flexible and friendly environment, uplifting the members' skill set, and make bonded through mixing team members from different teams were recommended. Accordingly, **to manage the high level of proximity by eliminating distraction among the team members toward achieving team creativity,** recommended strategies included advising for self-learning, providing a shadow resource, removing from the group, not responding to the calls, implementing training programmes, allocating a specific time to answer the questions, advising to avoid the behaviour, introducing do not disturb mode in Skype, ensuring team creativity by avoiding the detrimental effect of the high level of proximity on team creativity through team member distraction which obstructs the creative imagination process. Moreover, **to manage the high level of proximity by eliminating creativity blocking among the team members toward achieving team creativity,** strategies such as implementing meetings, discussions with the team lead and colleagues to debate creative ideas, using anonymous methods to present ideas, getting experts' assistance, critically evaluating each idea, ensuring the team creativity through avoiding the pernicious effect of the high level of intimacy on team creativity through team norm which ignores the absolute value of the solution were included respectively.

The research findings regarding objective one can be supported by the prevailing literature on the aptness of physical functions through cohesion and avoiding potential misunderstandings, which might strengthen team collaboration (Blomqvist, 2018), the feasibility of virtual functions, and the flexible environment through the positive correlation between a flexible workplace and workplace satisfaction, workplace satisfaction and productivity, encouraging trust (Chae, 2016) for meliorate proximity toward enhancing virtual team creativity. The strategies established under the second objective were significant through the potential of accommodating the twin demands of cooperation and concentration on creative tasks. Further, congruent with research findings, prevailing literature recommended the feature richen Skype, which shrinks social cues. The contradictory disclosure between distraction and virtual team creativity bestows a background for future researchers to investigate. Eventually, literature manifested the gravity of the findings under the third objective enhancing critical thinking and leading to valued creativity.

4.Conclusion and Implications

The study concluded that managing the proximity up to an optimum level with assisting the study-suggested strategies can boost virtual team creativity. The findings further contributed to new knowledge generation by begetting guidance on managing proximity up to an optimized level which can boost virtual team creativity, specifically in web development teams in the IT Industry of Sri Lanka. Moreover**,** team leaders and team members of web development teams in the IT industry are equipped with guidance in managing the proximity among the virtual team members toward achieving virtual team creativity. Moreover, the common findings other than the strategies which are unique to the web development teams can be applied to other industries. On the other hand, the leaders can assess the feasibility of each strategy and the unexpected negative consequences that can be incurred due to the unique culture and attitude of the team members while obtaining a regular solicit feedback to determine whether strategies are effective and additional adjustments are required.

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Keywords: Distraction, Proximity, Team Norm, Virtual Team Creativity

PANIC BUYING BEHAVIOUR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF SUPERMARKETS IN THE COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The consistency of the world is always vulnerable due to the occurrence of crises. Most recently, Covid-19 has become the key miserable facts behind the operations of several industries in Sri Lanka, including the supermarket industry. Consumer behaviour is an emerging area which has already attracted the great attention of scholars in the present world. Specifically, consumers' behaviour is highly subjected to unexpected situations like COVID-19. Panic buying behaviour is a kind of abnormal behaviour of consumers that could be realized due to the different crises. The Sri Lankan supermarket industry is currently facing challenges due to panic buying behaviour. Accordingly, panic buying behaviour is a novel and unexplored area of consumer behaviour, particularly in the Sri Lankan context (Nawarathne & Galdolage, 2022). Supermarkets have experienced big crowds, empty shelves, and long line-ups at cashiers (David et al., 2021). Hence, there is an immediate need to conduct a study assisting supermarket managers in Sri Lanka while facing unexpected situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study's main objective is to examine the difficulties encountered and mitigation measures taken by the Colombo district supermarkets to deal with panic buying during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers aim to use this investigation to gain a better understanding of the difficulties experienced by supermarket managers during COVID-19 due to customers' panic buying behaviour, as well as the strategies they used to deal with these difficulties. This study provides insights to supermarket managers to make accurate decisions despite consumer panic buying behaviour in the future. Additionally, this study aids policymakers in making decisions to reduce the negative consequences of the panic buying behaviour of consumers in the event of future crises.

2. Research Methodology

The qualitative methodology was employed since the knowledge regarding panic buying behaviour is minimally explored in the Sri Lankan setting. The researcher used a survey strategy to gather data since this is an exploratory study. The research context was the Colombo district of Sri Lanka. The primary justification for choosing the Colombo district was that most supermarket outlets are located in the Colombo district. The researcher employed the non-probabilistic convenient sampling method to select the sample for this study. Consequently, semi-structured interviews were used for the data collection. The unit of analysis of the study was a supermarket manager in the Colombo district. The researcher interviewed eight supermarket managers to collect the required data for the study. The interviews of respondents ended when the researcher reached saturation point. The interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes until the essential information was obtained from the respondents. Nevertheless, the interview audio recordings were obtained with respondent's consent. Finally, the interviews were transcribed into a word document. The researcher used the content analysis technique to analyse the interview data.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The challenges revealed from the interviews were customer retention challenges, order management challenges, challenges regarding consumer safety and employee safety, stock shortages, shoplifting, challenges in online grocery delivery, and queue management. One of the previous research has posited that stock shortages of goods in supermarkets are one of the negative consequences of panic buying behaviour (Prentice et al., 2020). Similarly, in this study, the researcher also recognized stock shortages as a critical challenge faced by the managers of the supermarket industry. People started to avoid physical stores to prevent themselves from virus transmission (Anderson et al., 2022). Therefore, supermarkets were expanding their online platforms to accelerate food delivery services. According to this study, the supermarket industry faced several challenges when dealing with delivering online orders.

Moreover, the researcher identified ensuring employee safety as a challenge encountered by supermarket managers during COVID-19. Frontline retail workers were exposed to serious occupational risks from COVID-19 (Mayer et al., 2022). As per the findings of this study, the researcher identified that increasing the number of orders to the outlets is only one of the difficulties faced by supermarket managers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government imposed several restrictions, and this caused to increase in online shopping behaviour among people. In addition, the researcher found that supermarkets struggle with customer retention because of people's panic buying behaviour. Furthermore, the researcher discovered the increase in theft in supermarket outlets was another challenge faced by supermarket management due to panic buying behaviour. Moreover, researchers discovered that managing long queues is a challenge for supermarket management.

As per the findings, the researcher observed that introducing promotions like discounts and bank offers, practising a customer complaint management system, selling products at their marked price, providing doorstep delivery services, and promoting CSR activities ensure customer retention in the long run. On the other hand, to assure the safety of both customers and employees, techniques like introducing safety guidelines in their outlets, assigning employees to work as groups, and imposing entry restrictions to limit viral transmission were implemented. Taking the assistance of police officers and employees, and increasing the number of employees and cashiers were utilized to regulate the queues. Further, the supermarket managers had implemented entry restrictions, monitored CCTV and placed employees near high-priced items to prevent theft. In addition, they had sought help from alternative suppliers to overcome the stock shortages.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The researchers identified retention challenges, order management challenges, challenges regarding consumer safety and employee safety, stock shortages, shoplifting, challenges in online grocery delivery, and queue management as the key challenges faced by supermarket managers in the Colombo district due to panic buying behaviour during the COVID-19 period. Moreover, researchers discovered several strategies to overcome those challenges.

Panic buying behaviour is one of the critical areas underexplored in the Sri Lankan context. The researchers expected to have a clear understanding of consumer panic buying behaviour in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka, from the perspective of supermarket managers. This study contributes to the existing knowledge of Sri Lanka by providing novel insights regarding consumer panic buying behaviour in the Sri Lankan context. In addition, this study facilitates the knowledge of supermarket managers in making the most accurate decisions duringunexpected scenarios like crises. Moreover, this study facilitates policymakers in decision-making to reduce the negative consequences raised by panic buying behaviour.

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Keywords: Challenges, Coping Strategies, Panic buying behaviour, Stockpiling behaviour, Supermarket industry

APPAREL WORKING PRACTICES STARTED DURING COVID-19 PERIOD, AND THE BENEFITS OF CONTINUING THEM EVEN AFTER THE PANDEMIC

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1. Introduction

Recently, a terrible plague called COVID-19 engulfed the entire world by creating chaos and disruptions for many countries and millions of lives around the globe. Hence, the organizations are trying to cope with business environment turbulence caused due to COVID-19 by introducing numerous working practices such as online training and development programmes on COVID-19 safety procedures and awareness programmes in stress and anxiety management, training employees in multiple roles under Human Resource Management flexibility, life, and family support by providing laptops, printers, scanners, foods, and accommodations for the employees who are working virtually, and more the employee wellbeing practices like authentic leadership of supervisors and top management (Agarwal, 2021).Meanwhile, the researcher conducted a preliminary investigation with management-level professionals to understand about whether they have started and experienced some new practices during this epidemic situation, and with the revealed new practices researcher was forced to conduct a deep investigation on the problem of "What working practices started during COVID-19 period and the benefits of continuing them in the apparel manufacturing industry successfully even after the pandemic?"

This paper aims to present the successful working practices that started during the COVID-19 period for the purpose of battling with chaos during the epidemic period. Further, the study also aimed at examining the benefits of new working practices for the company and employees through the continuation of them even after the pandemic. This investigation contributes to the existing knowledge of new organizational practices which were introduced during the epidemic period, and they help to get a precise understanding of the successful practices started during the COVID-19 period in the organizations, even during a crisis period or after the pandemic period. Furthermore, the management can use those new practices to overcome some hurdles and situations and to reach the success of the organization.

2. Research Methodology

New working practices differ from one organization to another, meaning they can be seen in multiple realities. Hence, social constructionism was the most appropriate research philosophy for the present study, and the qualitative research methodology was the typical research methodology selected for the present study in understanding subjective experiences. The researcher's ultimate goal was to produce individual and content-specific knowledge without generalizing findings. Hence, the inductive approach was the most appropriate alternative to the present study. Moreover, the research strategy of multiple case studies was used because it is more helpful to gain a rich understanding of the research context. The researcher selected the Apparel manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka as the context because it was indicated 5,435.1US$ million from the total industry exports of 9,702.0 US million from Jan-Dec 2021 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka Press Release, 2022). Consequently, the management professionals in the garment industry were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Further, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection methods because the present study was a qualitative inquiry. With this in mind, the present researcher conducted 15 interviews with management professionals working in the Apparel manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka.

3. Findings and Discussions

In the initial stage, the researcher used content analysis to analyze the interview data that had been transcribed. The researcher obtained lists of practices (open codes), management concepts (subcategories), and benefits (main categories) for the three distinct stages denoted by the current study's research questions. Accordingly, the present study revealed 23 virtual and 38 physical working practices that were started during COVID-19 in the apparel manufacturing industry and the benefits of continuing them even after the pandemic.

Work from Home (WFH) led to extra work under work overload (Agarwal, 2021). Nevertheless, many participants interviewed for the present study revealed that they can efficiently work under WFH and that it’s more convenient for them, and, employees are satisfied with WFH virtual working practice. However, participant # 01 mentioned a contrary idea stating that the convenience of WFH depends on the job role of the employees. Chanana and Sangeeta (2020) have highlighted the virtual team meet-ups on employee engagement practices. However, the researcher also classified under employee benefits those online meetings are are convenient for employees and thus help their personal development. Moreover, the present researcher identified that online quizzes and puzzles lead to employee satisfaction under employee benefits; consequently, Chanana and Sangeeta (2020) have identified short online games as an employee engagement practice. Further, Azizi et al. (2021) pointed out some human resource managers’ strategies for COVID-19 management, such as providing virtual games on a weekly basis.

Accordingly, the researcher categorized under employee benefits that sharing beauty tips and health & safety posts through WhatsApp Groups led to personal development. Adikaram et al. (2021) pointed out the HRM activity of WFH under the health & safety bundle. However, the present researcher categorized the virtual working practice of WFH as a management concept of cost-saving under the company benefits. Similarly, WFH led to employee convenience and employee satisfaction. Precisely, the present study emphasized that WFH practice leads to cost-saving under the company benefits. Although participant # 07stated that the overhead cost is saved, but there is a cost for WI-FI and laptops. Further, Adikaram et al. (2021) highlighted that the HRM practice of art competition for employees' kids under employee motivation and engagement bundle. Similarly, the present study revealed that painting competition for employees' children caused employee satisfaction and it was more beneficial to the company to improve their goodwill.

4. Conclusion and Implications

23 virtual and 38 physical working practices were revealed in the present study. Most likely, these practices benefit the company and the employees in several ways. For instance, online meetings cause cost savings and increase efficiency through time-saving for the company. Similarly, online meetings are convenient for the employees and, thus, help to employees' personal development (computer knowledge) of. Accordingly, the findings have both practical and theoretical implications because both practical excerpts and literature review revealed some puzzles or dilemmas as the research gap. The present study clearly categorized the benefits for the company and benefits for employees with the continuation of new working practices even after the pandemic situation. Hence, this investigation contributes to the existing knowledge of new working practices introduced during the epidemic period. Based on the content analysis, the researcher has also created a model of effective working methods in the garment sector. Similarly, this study contributes to get a precise understanding of the successful practices started during the COVID-19 period in organizations, and why the organizations continue them even after the pandemic.

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***Keywords**:* Apparel Industry, COVID-19, New Practices, Organizational Practices

INNOVATIVENESS, PROACTIVENESS, AND RISK TAKING TO ENHANCE SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE DUE TO DISRUPTION OF COVID-19 OF APPAREL AND TEXTILE SME's IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE

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1. Introduction

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has unexpectedly disrupted many global Supply Chains (SCs). In the wake of such a disastrous event, the core concept of Supply Chain Resilience (SCR) has become increasingly important. Belhadi et al. (2021) defined SCR as a situational capability acquired through continuous learning and adaptations from a series of SC disruptions. Similarly in Sri Lanka, different industrial SCs experienced severe SC disruptions due to COVID-19, particularly Apparel and Textile Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) (Rusniya & Nufile, 2020). Therefore, the researcher has selected ten random SMEs in the Western Province to identify the level of SCR of Apparel and Textile SMEs due to COVID-19. Accordingly, a preliminary survey was conducted using five item measurements on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5) of Belhadi et al. (2021). Results revealed the lower level of SCR (2.2) of the same response group by providing enough evidence to identify a problem with their level of SCR due to the disruption of COVID-19.

Literature argued that innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking are some of the antecedents of SCR. Therefore, aligning these antecedents with the Resource Based View (RBV) and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), this study mainly focuses on identifying the impact of the innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking on SCR of the Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province due to disruption of COVID-19.

In Sri Lanka, there were limited studies that investigated the SCR of SMEs. Moreover, there were no empirical validations in the Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province of Sri Lanka considering the disruption of COVID-19. Therefore, the present study will bridge the existing literature gap. Thus, the findings would benefit the Apparel and textile SMEs in the Western Province to identify the strategies to enhance their SCRes in future disruptions similar to COVID-19.

2. Research Methodology

The researcher conducted the current study by using the positivist philosophy. Moreover, the researcher tested a specific set of hypotheses based on RBV and DCT employing the deductive approach to make conclusions based on numeric values. This study was explanatory, and under the mono method, the researcher used questionnaires to collect and analyse the data. Moreover, the unit of analysis of this study was at an organiational level. According to the Database of the National Enterprise

Development Authority (NEDA) (2022), 74 Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province were considered as the population of the study, and data were collected through a census. Further, the researcher used an online self-administered questionnaire via social media to collect primary data. The main variables were measured using the measurements of Zhang et al. (2014) and Belhadi et al. (2021) using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Multiple regression analysis was used as the main analytical tool of the study by considering SCR as the dependent variable and innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking as the independent variables respectively.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Multiple Regression output

Model		Coefficient	P-Value
1	Constant	0.207	0.388
	Innovativeness	0.420	0.008
	Proactiveness	0.396	0.004
	Risk-taking	0.046	0.704
2	Constant	0.212	0.371
	Innovativeness	0.452	0.001
	Proactiveness	0.407	0.002

Source: Census Apparel and Textile SMEs in Western Province

As per Model 1 in Table 1, the p-value of risk-taking (0.704) was greater than the critical value of 0.05. Thus, there was not ample evidence to reject $H_{OC.}$ Hence, it can be concluded with a 95% level of confidence that there is no significant impact of risk-taking on SCR of Apparel and Textile SMEs in the research context during the pandemic of COVID 19. Further, the p-values of Innovativeness (0.001) and Proactiveness (0.002) in Model 2 were less than 0.05; hence, there was adequate evidence to reject H_{0A} and H_{OB}. Therefore, it can be concluded with a 95% level of confidence that the innovativeness and proactiveness impact the SCR of Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province due to the disruption of COVID-19.

Furthermore, there was a positive impact (β=0.407) of proactiveness on SCR of Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province. This implied that if SMEs' can enhance their level of proactiveness by a unit during the disruption of COVID-19, they can enhance the level of SCR by 0.407 units. Nevertheless, proactiveness was found as the strongest determinant of SCR in the research context. This finding was aligned with the findings of Al-Hakimi and Borade (2020) and Eshegheri and Korgba (2017).

Moreover, a significant positive impact (β =0.212) of innovativeness was found on SCR of Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province. It implied that if SMEs' can enhance their level of innovativeness due to the disruption of COVID-19 by a unit, they can enhance the level of SCR by 0.212 units. However, innovativeness was found as the weakest determinant of SCR in this context. In line with the present study findings, Al-Hakimi and Borade (2020) also concluded that innovativeness significantly impacts SCRes in Yemen manufacturing SMEs. Further, Eshegheri and Korgba (2017) also revealed that innovativeness increases the SCR in relation to their specific research contexts.

Study findings further revealed that risk-taking had no significant impact on SCR of Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province due to the disruption of COVID-19. In line with this, previous studies disclosed contradictory findings (Al-Hakimi & Borade, 2020; Zhang et al., 2014). One main reason behind this conclusion might be the lack of confidence of the Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province to take the risk during unexpected disruption situations such as COVID-19.

4. Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, innovativeness and proactiveness were revealed as the significant determinants of SCR, while risk-taking was not found as the significant determinant SCR of the Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province due to the disruption of COVID-19. Finally, the findings contributed to SCR literature in the Sri Lankan context due to the contextual gap. Further, it contributed by showing the applicability of RBV and DCT with innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and SCRes in the particular research context.

Theoretical implications aligned with RBV and DCT suggested that if the Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province can integrate and reconfigure internal and external skills to respond to a rapidly changing environment similar to COVID -19. they can behave proactively with more innovations which ultimately enhance their level of SCR.

Moreover, as practical implications, it can be stated that if the authorized bodies for SMEs in Sri Lanka (similar to NEDA) can be provided with more awareness sessions and skill development programmes (eg: digitalization, market segmentation tactics, etc.) to enhance the level of innovativeness and proactiveness of Apparel and Textile SMEs in the Western Province, in turn, it would enhance their level of SCR during future disruptions similar to COVID-19.

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***Keywords**: COVID -19, Innovativeness, Proactiveness, Risk-taking, Supply Chain Resilience.*

IMPACT OF GENDER AND GENERALIZED TRUST ORGANIZATION ON WORKPLACE GOSSIP: EVIDENCE FROM KANDURATA UMBRELLA INDUSTRIES (PVT) LIMITED

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1. Introduction

The collectivistic culture of an organization promotes the interconnection of employees and parallels it with a deviation of expected employee behaviour in a particular organization. Talking about an absent third party in an organization is a kind of dysfunctional behaviour prevailing around the organization, and that is called workplace gossip. Workplace gossip is a mixed blessing for organizations, while positive outcomes of it include stress releasing, increased job performance, giving power to individuals who are marginalized and thus, encourages organizations to have workplace gossip. On the other hand, the negative consequences include damaging the status and well-being of third parties, time-wasting, demote it (Tan et al., 2020; Naeem et al., 2019; Kuo et al., 2020). A preliminary study conducted in Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited confirmed the higher level of workplace gossip in Kandurata Umbrella (Pvt) Limited. Thus, the findings directed the way to establish the research phenomena for the study. The emergence of gossiping behaviour among employees is determined by organizational and personal factors. The scant literature regarding generalized organizational trust and employees' gender antecedents for workplace gossip provoked the researchers to build the research objective' Accordingly, the study objectives aimed to examine whether (1) employees' gender and (2) generalized trust in an organization impact on workplace gossip in Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited. The findings of the current study will guide the organization to control workplace gossip behaviour of employees, mitigate the unfavourable consequences and grab the benefits over workplace gossip by using generalized trust in the organization and employees' gender as tactics.

2. Methodology

Based on the deductive research approach, researchers carried out an explanatory study to investigate the causal relationship between generalized trust in an organization and employees' gender in workplace gossip. Primary data were collected from the total population (76 employees) of Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 24 items to measure generalized trust (Cook & Wall, 1980), demographic characteristics and workplace gossip (Bradly et al., 2017). All items were measured on seven points Likert scale. The study was cross-sectional in nature and had an individual unit of analysis.

Correlation analysis was applied to test the association between independent variables and dependent variables. Simultaneously, Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis was applied with a dummy variable for employees' gender to detect the impact of independent variables on the dependent variables. IBM SPSS statistics version 21 and AMOS were adapted to test the two hypotheses of employee gender and generalized trust in the organization's impact on gossip in Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited.

3. Discussion and Findings

The findings emphasized a moderate level of positive correlation (0.557) between generalized trust in the organization and workplace gossip.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

	Workplace Gossip (Dependent Variable)	
	Pearson Correlation	Significance Value
Generalized Trust in Organization	0.557	0.000

Source: SPSS

The association between the independent and dependent variable was confirmed. Accordingly, the researcher paid attention to identifying the impact of generalized trust and employees' gender on workplace gossip.

Table 2: Model Summary of the study

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.564	0.318	0.296	0.8809

Source: SPSS

R square value of 0.318 demonstrated the level of generalized trust in the organization, and employees' gender determined the variation of workplace gossip as a moderate predictor of workplace gossip.

Table 3: Coefficient Table

Model	Un-standardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.410	0.646		2.184	0.33
Generalized Trust in Organization	0.644	0.121	0.565	5.320	0.000
Employees' Gender	0.200	0.237	0.089	0.841	0.404

Source: SPSS

Further, the findings of MLR analysis established generalized trust in the organization as a significant predictor, while employees' gender was not significant in predicting workplace gossip. Ultimately, researchers derived the following fitted regression model;

Workplace Gossip (WG) = 1.410+ 0.644 Generalized Trust in Organization

Among the two independent variables, employees' gender was an arguable predictor of workplace gossip, and even previous literature had attempted to investigate. The current findings agreed with Grosser et al. (2010), as there were no gender differences in sharing gossip. However, the target of workplace gossip was determined by employees' gender since it didn't deviate between men and women to gossip in an organization (Berkos, 2003). In line with that, if workplace gossip is about a co-worker or supervisor, there was no gender difference to engage in gossiping in Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited. The present study results emphasized generalized trust in the organization as a significant predictor of workplace gossip, and further, the findings of Ellwardt et al. (2012) supported the findings of the current study, which meant a high level of trust led to negative workplace gossip in the organizations rather than positive workplace gossip. Moreover, Grosser et al. (2010) also assisted the findings of the current study by concluding trust as a critical factor for determining negative workplace gossip. Therefore, the outcomes guided Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited to remote generalized trust in the organization to absorb benefits while controlling costs.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Notably, researchers were able to conclude that workplace gossip can be negative or positive about co-workers or supervisors, and generalized trust in Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited encourages a high prevalence of workplace gossip. Moreover, employees' gender in the particular organization did not play a significant role in determining workplace gossip. However, generalized trust in the organization was a critical determinant in Kandurata Umbrella Industries (Pvt) Limited to control workplace gossip.

Consequently, organizations can make sound tie-ups between employees to grab over benefits of workplace gossip, such as sharing information and stress releasing. Breaking up trust between employees is a challenging task to control workplace gossip, therefore, applying a neutral way is preferred, and organizations can follow some strategies to manage the trust and workplace gossip.

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Keywords: Employee's gender, Generalized trust in organization, Workplace gossip

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SMALL-SCALE HOTELS' OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT DURING THE CRISIS PERIOD

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1. Introduction

The consistency of the world is disrupted due to the variety of causes created by the crises. The most recent examples of the crises are Covid-19 and economic crises. Among the most affected sectors by the crises in the world, tourism, retail, and several provisions of the service sectors are positioned in a significant place (World Bank Group, 2022). Tourism, the third-largest foreign currency earner (12.5% GDP), the backbone of Sri Lanka's economy, was hit hard by the closure of the international airport and the blockade of the country's COVID-19 (Robinson & Kengatharan, 2020). The latest world bank report predicts that South Asia will experience the worst economic performance in 40 years, and half of the country could be in a serious recession (World Bank Group, 2022). The Sri Lankan government has already recognized small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) as a driver of economic growth. SMEs in the tourism industry has been severely affected due to the closing of business operations and lay-offs (Bartik et al., 2020). Bentota is one of the peak areas of tourism which operates with a huge number of small-scale hotels and businesses that have been critically affected as a result of the crisis.

The main objectives of the study are to determine the challenges faced and strategies used by the small-scale hotels in the Bentota area in managing their operations during the crisis This study facilitates the managers of small-scale hotels to make accurate decisions during the crisis period since they possess limited resources and knowledge in managing their operations. Consequently, the knowledge is still lacking and developing in this area. Further, this study provides insights into the existing literature by providing facts regarding the challenges faced and strategies used by small-scale hotel managers, specifically during the crisis period in the Bentota area.

2. Research Methodology

The researcher's prime concern was to study the difficulties faced and tactics used by small-scale hotel management during crisis times by relying primarily on their perception; hence interpretivism is the research paradigm used for this study. Since the Sri Lankan environment had not explored this information, the qualitative methodology was employed in this study since this study was exploratory in nature. The researcher employed a survey approach to collect the data while Bentota of Sri Lanka was the research context. The researcher selected the sample using the non-probabilistic convenience sampling method for this investigation. Similarly, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to obtain the required data for the study. Small-scale hotels in the Bentota region served as the study's analytical unit. Once the respondents had provided the necessary information, six interviews were conducted with the hotel managers and they lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. Finally, a word document with the interview's transcription was created. The interview data were using the content analysis method.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The critical challenges faced by small-scale hotel managers were the declining number of visitors, employees' high salary expectations, paying salaries for the employees, locating skilled labour, operating with a small number of employees, paying loans, energy crisis, lack of government assistance, the absence of leadership skills respectively.

One of the critical challenges faced by hotels was cash flow management difficulties. In the existing literature, it is mentioned that between 11 January and 16 March 2020, a total of 170,084 hotel reservations in Malaysia were cancelled, resulting in a revenue loss of RM 68,190,364 as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic (Foo et al., 2021). Managing fixed expenses, payroll, employee morale, and especially cash flow were the challenges frequently addressed by many organizations in today's environment (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021). Similar challenges could be identified from the gathered data. Nevertheless, it was a tough challenge to practice health and safety guidelines during the Covid-19 period. Regardless of the nature of the operations, managers must consider forming specialized task forces among the staff to address hygienic concerns and provide the necessary education and awareness raising (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021).

Small-scale hotel management employed several strategies to overcome difficulties. Most of the hotel management had chosen to focus on the local market as foreign visitor arrivals had almost stopped. Offering special packages and discounts, focusing more on outdoor activities and boat rides were among the strategies implemented. Further, small hotels have switched to cooking using wood stoves and had changed their cooking habits to batch cooking. To ensure the survival of employees', small-scale hotels focused more on providing financial assistance, like informing staff members of the hotel's actual financial status to pay salaries and setting up an allowance in addition to the salary. The hotel administrators had given staff members protective clothing, such as masks and gloves. Moreover, food prices and menue were raised to increase revenues. Reducing the number of electrical fans and overtime allowances are the cost-reduction strategies used.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The ultimate purpose of the study was to uncover the difficulties encountered by small-scale hotels while managing their operations throughout the crisis and to determine the solutions they proposed. SMEs are the key driver of the Sri Lankan economy. More specifically, small businesses facilitate the survival of people. Bentota is one of the famous tourist destinations in the Southern coastal line. Most of the hotels in the Bentota area are small-scale. Small businesses own a limited number of resources and capabilities. Moreover, small-scale managers didn't have sufficient knowledge to deal with uncertain situations like crises.

The literature about this area is still lacking and developing in the Sri Lankan context. There are studies in the foreign context that cover how managers manage their operations during a crisis period. However, demographic differences can't generalize the literature about this area to Sri Lanka. Accordingly, this study contributes new knowledge by looking at the crisis from the view of small-scale hotel managers. Moreover, this study provides some insights into the crisis management strategies used by small-scale hotel managers. Understanding how small businesses in the hotel industry managed their operations while dealing with a variety of challenges would assist managers in handling emergencies in the future with more accuracy by having the right perspective.

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Keywords: Challenges of hotels, Crisis management, Small-scale hotels

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES IN INSURANCE BROKERING SECTOR: THE MEDIATOR EFFECT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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1. Introduction

Businesses must explore new practices to survive in today's dynamic and competitive market. High self-esteem, satisfaction, and a sense of overall harmony in life can be considered indicators of a successful balance between work and family roles, and a healthy work-life balance is important for an individual's psychological well-being (Panda & Sahoo, 2021). Accordingly, work-life balance practices are intentional organizational adjustments in programmes or organizational culture aimed at reducing work-life conflict allowing employees to be more effective at work and in other activities. Employees with a sense of success in their workplace are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. With the onset of the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, workers in various fields of the country have had to face huge problems. Among those sectors, the insurance brokerage sector was most affected because insurance agents in the insurance sector, employees in the insurance brokerage sector encountered with many difficulties, such as not being able to deal with their clients, collecting insurance premiums, work stress, and challenging work-life balance. As a result, the gross written premium of insurance brokerage firms decreased. With that, they have a risk in their jobs. In such a critical period, it is a question of how work-life balance impact maintaining the mental empowerment and job satisfaction of the employees of insurance brokerage companies. Therefore, this research aims to study the mediating effect of work-life balance on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction among employees in the insurance brokerage sector in Sri Lanka. The findings of the study will be important for companies to redesign their decisions to achieve organizational goals. Further, this study helps businesses to understand their human capital needs and find solutions to improve working relationships and consequently create an environment that improves productivity.

2. Research Methodology

The researcher applied the deductive approach to this study and continued with positivism. The researcher chose the survey research strategy, and the individual unit of analysis was the most appropriate for this study. Further, this research adopted quantitative data, and a questionnaire was used to gather data. Data were collected from 154 employees in the insurance brokering sector using a self-administered questionnaire. Here the employees were categorized according to their gender, age, income level, education level, and the number of family members. According to the Gross Written Premium, the best ten (10) performed insurance brokering companies in Sri Lanka were taken as the population of this study. Among those 10 companies, seven (7) brokering companies were considered as the sample based on the simple random sampling method. The conceptual framework of this study is as followings.

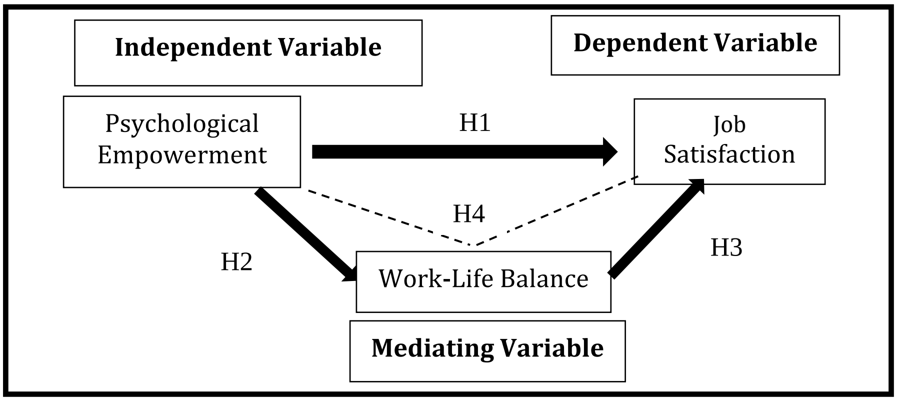

Figure1: Conceptual Framework

In order to achieve the primary objective of this study, SPSS version 26 and AMOS were utilized to conduct the structural equation modelling.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

As per the results of the reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha value for all variables was 0.852, and was greater than the acceptable level (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Further, validity analysis results were acceptable since the results showed KMO as 0.712. Therefore, it suggested that the variables have a high level of validity. Based on the correlation analysis and structural equation modelling results, there was a significant positive impact of Psychological Empowerment on Job Satisfaction, while the direct effect was 0.819, and the significance was 0.000. Consequently, the correlation was 0.709, and its significance was 0.000. Further, it indicated a significant positive impact of Psychological Empowerment on Work-Life Balance because the direct effect was 0.714 while the significance was 0.000 On the other hand, its correlation was 0.585, and significance was 0.000. There is a significant positive impact of Work-Life Balance on Job Satisfaction. Accordingly, the direct effect was 0.387, and the significance was 0.000. In addition, the correlation was 0.683, and its significance was 0.000. Consequently, there was a significant mediating effect of Work-Life Balance on the relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction, while the indirect effect was 0.276 and the significance was 0.000. Further, the correlation was 0.683, and its significance was 0.000.

Accordingly, the results indicated a significant impact of Psychological Empowerment on Job Satisfaction among Insurance Brokering Sector employees in Sri Lanka. Zoysa and Sivalogathasan (2021) have proven this fact from the results of their study. However, the the impact did not have a significant predictive value on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction (Buitendach & Hlalele, 2014).Moreover, a significant impact of Psychological Empowerment on Work-Life Balance was found in this study

(Thomas and Velthouse, 2014). In addition, results also confirmed that there is a significant positive impact on Work-Life Balance on Job Satisfaction. Rifadha and Sangarandeniya (2015) have supported this notion from the findings of their study. However, Nadeem and Abbas (2009) concluded that both work-family interference and job satisfaction are highly adversely correlated. Finally, the findings of the results showed that there is a significant mediating effect of Work-Life Balance on the relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction (Zoysa and Sivalogathasan, 2021).

4. Conclusion and Implications

This researcher accepted all the hypotheses and identified a significant positive relationship between all the variables; hence, all the objectives were achieved. The researcher concluded that insurance brokering companies must take the challenge of work-life balance seriously since it impacts their professional performance, life satisfaction, and employee welfare, all of which are highly important. This research provides opportunities for the management and policymakers of the insurance broking sector to reconsider the guidelines for scheduling favourable policies to their employees. The majority of respondents in the research were female. Therefore, this study provides an opportunity for the management of insurance companies with more female employees to reconsider their organizational policies and the job roles of employees. Moreover, these research findings are significantly helpful to understand how the management can successfully manage their employees to achieve the goals and objectives of the company by satisfying workers within their organizations. Further, these research findings can help identify conditions relevant to implementing various work-life balance initiatives that can support employees to balance their work and family responsibilities better, improve their well-being, and deliver organizational benefits. However, the findings of the research may limit to certain institutions since the researchers had not received permission from all the institutions to distribute the questionnaire Concurrently, this research did not consider the knowledge, skills, infrastructure facilities, physical health of the people, and other social factors due to the lack of time.

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Keywords: Insurance brokering sector, Job satisfaction, Psychological empowerment, Work-life balance

AN EXPLORATION OF HOW SRI LANKAN FREELANCERS OF CREATIVE AND MULTIMEDIA-RELATED PROJECTS EXPERIENCE THE TENSION OF PROJECTING A COMPETENT IMAGE

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1. Introduction

Online freelancing falls under the "crowd work, category, which is a subset of the broader term "gig economy." Fiverr, Upwork, and freelancer.com are some well-known freelancing platforms. Clients play a significant role in determining the work receipt by freelancers. Similarly, getting a gig/project can be impacted through the self-presentation of freelancers. Additionally, when adapting to a client's request, most of the time, there is a need for unpaid learning by the freelancer (Blaising et al., 2020). Therefore, in securing a client's order, freelancers attempt to persuade the client that they can meet the client's requirements. As a result, crowd workers show a competent image to the client even when they do not have the competency to perform certain gigs (Ashford et al., 2018). Attempting to project an image without the necessary skills increases the likelihood of developing an unfavourable image and may also lead to depression. Though showing a competent image by online freelancers in getting orders is a phenomenon worth studying, there is a dearth of research on the experiences of online freelancers in showing a competent image and the resultant tensions. Thus, the study aims to explore how Sri Lankan freelancers occupied in creative and multimedia-related projects experience the tension of projecting themselves as competent when they are not. Accordingly, the research adds new knowledge, specifically to the literature on gig working and, generally, to the literature on gig worker socialization. Moreover, the research uncovers the experiences of Sri Lankan online freelancers. Thus, it reveals an important aspect of online freelancers in a developing country context. Further, the study provides practical insights for freelancers to cope with uncertainties related to their jobs, clients to contact the most suitable online freelancer/s, and platforms to provide a smooth service to clients and freelancers.

2. Research Methodology

Adapting an interpretive philosophy allowed the researchers to deeply understand the individual online freelancer's experience of tension of projecting themselves as competent. The inductive approach was adopted to identify hidden meanings behind the data. The researchers embarked on exploratory research using qualitative methodology and the multiple case study strategy since the knowledge in this area of research was limited and the need for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in the real-life complexities of these workers. In addition, the study focused on Sri Lankan freelancers occupied in creative and multimedia projects since, in 2021, the highest online freelancing labour supply from Sri Lanka was for creative and multimedia projects. The purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods were employed to find the participants of the study as there was no published list of Sri Lankan freelancers in creative and multimedia gigs. Nine semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with online freelancers who work on various macro-work platforms by using both telephone and Zoom modes. The interviews lasted for 40 to 55 minutes on average. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed, and content analysis was used to analyse the data. After an initial coding round, those codes were categorized into seven categories.

3. Findings and Discussion

Findings revealed that online freelancers in creative and multimedia projects experience different tensions due to projecting a competent image: account-related tensions, learning-related tensions, self-management-related tensions, communication-related tensions, client-related tensions, order-related tensions, and earning-related tensions.

The account-related tensions included reviews, profiles, and performance reduction. Concurrently, identifying those aspects independently and understanding the link between them would provide a new perspective to the literature because studies have not been conducted to identify this difference (Wood et al., 2019). Learning-related tensions were due to the lack of knowledge, ability, and pressure to show creativity related to the respective order. Further, freelancers experienced self-management-related tensions since there is pressure to complete the order on time while managing other orders and relationships. In addition, communication-related tensions were prevalent among freelancers who struggled with language, algorithmic control, and confidence in communicating. Together, these three categories of tension resulted in learning credibility tension, a phenomenon that has yet to be addressed in online freelancing (Ashford et al., 2018).

The tension associated with receiving a direct order and providing unlimited revisions can be identified as order-related tensions, while the tension of receiving the payment and feeling disappointed was identified as earning-related tensions. Freelancers experience client-related tensions such as whether the client would accept the project, identification of the nature of the client, and dealing with the client's unawareness. Remarkably, the tension behind learning and the tension of algorithmic control were due to insufficient requirements, and the tension related to direct orders can be identified as noteworthy additions to the gig work literature since the nature of those tensions was not adequately identified in previous studies related to freelancing. Besides these, freelancers highlighted that it is challenging to work with female clients. This was an interesting finding that has not yet been adequately addressed (Keith et al., 2019).

The findings also revealed that online freelancers deploy several self-presentation strategies. As noted in the self-presentation literature, flattery, lying, and self-promotion (Mun & Kim, 2021) can also be identified among online freelancers. Apart from those, several other tactics were identified: reading the client's message without viewing the message from the inbox and telling the general. On the other hand, a few advanced points to understand were the knowledge level of the client, showing the skills, getting pre-prepared, showing progress frequently to ensure accuracy, altering the materials from the internet to show the sample initially, and publishing gigs to which they are incompetent.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Sri Lankan freelancers in creative and multimedia projects experience seven types of tensions when they project a competent image in securing and performing projects for which they are not competent. They use different strategies for self-presentation and occupy different views on tensions related to algorithmic control, learning, earning, and client management. The findings regarding learning credibility tension emphasized the importance of socialization practices among online freelancers.

The findings implied that the platform ought to consider offering a socializing programme to reduce the uncertainty of the work. Further, platforms need to develop an efficient feedback system through which feedback can be interpreted meaningfully to enable freelancers to recognize and acquire the skills in demand. Moreover, platform designers should focus on power and information asymmetries to reduce the precarity of online freelancing work. The findings of the study also highlighted different kinds of tensions that could lead to mental instability in online freelancers. Hence, the mental health and well-being of freelancers should be a concern for freelancers and health officials of the government. Additionally, the government and educational institutes can implement skill development programs to facilitate the development of English and other language competencies to equip future freelancers to mitigate communication-related tensions.

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Keywords: Gig economy, Impression management, Online freelancers, Self-presentation, tensions

AN EXPLORATION OF WORKPLACE SOCIAL GAFFE IN SRI LANKA: ACTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

Workplace relationships take shifts with different episodes amidst the importance of maintaining positive workplace relationships for better outcomes for the organization. Previous studies have been conducted to investigate such kind of work episodes, which leads to a change in work relationships, such as workplace mistreatment, incivility, and envy, where the majority of the studies take the victim's perspective considering the actor's malicious intention to hurt the victim. In contrast, this study on social gaffes explored how workplace relationships change due to expectation violations which are unintentional, and unexpected to the actor him or herself. In general, social gaffe includes mistakes, awkward interactions, slip-ups, and embarrassing pratfalls, whereas this study aimed to explore how social gaffes shape relationships from the actor's perspective aligning to the workplace. Social gaffe can be identified as a phenomenon with its root in psychology, where different terms have been given, such as social blunder, faux pas, transgression, predicament, and embarrassing predicament. Most of the studies regarding social gaffes have been conducted in a psychological context aiming to identify how social gaffes impact people with social anxiety disorder and autism syndrome (Moscovitch et al., 2015). However, recently, some of the previous researches have shed light conceptually on this phenomenon to be influential in a work context as well (Puranik et al., 2021). Although committing social gaffes has been identified as universal and common, it is understudied in the management context (Kessler, 2022). As a result, knowledge of this phenomenon and how it shapes workplace relationships is scarce in management literature. Thus, this study unveils new knowledge on how the experience of social gaffes unfold in a workplace from the actor's perspective in Sri Lanka by exploring the experience of committing social gaffes in the work place and its consequences.

2. Methodology

To date, social gaffes have been studied in laboratory settings with controlled variables or by providing faux pas situations and imagined blunders as quantitative studies (Leary et al., 1996; Tangney et al., 1996; Moscovitch et al., 2015). However, this study aimed to focus on deepening the understanding of people's lived experiences in this regard. Thus, in line with phenomenology, this exploratory study occupied an inductive approach and qualitative methodology followed by a case study strategy. The participants were selected based on purposive sampling with inclusive priory criteria such as the ability to narrate from the actor's perspective, experiences related to work context and social gaffe, and unintentionality of the act. Accordingly, eight participants from trainee to managerial levels in several industries were selected. Further, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted, lasting for 15 – 30 minutes as interviewees recalled their incidents differently, out of which three were face to face and the rest over the phone. Moreover, content analysis has been used for data analysis resulting in a model.

3. Findings and Discussion

When describing how social gaffes unfold in the workplace, the findings were able to answer two aspects, the experience of committing a gaffe and the consequences. Accordingly, some necessary characteristics were identified in describing the experience, such as the victim's reaction to social gaffes as either hostile or benign, which was conceptually argued by previous researchers (Puranik et al., 2021). In addition, previous literature on self-conscious emotions has identified that a victim's intimacy and power could influence relational status through self-conscious emotions (Tangney et al., 1996), which was consistent with this study finding but in the work context. Moreover, how an actor would attribute the gaffe committed was explained either as a norm violation or damage to self-representation followed by the actor's emotions such as self-consciousness and basic emotions. In addition, two categories conceptualized previously on actor's response toward victim was empirically explained as other focus or self-image repair efforts by this study (Puranik et al., 2021). Notably, other parties' positive or negative evaluations have also influenced in shaping the experience of social gaffe from the actor's perspective. Finally, other characteristics, such as the intensity of the gaffe, the realization of whether an unexpected gaffe is committed, and the state of an actor after committing a social gaffe which is a unique aspect of the social gaffe phenomenon in the management context have been derived by this study.

Considering the consequences, previous studies have identified short-term outcomes of social gaffes in a psychological context, such as apology and embarrassment (Leary et al., 1996), where this study expanded those findings into organizational, behavioural, relational, and psychological consequences, particularly in relation to the work context. In fact, this study resulted in significant consequences like turnover and reduction in efficiency, etc., as organizational consequences of social gaffes that have not been explored to date in a management context and behavioural consequences. Most importantly, relational consequences have resulted in either positive, negative, or no changes in relationships deriving the finding that social gaffes can even lead to positive relational outcomes (e.g., Pro-social behavior). Finally, psychological consequences such as a whole day out of mind, cognitive work interruption, sense-making, etc., were also identified. Thus, this study was able to empirically explore some facts argued by previous researchers along with novel findings in relation to the research questions as a whole, giving light to an unexplored phenomenon in the management context.

4. Conclusion

Accordingly, this study achieved the objective of exploring how social gaffes unfold in which the study findings revealed how the experience was shaped based on characteristics of the victim, actor, other parties' evaluation, and consequences on behavioural, organizational, relational and psychological aspects. Theoretically, this study contributed new knowledge on workplace social gaffes, taking together the experience and consequences from the actor's perspective. Simultaneously, this study identified another type of anchoring event in shaping workplace relationships, as argued by previous researchers. Practically, this study provided awareness to everyone but particularly to managers so that negative consequences can be minimized, positives can be encouraged, and they can differentiate unintentional mistakes from incivility. Finally, it was not without limitations. Primarily, the study failed to identify the exact emotion one felt in relation to the circumstances. Further, recalling bias regarding social gaffe events, particularly from the actor's perspective where one recalls a gaffe committed by them, opened doors for future studies on this phenomenon from different cultures as norms on what is appropriate and interpretations are given to emotions are different from the investigations on other perspectives and positive side of social gaffes.

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ROLE OF INTROVERSION IN REACHING TOP MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

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1. Introduction

The personality that captures individuals' uniqueness plays a crucial role in understanding organizational behaviours. Consequently, personality has become an important criterion of employee recruitment, selection, and promotion decisions. Researchers have widely used different personality types, measurement scales, and outcomes of personality. Introversion and extraversion have been identified as common personality traits and are popularized worldwide. While extraversion has often been interpreted positively, introversion has received less attention among researchers and practitioners (Blevins et al., 2021). Notwithstanding, there are introverts who reached managerial positions in the corporate sector, and the role of introversion in achieving career success has rarely been investigated. In relation to introversion, there are views that highlight the positive side (Taylor, 2020) as well as the negative side (Jones as cited in Grant et al., 2010). However, the extant literature on personality does not comprehend the understanding of introversion's role in the journey to reach top positions in the corporate sector. Given this background, the present researchers were motivated to;

Explore whether introversion was assisting introverted individuals to reach top managerial positions.

Explore whether introversion was obstructing introverted individuals from reaching top managerial positions.

Explore whether the introversion trait was affected when they moved ahead toward top managerial positions.

There are more studies into the relationship between extraversion and leadership, and the findings revealed it is positive (Spark et al., 2018). Nonetheless, introversion has not been examined to a greater degree, particularly in workplace contexts. Consequently, the present study contributes to the existing literature by producing new knowledge on how introversion was supportive and obstructive in arriving at managerial positions. Moreover, the existing methodological gap (Blevins et al., 2021) has also been filled by adopting the qualitative methodology. The current study signals practitioners about the strengths of introversion to maximize its utilization and to be supportive of introverts to conquer the struggles of introversion. Further, introverts are encouraged to exercise strategies to defeat introversion-related barriers.

2. Research Methodology

The present study used the interpretivism research philosophy as it concentrated on capturing the subjective reality of introversion in reaching managerial positions. Qualitative methodology was adopted since the current investigation explored multiple truths paired with complex descriptions and interpretations in the form of experiences, stories, opinions, and perceptions of managers embedded with introverted attributes. Further, the inductive reasoning approach was used in this endeavor to explore the heretofore under-investigated phenomenon. The case study approach was employed as the research strategy since the present study focused on each participant's various stories leading to the multiple case studies approach. The researchers opted for purposive sampling and selected participants who reached top positions in the corporate sector representing diverse backgrounds such as human resources, finance, sustainability, quality assurance and who accepted that they have introverted personalities at the beginning of their careers. Data were collected by conducting in-depth and semi-structured interviews via the Zoom platform with the top managers. An interview guide with semi-structured questions was used to uncover how introversion helped or obstructed in reaching the top managerial positions. The sample size was limited to 10 since the saturation point was reached by around the 10th interview. The interviews were of 1-2 hours in length, and were recorded with the participant's consent. All the interviews were transcribed, and content analysis was performed. The researchers read through all transcriptions around two to three times to discover the statements that implied the answers to the three research questions. Subsequently, open codes, sub-categories, and categories were derived for each research objective.

3. Results/Findings and Discussion

Findings related to research objectives 1 and 2 are illustrated in Figure 1. In relation to the first research objective, 8 categories representing 47 codes were identified as the supportive role of introversion. In relation to the second research objective, 12 categories were found, representing 40 open codes that revealed how introversion obstructs reaching top positions. Previous research found that introverts engage in meaningful conversations, think before speaking (Islam, 2018), and are good listeners (Islam, 2018). The study identified many other ways that introversion assists career success. The obstructive role of introversion was determined by previous researchers and revealed that introverts are not good at communication and lack interpersonal skills (Taylor, 2020). However, this study has gone beyond the previous findings that discuss the negative impact of introversion and comprehended how introversion blocks career success.

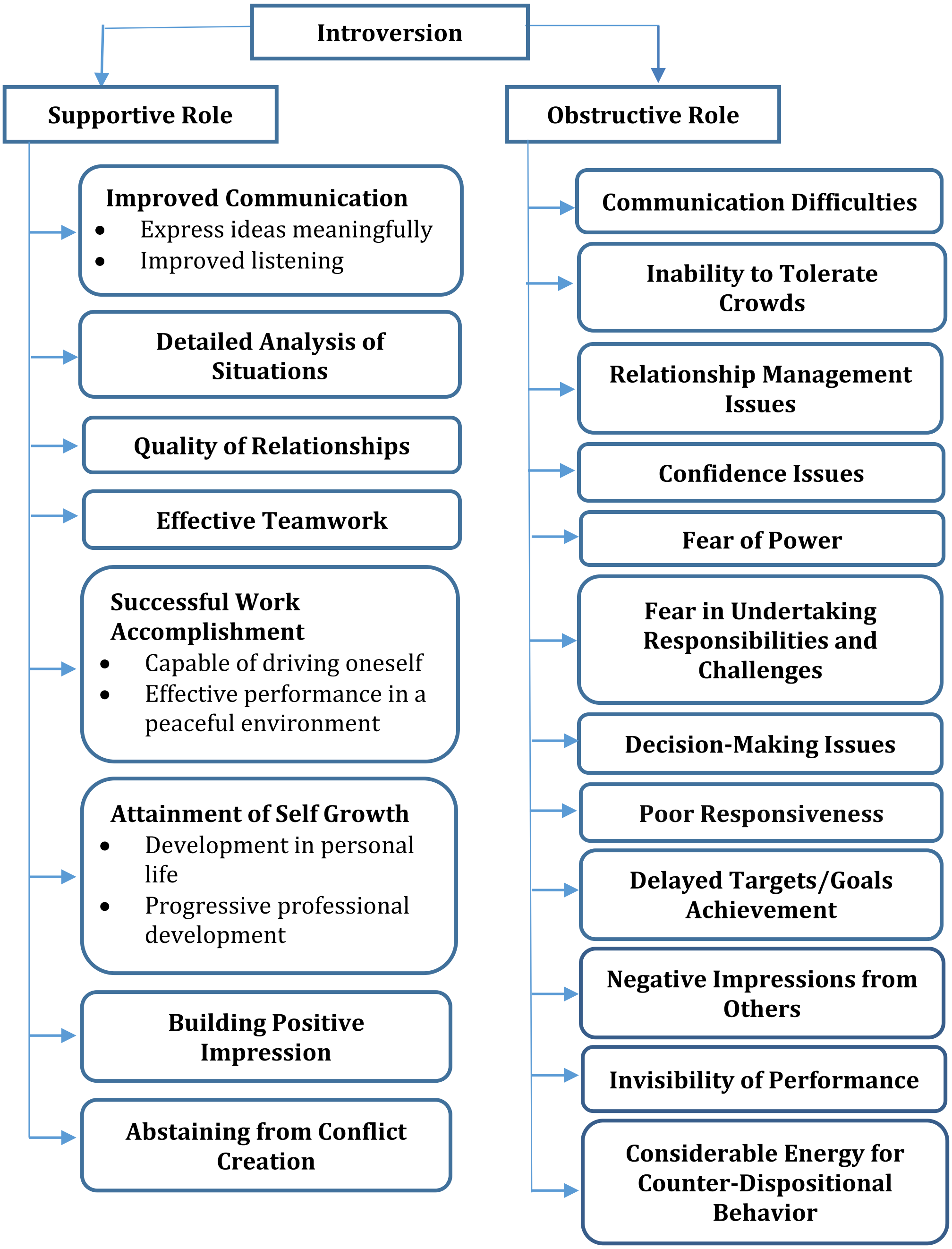

Figure 1: Summary of the Findings of Objectives 1 & 2

Importantly, in response to the third research objective, the researchers discovered that, on the one hand, the trait of introversion might be subjected to change over a period, moving from the introversion side to the middle of the introversion-extraversion continuum. On the other hand, it may not be changed significantly for some individuals, as two managers mentioned that they are still introverts trying to adjust according to the situation.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The present study concludes that introversion is not an extremely negative personality trait as it helps professionals to reach top positions. On the other hand, it concludes that introversion is not always helping because it hinders the journey to career success. Moreover, it can be concluded that the introversion trait gets affected when individuals come across different circumstances. Notably, the current study concludes that there are no perfect introverts, but get themselves adjusted in-between extraversion and introversion in different situations. Interestingly, they love to remain as they are (i.e., as introverts). Concerning implications to the existing knowledge, the current study contributes by deriving new knowledge about both the instrumental and detrimental avenues of introversion in pursuing managerial positions by interviewing managers with introverted characteristics. As per the practical implications, introverted individuals are encouraged to make the maximum use of their introverted strengths to excel in their careers and insist on putting strategies into action to conquer their impediments of introversion. Practitioners are required to value introverted strengths by assisting introverts to eliminate the shortfalls of introversion.

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Keywords: Introversion, Obstructive role, Supportive role

"*A BROADER PICTURE*": NEW PERSPECTIVES OF WORKPLACE ROMANCES PREVAILING IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FIRMS IN JAFFNA

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1. Introduction

Workplaces are full of human relations, emotions, and interactions; hence, biopsychological functionalities like workplace romances are inevitable. However, mainstream Human resource management views romances merely as sexual activity and misbehavior. On the other hand, most of the previous empirical studies have narrowly focused on romances that exist only within love and extramarital relationships (sexual relationships). Studies like Aquino et al. (2014), deviating from the above view, argued that workplace romances have been misunderstood, constricted, and always linked to sexual relationships, whereas gestures, minute actions, interactions, and communications between employees outside sexual relationships are also within romance. Even after this notion, the said broader view remained under-explored. Accordingly, this study has filled the above lacuna in the literature, studying the broad perspectives of romances. In many culturally conservative societies like Jaffna, romances have been regarded as social misbehaviour and taboo. Business organizations also follow the societal order and practice hostilities against workplace romances. In order to break this taboo box and create discussion, it is necessary to explore workplace romance from broad perspectives. Studies like Paul and Townsend (1998) have presented that Information Technology (IT) firms possess more modern aspects of workplace behaviours due to increased technology use and flexible work culture. Accordingly, this study has focused on the broad perspectives of workplace romances in IT firms. The objectives of this study are to identify new perspectives on workplace romances and classify such identified perspectives for proper understanding. This study is significant as identifying and classifying the new perspectives would update the exploration leading to contemporary analysis of workplace romances in the field of organizational behaviour. Ultimately, this study also provides an immense contribution to properly manage the work and organizational life of Human Resources (HR).

2. Research Methodology

This study was geographically located in Jaffna, a culturally conservative district in the north of Sri Lanka, and was contextually located in IT firms. Due to more aspects of subjective nature, the study was undertaken in a qualitative interpretive paradigm with an ontological stance of relativism and an epistemological stance of subjectivism. As clear boundaries for a "case" were available, the researcher followed case study methodology, specifically, an intrinsic exploratory case study. Purposive sampling was used, and accordingly, two -medium-scale IT firms were selected, and 6 employees from each firm were interviewed (semi-structured) each for one hour. Out of 12 employees, 7 were male (3 were single), and 5 were female (4 were single); all were aged between 26 to 36 and were heterosexual.

Such employees were the unit of analysis in the study, and all of them were operational-level employees who held job positions like User Experience (UX) designer, User Interface (UI) designer, graphic designer, assistant software engineer, and marketing personnel. Data consisted of experiences, narratives, and opinions of the employees as well as non-participant observation of the researcher. Thematic analysis was conducted where data were manually coded into two themes, viz micro and macro romances. Sub-themes were also included to make it precise and clear.

3. Findings and Discussion

Primarily this study has found that IT firms generally perform based on collectivism; thus, interrelationships and romances between employees are inevitable. Next, in line with the definition of romance, this study reiterates Aquino et al. (2014), that romances cannot only be reduced to sexual relationships, instead, should be viewed broadly. This study, as per its objectives identified several broad and new perspectives of workplace romances in IT firms and presented two major classifications (illustrated in figure 1) Accordingly, 'micro romances', which are not part of any organized relationship and occur autonomously, whenever there is interaction and communication between employees; 'macro romances', take place as a part of an organized relationship, where the party/parties involved in romance have expressed their relationship. This classification has pointed out the existence of romances outside general relationships-based romances and sexual relationships-based romances.

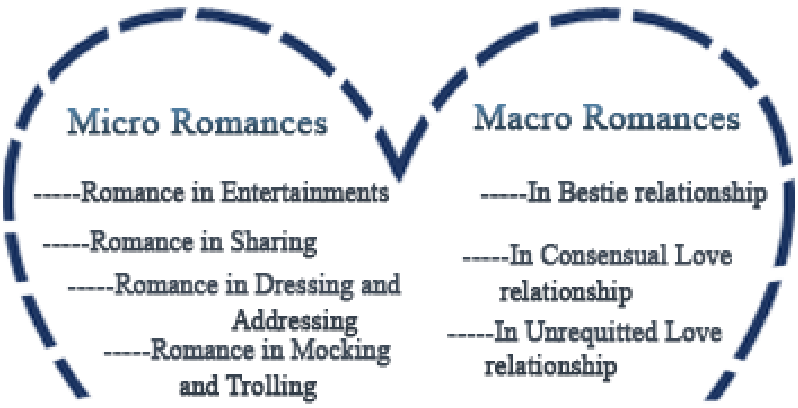

Figure 2: Classification of broad perspectives

Under micro romances, it was found that sharing work and sharing of personal and social problems with coworkers possessed compassion and care, where romance has been an underlying aspect. Knowledge sharing has also been noted with romance, given the fact from previous studies that knowledge has been a source of attraction between individuals. Thirdly, this study has evidenced that mocking and trolling in Jaffna culture has its unique meaning, where people who got mocked have accepted and felt happy with it. However, trolls from only special people were allowed, where the romance is obvious. This finding was contrary to Eaton and Mausner-Dorsch (2000), in which trolling was evidenced as a destructive factor in the workplace. It was also found that the clothing (dress) of fellow employees has been noted, peeked at, commented on, and praised by fellow employees where the underlying emotion is 'romancing the person, given the evidence from Eicher and Roach-Higgins (1992) that dress is also part of the body and identity. As the fifth finding, this study points out the romance in addressing others, especially when nicknames are used and adorable syllables are added to the original names. One has to spend much time, care, and effort creating such creative and meaningful names, which exhibit romance.

Under Macro romances, best friend relationships have been found with endearing romances, affirming Cooper-Thomas and Morrison (2016), deviating from numerous previous studies, which argued the absence of romance in friendship. Next, this study demarcates love into unrequited and consensual love, where unrequited love possesses a one-sided psychological romance (euphoria). Consensual love also had non-sexual romances like glances, gestures, and smiles in addition to the sexual romance that has been highly explored in previous literature.

4. Conclusion

Overall, this study has concluded that workplace romance exists in very minute matters outside (sexual) relationships, and such romances have been empirically evidenced in this study as 'micro romances. Similarly, in relation to 'macro romances', this study conclusively points out that there can be romances in non-sexual relationships as well (Bestie relationships and Unrequited love). The above concluded points build up the new broad perspectives of romances that exist in IT firms nowadays in the Jaffna district. As a practical implication, this study urges the HR management to withdraw from following societal taboos and a 'nothing to discuss' mindset about workplace romance and to explore it further, to properly understand and manage HR. As a limitation, this study has only considered the workplace romances that take place within the same level (operational level employees); thus, it has been recommended for more exploration from differing levels of workers to fully understand workplace romances in organizational settings. Moreover, explorations about the hostilities on workplace romances, especially psychology-based studies, are much needed to create a holistic and comprehensive understanding of workplace romances.

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Keywords: IT firms, Micro romances, Macro romances, New perspectives, Workplace romances

EMPLOYEE MISTREATMENTS DUE TO POSITIVE VOLUNTARY WORKPLACE BEHAVIORS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY FROM THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

The success or failure of an organization heavily depends on the behaviour of its employees. Generally, employees engage in work as per the job description, which is called in-role behaviours; in contrast, some employees do work more than the job description, which is called extra-role behaviours or voluntary workplace behaviours (Dash & Pradhan, 2014). The employees who engage in voluntary workplace behaviours should receive a positive response from others in the workplace because those bring financial and non-financial benefits to the entire organization. That is the typical response that workers who engage in voluntary behaviors expect. However, these behaviours can occasionally lead the employees to be mistreated within the organization. Bilal et al. (2021) also found that employees who try to do a positive thing for the organization will be mistreated in the organization. Therefore, the researcher wanted to explore this anomaly. Thus, this exploratory study aimed to investigate how employees have been mistreated when engaged in positive voluntary workplace behaviours based on the victim's perspective. There is no adequate inquiry that directly and deeply investigates how positive voluntary workplace behaviors can be an antecedent of workplace mistreatment. This understanding of employee mistreatment due to positive voluntary workplace behaviours in a single study is relatively rare. Therefore, deeper investigations should be carried out regarding this specific area. Due to the lack of research in the field, this research provides insight into protecting and promoting voluntary behaviors in organizations and facilitates future researchers. Moreover, considering the Sri Lankan context, no study has investigated the same phenomenon. Therefore, by offering a thorough insight, the study contributed to enhancing the literature in Sri Lanka as it is a novel endeavour for the local context while it provides a new perspective for the existing knowledge as well.

2. Methodology

Based on the Interpretivism paradigm, this study was conducted under the inductive approach using qualitative research methodology. This study was exploratory since this investigation focused on having a better understanding of the nature of the issue from a novel perspective. The researchers have chosen multiple case studies as the most appropriate research strategy. Ten employees who experienced workplace mistreatment due to their voluntary behaviours within the private and public workplaces in Sri Lanka were selected as the sample using purposive and snowballing sampling methods. Ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected five employees from private organizations and five employees from public organizations. The researchers ensured the trustworthiness through the appropriate quantity and length of the interviews as well as developed a good rapport and trust with participants when collecting data. After the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the data were analysed using content analysis, whereby codes were listed as open codes and axial codes and were categorized under three phases; (1) mistreatments experienced by the employees who demonstrate VWBs, (2) reactions of employees who demonstrated VWBs after they have been mistreated within the organization, and (3) perceived reasons for various mistreatments of others in the workplace toward the employees who demonstrate VWBs, to get a comprehensive understanding on the whole phenomenon.

3. Findings and Discussion

First, researchers found various mistreatments experienced by the employees who demonstrated positive voluntary workplace behaviours, such as the victim being exposed to the perpetrator's inactive attention, undermining, false accusative acts, suspicion, unbearable work stressors, interruptions, exclusionary acts, verbal harassment, hidden mistreatments and also exposed to the perpetrator's inactive collaboration. The scope of the mistreatments varied from minor to major mistreatments on the severity of the impact caused on the victim. According to Robinson and Bennett (1995), verbal harassment can be considered as the major mistreatment, while inactive attention and inactive collaboration were considered as minor mistreatments among employees. Notably, recent literature emphasized ostracism as a version that entails a serious violation of inclusion (Chen & Tang, 2018). Based on these findings and to the knowledge, these various mistreatments can range from inactive attention and inactive collaboration to exclusionary acts and verbal harassment.

Behavioural reactions, psychological reactions, and other reactions were the results of the second phase. Accordingly, behavioural reactions included the continuation of voluntary behaviours, weakening voluntary behaviours, discontinuation of voluntary behaviours, positive reaction, neutral reaction, changed behaviour, asking or clarifying, while psychological reactions included the emotional reactions and changed attitudes of the victim. In addition to those behavioural and psychological reactions, there were some other reactions where the victim reacted to this experience according to the situation and based on their intuition.

According to the results of the third phase, the perceived reasons for various mistreatments of others in the workplace toward the employees who demonstrate positive voluntary workplace behaviours were categorized into three levels; individual, group, and organizational level reasons. Consequently, based on the victim's perspective, perpetrator's hypocrisy and jealousy, the perpetrator's misperception, the perpetrator's dislike for voluntary behaviours, and the perpetrator's unique characteristics were the individual-level reasons, while traditional attitudes of team members and power distance among team members were the group-level reasons for employees who engage in VWBs within the organization. Moreover, organizational-level factors like leadership style and management style, organizational culture and ethical climate, power distribution, organizational rules, and policies greatly impact on employees' mistreatment (Samnani & Singh, 2012). As perceived by the victim, organizational culture and organizational processes and practices were the reasons for the victims to be mistreated within the organization as per the results of the study.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The study examined various mistreatments experienced by the employees who participate in VWBs left with different mistreatments varying from minor to major mistreatments. Reactions of the victim to those various mistreatments were found as behavioural reactions, psychological reactions, and other reactions. The perceived reasons for mistreatment from the perspective of the victim were investigated, and it was identified that individual-level, group-level, and organizational-level reasons have caused these mistreatments. All these three phases were significant in understanding employee mistreatment due to positive voluntary workplace behaviors as a whole.

The findings will be a new perspective for organizations and managers to look at this phenomenon of workplace mistreatment differently and take necessary actions. Furthermore, organizations can easily take remedies to stop or mitigate those mistreatments and protect the employees who engage in VWBs, as this study provides why employees are mistreated due to their VWBs. Simultaneously, the study expands the literature in Sri Lanka as no study has investigated the same phenomenon in the Sri Lankan context including all these three phases in a single study.

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Keywords: Voluntary workplace behavior, Workplace mistreatment, Victim's perspective

WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND WHAT IS NOT IMPORTANT FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS/UNDERGRADUATES IN SRI LANKA? AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL VALUES

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1. Introduction

Personal values are the fundamental convictions of what is right or wrong that serve as the foundation for individual behaviour (Schwartz, 1992). Researchers extensively examined the role of personal values in deciding a wide variety of organizational outcomes (Arieli et al., 2020). Thus, it is vital to identify the personal values of individuals to understand their behaviours. Among the models and frameworks that discuss personal values, Schwartz's (1992) value framework is popular among researchers as it covers 10 types of personal values, presents measuring scales, and elaborates on some compatible and opposite values upheld by individuals. On the one hand, as Schwartz (1992) stated, the pursuit of success values clashes with the pursuit of kindness (i.e., benevolence value) as those go in opposite directions. On the other hand, pursuing power (i.e., power value) and success ideals (i.e., achievement value) can be held simultaneously as those are harmonious with each other (Schwartz, 1992). Meanwhile, organizations are concerned about individual values as they need to identify and change the values to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Organizations are particularly concerned about the young cohort, given their great potential to contribute to the success of organizations and their distinct nature (Manuti et al., 2018). University students/Undergraduates can be taken as individuals who have the potential to contribute to organizations in various capacities. Therefore, investigating the values of university students will be beneficial for the industries dealing with the new workforce. Although there are studies conducted concerning learning orientation of university students/undergraduates in Sri Lanka (Gamage et al., 2021), studies are scarce in analysing their value profile. Given this background, the objectives of the present study were to explore the personal value prioritization of university students/undergraduates in Sri Lanka and to identify alignments of those values. In doing so, Schwartz's (1992) value framework was used as the study's analytical framework as it provides a comprehensive understanding of personal values.

2. Research Methodology

This study followed the positivistic viewpoint, deductive approach, and quantitative methodology. Personal Value Questionnaire (PVQ) was used developed by Schwartz (2012) to quantify the different personal values that exhibit significant predictive validity and reasonable meaning equivalence across cultures (Schwartz, 2012). Responses for the items were taken using a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree; 1 Strongly Agree; 5). The purpose of this study was to identify the different personal values of university students. Thus, a descriptive study was conducted using a questionnaire survey. For this study, undergraduates (aged 21-27) who were studying by the time of the survey (i.e., June-August, 2022) in both private and government universities were considered. A Google form that includes demographic data was circulated and items of personal values among university students/undergraduates via social media. Researchers were forced to opt for the convenience sampling method as it was practically impossible to identify the sampling frame. After several rounds of reminders, 389 effective responses were received. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean values and standard deviations. The sample comprised of 175 males and 214 females, as well as 24 undergraduates from private and 365 from state universities. 125, 84, 130, and 52 respondents represented years 1, 2, 3, & 4 sequentially.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Table 1 presents the 10 types of personal values under four broader categories and the degree to which university students/undergraduates held those values. As per the results of descriptive statistics, the mean value of achievement (4.63) was the most prominent, and the power value (2.76) was the least important value reported by the respondents. Furthermore, this study accords the low score on prestige values (power) as reported in a study conducted in India (Naim, 2021). Surprisingly, university students/undergraduates did not prefer power values, although both Sri Lanka and India are considered high power distance national cultures (Hofstede Insights, 2021). The study unveiled some interesting findings concerning the compatible and contradictory values as proposed by Schwartz (2012). First, the results revealed higher mean values for the personal values of benevolence (4.25) and achievement (4.63), which were proposed as opposite values in Schwartz's (2012) framework. Second, the harmonious values of achievement (4.63) and power (2.76) mean values reported in two extremes contradicted to Schwartz's (2012) views.

Table 1: Personal Value Prioritization of University Students

Openness to Change			Self-Transcendence		
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Self-Direction	4.31	0.45	Universalism	4.26	0.39
Stimulation	4.03	0.46	Benevolence	4.25	0.46
Hedonism	3.88	0.60			
Self-Enhancement			**Conservation**		
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Achievement	4.63	0.96	Security	4.23	0.51
Power	2.76	0.46	Conformity	3.18	0.61
			Tradition	4.10	0.54

Source: Survey data (2022)

4. Conclusion and Implications

The present study concluded that achievement is the most important and desire for power is the least important value for university students/undergraduates. Further, the study also concluded that the individuals hold the values opposite in nature and hold compatible values in high and low degrees, which is surprising as those can result in value incongruence.

Concerning theoretical implications, the present study informs Schwartz's (2012) value framework, the individuals' ability and desire to uphold contradictory values. In addition, the Schwartz (2012) value framework was expanded in a national culture with high power distance (Hofstede Insights, 2021) and a developing country context. The study's finding of less preference for the power of university students/undergraduates raises the validity of the view that national culture influences the individuals of that particular culture. Concerning practical implications, the study implies the importance of inculcating power value among university students/undergraduates as it is important in managerial and leadership positions. Simultaneously, it will be important to help individuals resolve value dilemmas when they hold contradictory values. Additionally, managers might have to think of alternative ways to gain commitment to rules and regulations enforced by organizations as conformity reports relatively low mean value among the participants. Inevitably, the study has some limitations that provide opportunities for future researchers. The study was descriptive in nature; the findings are at a basic level. Hence, exploring why power orientation is low of the participants while they represent high power distance national culture and how individuals hold contradictory values simultaneously can be further ventured by future researchers. Further, future researchers can conduct the same study for larger samples even beyond the university context using the probability sampling technique to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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Keywords: Descriptive study, Personal values, University students, Value prioritization

CLANDESTINE ROMANTIC LOVE AFFAIRS OF MARRIED EMPLOYEES IN THE APPAREL INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

It is not an exaggeration that employees in contemporary organizations spend more time with their official counterparts than spend with their family members. Consequently, workplace romance (also known to be clandestine workplace romantic relationships - CWRR) reached a considerable level and has received the attention of scholars. Horan and Chory, as cited in Sidu et al. (2020), have defined CWRR as "a relationship that occurs between two members of an organization where sexual attraction is present, affection is communicated, and both members recognize the relationship to be something more than just professional and platonic" (p. 45). Preliminary investigations with the managers and employees revealed that workplace romance has been common among married employees and problematic in the Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka. Although clandestine workplace romantic relationships related studies are common in the West, minimal investigations were found in the Sri Lankan context.Similarly, workplace love relationships involve a very intense emotion (Khalilzadeh & Pizam, 2021), which needs in-depth inquiry to uncover the realities of the phenomenon. Yet previous studies have taken the deductive approach with prior identified variables. Given the contextual knowledge and methodological deficiencies, present study aimed to;

i. Explore the antecedents of CWRR in the apparel industry of Sri Lanka
ii. Explore the different ways of initiating and maintaining CWRR of married employees in the apparel industry of Sri Lanka

iii. Explore the consequences of CWRR on married employees in the apparel industry of Sri Lanka

This study contributes knowledge specifically to the present context in understanding contemporary issues of married individuals' clandestine workplace romantic relationships. It was also expected that the subjective viewpoints drawing interpretation from managers and employees would uncover multiple realities in understanding clandestine workplace romantic love affairs.

2. Research Methodology

Accordingly, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide following interpretivism as the research philosophy and deductivity as the research approach. Interviews were conducted via telephone and Zoom platforms with four participants representing management (Production, Human Resource, and Administration), two co-workers, and two employees involved in CWRR in the apparel industry.

Participants were selected purposively who have had the experience or have knowledge of clandestine romantic relationships of married individuals. All the recordings obtained were transcribed to properly understand participants' views. Content analyses was conducted to identify codes and categories related to research objectives.

3. Findings and Discussion

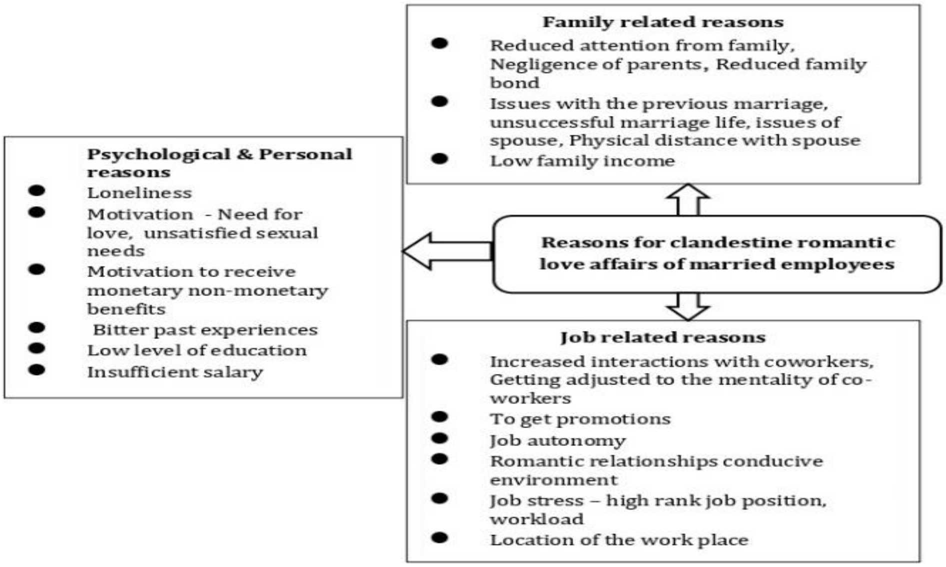

Figure 1: Reasons for the background for CWRR

As shown in figure 1, three main reasons were identified that serve as the background for CWRR. While there is some evidence that family-related reasons impact on CWRR (Farai & Mugove, 2017), the study detailed several family-related reasons behind CWRR in the Sri Lankan context. Similarly, aligning with previous research findings (e.g., Baker, 2016), job-related reasons such as the geographical area of the company and job autonomy behind CWRR and many other reasons were explored. In particular, some psychological reasons were found as reasons for CWRR, such as loneliness and sexual needs in the present context might be common to any other context as those are inherent in human beings.

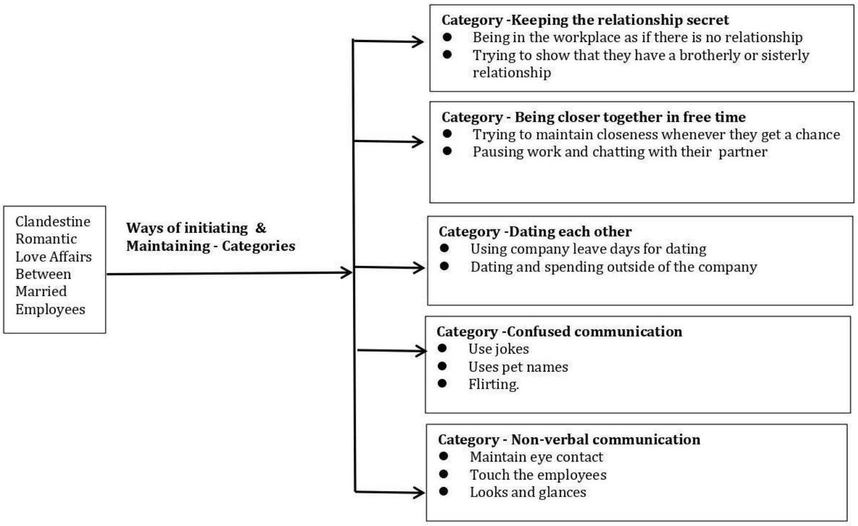

Figure 2: Different ways of initiating and maintaining CWRR

Figure 2 presents the findings related to research objective 2. While previous studies have not addressed the ways of initiating and maintaining CWRR, the present study revealed subtle and mostly secret ways the relationships are nurtured.

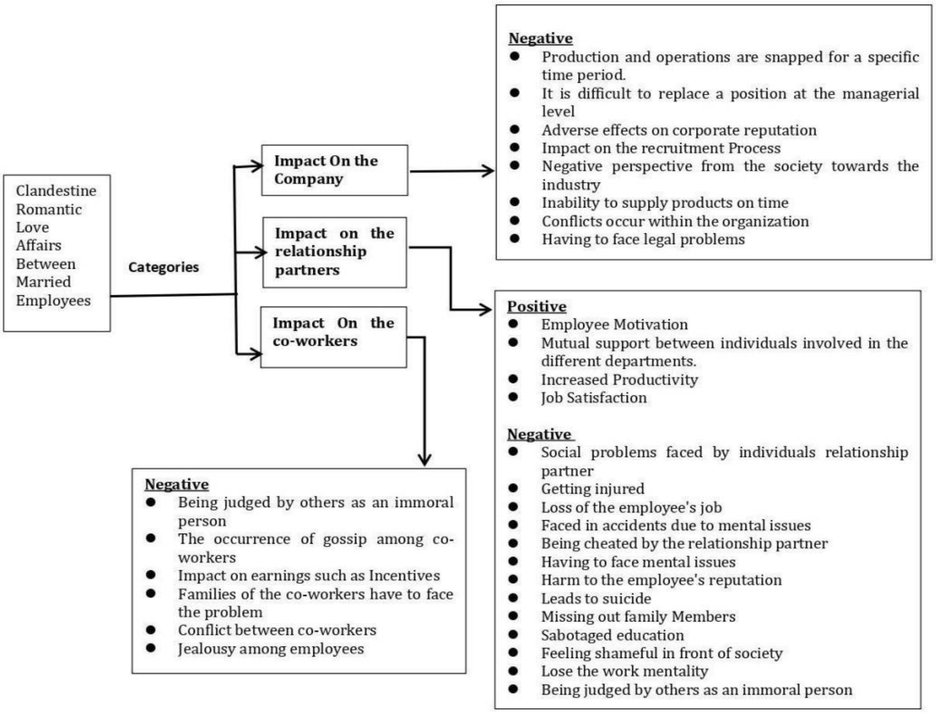

Figure 3: Main consequences of CWRR

Accordingly, three main consequences of CWRR were identified (i.e., impact on the company, impact on the relationship partner, and impact on the co-workers) related to research objective 3. Aligning with previous studies, the present findings supported both positive and negative outcomes of CWRR in a novel context.

4. Conclusion

The present study consists of several conclusions. First, there is a natural background that promotes CWRR in organizations, such as love and sex as primary human desires and increased contact hours with other employees in organizations. Second, most of the CWRR relationships are initiated and maintained secretly and will be noticed by others once they grow to a substantial level. Thus, it is not easy to observe and monitor those behaviours within the organizations' premises. Third, although there are some positive outcomes of CWRR, those are not long-term benefits, rather temporary in nature. Unfortunately, most of the CWRR of married employees end glumly by bringing adverse outcomes to the organization, coworkers, and particularly to the relevant individuals. Therefore, organizations in Sri Lanka need to make policies to discourage CWRR of married employees through minimizing the existence of antecedence that promotes clandestine romantic love affairs.

Given the nature of CWRR, although it would be impossible to eliminate the conditions for CWRR, companies can create a climate that discourages the ability to involve in CWRR, particularly among married employees. Further, organizations must educate employees about the negative consequences of CWRR. Finally, CWRR has not been only an organizational issue but also a social issue, as the findings of antecedents and consequences of the present study. Thus, organizations need to make social awareness of the adverse consequences of CWRR and educate parents of Sri Lanka about their responsibility of raising kids, providing an understanding of social issues and the harmful effects of inappropriate relationships as a long-term solution to the problem. The study attempted to bring antecedents, maintenance process, and consequences of clandestine romantic love affairs into one frame by providing a comprehensive understanding for anybody interested in exploring the phenomenon even deeper in the future.

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Keywords: Workplace romance, Clandestine love relationships, Apperal industry, Married employees

MARKETING MANAGEMENT

BUYING DECISION-MAKING STYLE OF GEN Z ON ELECTRONIC GADGETS IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

In 1986, Sproles and Kendall defined consumer decision-making as a mental orientation that characterizes the way consumers make choices. This is very important for marketing to know how consumers behave when purchasing, and relevant for the market segment. Nowadays, consumer decision-making style is examined by developed and developing countries. Consumer style inventory is a comprehensive instrument developed by Sproles and Kendall that is used to measure consumer decision-making style. There are eight factors under the Consumer Style Inventory (CSI). Those are perfection and high-quality awareness, brand awareness, novelty and fashion awareness, leisure and shopping awareness, price awareness and money value awareness, impulsiveness, confusion due to over-selection, and customs/brand loyalty. More research is needed to examine consumer decision-making style and CSI instrument to guide marketing strategy (Anic, Ciunova, & Rajh, 2010). Gen Z is someone who is born after 1997, grew up on cutting-edge technology, the Internet, and social media, and has the potential to become a technology addict. Generation Z differs from millennials in that it is the first generation who grew up completely in a digital age. Generation Z has an age range of 9 to 24 years (Thangavel, Pathak, & Chandra, 2019). Therefore, this study will help marketing researchers understand the current Gen Z segment. Marketers in the digital age can use insights to design marketing strategies. It also helps market researchers develop successful branding strategies, quality control, advertising planning, pricing, and long-term customer retention. For future scholars, policymakers, and advertising organizations, it will be a great starting point to learn more about Gen Z markets and behavior patterns at the time of purchase by determining decision patterns. As a result, this study aims to update previous surveys and provide new insights into Gen Z's decision-making style.

Shopping-related perceptions and behaviours are influenced by consumer decision-making patterns. According to the consumer's decision-making style, "the basic attitude a customer holds about a purchase decision, even when applied to different items, services, or purchase decisions." It can also be defined as "the mental attitude that characterizes a consumer's approach to decision-making (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). Consumer Etiquette Awareness in 1985, Sproles created a 50-item survey to assess shopping and typical shopping attitudes. Data was collected from 111 female students in two classes at the University of Arizona. Sproles 6 has discovered Consumer Decision-Making Styles (CDMS) attributes, including high quality, respect, brand awareness, time-saving, and decision-makers seeking appropriate and mysterious support using factor analysis approaches. In 1986, Sproles and Kendall defined inventory and extended it to the Consumer Style Inventory (CSI). Furthermore, consumers choose CSI has accepted 40 articles. In the Duchene area of Arizona, the tool was distributed to 482 students in 29 Home Economics classes in five high schools. Perfection and high-quality awareness, brand awareness, novelty and fashion awareness, leisure and shopping awareness, price awareness and money value awareness, impulsiveness, confusion due to over-selection, and customs/brand loyalty are the eight mental features of emotions calculated from now on tools.

2. Methodology

The study is “exploratory research” that explored buying decision-making style of Gen Z on electronic gadgets using the CSI instrument with the aim of, evaluating whether the original consumer style inventory (CSI) created by Sproles and Kendall (1986) is applicable to Gen Z in the western province of Sri Lanka. The main objective’s data collection took a qualitative approach, and detailed personal interviews were conducted with Gen Z in the western region of Sri Lanka to gather the required data. The interview was conducted among 25 Gen Z people. The selected respondents were between 15 to 25 age and residents of the Western province of Sri Lanka. Simple random sample technique was employed. The interview audios were recorded using a digital device that can be played repeatedly and transcribed. The gathered qualitative data collected was investigated only for data analysis purposes.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research approach that aims to uncover values from qualitative data collection such as general Z situations, ideas, knowledge, experience, and interview transcripts. Inductive and deductive reasoning are two approaches to theme analysis. The authors chose the deductive approach to data with some predetermined beliefs based on the theory or current knowledge since it frequently makes a case for a particular view point. In addition, drawing inferences or reaching conclusions based on several premises. Premises are widely held beliefs or facts that serve as the foundation for a theory or broad concept. The conclusions are claims supported by the premises. The most common method of thematic analysis consisted of six steps. Those are understanding, coding, topic generation, topic evaluation, definition, and writing down.

3. Research Findings and Discussion

According to the research, the majority of participants were interested in electrical devices and had an up-to-date understanding of them. The electronic devices were given six-tenths for curiosity and up-to-date information. Thus, it assisted the researcher in continuing the interview. In addition, the participants were all fascinated by gadgets and strongly desired to buy all kinds of electronic devices. The majority of participants stated they spent a considerable amount of money on electronic devices. Concerning on brand awareness, some participants paid attention to the brand when purchasing electronic devices and only a few participants considered novelty fashion consciousness. Recreational and hedonistic shopping consciousness was not the case among Gen Z This is especially true for participants who would be aware of the monetary value of the gadgets, which should be worth the money they spend. Gen Z said no one could buy gadgets without pre-planned shopping. Some Gen Z shared their experiences by stating that they would be confused over the number of different brands available in the markets nowadays. Thus, they depend on their friend or experts in brand awareness. Half of the people shared their opinion asserting that they would be happy to buy items from the same company in the future if the brands they used earlier gave them a positive experience. Overall, the results showed that the majority of generation Z considers only six factors when buying electronic devices: perfectionism and high-quality awareness, price and value of money awareness, habits / brand loyalty, brand awareness, confusion caused by over-selection, and finally, novelty fashion awareness.

4. Conclusion

According to the results of personal interviews, the majority of respondents when choosing electrical devices considered perfectionism and a high level of quality awareness. In addition, a few the respondents believed that novelty and fashion are associated with purchasing electronic devices. None of the participants believed that leisure, shopping, and impulsivity are good criteria for buying decision-making for electronic devices. This study provides implications to know Gen Z in order to develop an effective segment based on the behavioural patterns of Gen Z customers. It will be a great starting point for future scholars, policymakers, and advertising organizations to learn more about Gen Z markets and their behavior patterns at the time of purchase by determining decision patterns. This study is characterised by several limitations including the study does not consider gender differences and was restricted to young customers in the Western province of Sri Lanka due to the convenience of collecting data.

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***Keywords**:* Consumer Style Inventory (CSI), Gen Z, Electronic gadgets, Buying decision-making style.

EXHIBITING AN EXCLUSIVE INTEGRATED ONLINE PLATFORM FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The Internet has expanded widely in the business sector. In the face of globalization, the number of website users worldwide has proliferated. Accordingly, electronic commerce has become one of the essential commercial operations in today's world of technology (Ho & Hsiung Wu, 1999). However, there is a lack of a single website that provides all the primary services on the same platform in Sri Lanka. The researchers have considered the market as seven primary service categories. These include educational services, healthcare, construction services, transportation, beauty salon services, IT services, and an online store. Urban people living busy lives are mainly affected by the problem of accessing separate websites to avail of various services. Colombo is one of the busiest and most populated cities in Sri Lanka. In the hustle and bustle of Colombo city life, people want access to goods and services in the comfort of own homes (Weragoda, 2019). Due to urbanization, people in the Colombo region are more likely to use modern technology in their day-to-day activities than people in other parts of the country. Living a busy lifestyle adds additional challenges to accessing services, such as difficulty in obtaining and locating better benefits and a lack of understanding of the service's terms and conditions (Ruiz, 2021). Although there is access to some single-service websites, there is no single-service market in the Colombo region that provides all services from a single website. This web application can be a help to unemployed service providers and small-scale business companies. Within that purpose, this research aims to determine what service providers and customers need and to create a website for the Colombo service market which meets those needs. The study's primary purpose is to "develop a web application to support essential services through a single platform for Colombo district providing best customer satisfaction".

2. Research Methodology

The Colombo area was selected due to its urbanization and the use of new technology to analyze customer satisfaction in creating an online service market. In this study, the primary objective was to provide all services to the customer on a single platform. Consequently, a google form was created to measure customer satisfaction, and a customer was selected through random sampling considering their level of satisfaction. This study used a mixed method as the research approach since numerical data is required to measure customer satisfaction, and qualitative data is used to develop this system to satisfy customer's needs. This method measures customer satisfaction with a customer satisfaction analysis tool. It analyses the obtained data and compiles the information obtained from it along with the information of the service providers and customers to create a database. Five factors that underlie customer satisfaction were identified. For that, a system model, system architecture, and system diagram were created with the help of computer languages and tools. Accordingly, react was used to set up the front-end and Node express to set up the backend. In addition, react geo library was used to create a location tracker in this study.

3. Findings and Discussions

This research identified a gap in the Sri Lankan service sector, and it is evident that there is no proper answer to that need. Hong & Pavlou (2017) stated that language and culture play a significant role in online systems ensuring good communication and interaction between buyers and suppliers. In Sri Lanka, the market is already operational. The survey also discovered that consumers are more likely to access services and goods online. Although the market for items in this online marketplace has improved in many ways, the market for services cannot be fulfilled. According to Perera & Sachitra (2019), convenience for online shopping and website functionality have a moderate effect on customer service and customer satisfaction. The study discovered that more than 84% of consumers prefer the service market to be online compared to the goods market. Further, the survey found that 95% of clients enjoy the website provided due to the existing absence of a website that offers all services. This makes it extremely simple for them to enjoy any service in the service industry.

Customer satisfaction for the independent variables: Below table 1 represents the data from a questionnaire created to obtain information for this research. The questionnaire was designed to analyse how satisfied customers are with the current service market and the range of services it offers. For that, the researchers employed 382 customers in the area where the study was conducted. The responses given to the independent variables in this research and the extent to which they led to customer satisfaction were shown in the above table. As shown above, in the study of customer satisfaction regarding the existing service market and their online presence, they have obtained a value of 0.00. It showed that there is a significant relationship between before and after customer satisfaction. I This research aims to design a website that provides customers with what they want and makes the service market work online.

Table 1: Customer satisfaction for the independent variables

		Customer Satisfaction
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	382
Information	Pearson Correlation	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	382
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	382
Time	Pearson Correlation	.697**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	382
Price	Pearson Correlation	0.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.107
	N	382
Techno	Pearson Correlation	.603**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	381

Source: Survey Data

4. Conclusion and Implications

Focusing on the current market, the market for goods and services has grown exponentially. Although the Sri Lankan commodity market is mainly online, the market for services is lagging not being in the way. Therefore, after researching customer satisfaction, the aim was to create a new website for the service market. This involved creating a new website where all the services that customers need can be accessed through a single website. A web template was created after analyzing the customer feedback required for that. It enabled customers to have all the essential services they need on a single website. The end goal was to show the customers the website after creating the web template and to market the service market widely.

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Keywords: Customer satisfaction, E-commerce, Online platform, Service Sector

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY: EVIDENCE FROM INDIAN BANKS

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1. Introduction

With the advancement of technology, today's customers are more aware, and rapidly shift from one service provider to another. This problem also lies within the banking sector of India. The current banking sector is under colossal stress to maintain customer loyalty, which greatly depends upon the satisfaction level of the customers. The problem becomes more severe with banking mergers/ acquisitions and banking frauds. Therefore, tackling this problem becomes very important to maintain and improve customer loyalty towards the bank. Berry introduced the term relationship marketing in 1983 to obtain a direct response to a marketing campaign that directly draws attraction toward customer loyalty and satisfaction. The existing literature has some evidence indicating that relationship marketing positively influences customer loyalty. Based on these arguments, the study focuses on the concept of relationship marketing and customer loyalty in the banking sector of India. In the Indian context, the study of Chatterjee, Babu, Sekhar & Kumar (2022) possess similar findings but with a limited context of relationship marketing. Accordingly, the study will try to fill this gap by taking a broader, and more detailed operational definition of relationship marketing and measuring its impact on customer loyalty in Indian banks. The primary objective of the study is to measure the relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty and examine the impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty. Further, the study will extend the current knowledge about relationship marketing and customer loyalty in the banking sector. In addition, this will also be beneficial for the banks to understand the importance of relationship marketing for maintaining customer loyalty so that customers do not switch from one bank to another easily. Marketing researchers can also use these findings for conducting further research.

2. Research Methodology

The research design for the study is descriptive. Descriptive research design targets to describe the ongoing phenomenon more accurately. The primary data were used for this study. After reviewing particular literature, a questionnaire was designed, which possessed good reliability measured by Cronbach Alpha. The composite reliability was examined with the help of SPSS-AMOS. The sample data for this study were collected from the five states (i.e., Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab) of the northern region of India. 275 samples were collected from the customers of public and private sector banks. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through Google form and consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of individual's personal details and the second part consisted of the six variables used in the study consisting of 35 questions adopted from the relevant literature. Responses for all the questions were requested on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The researchers used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which was performed with the help of SPSS-AMOS to test the study hypotheses. Accordingly, it was ensured that all the conditions were met for applying SEM.

3. Results

Table 1: Regression Weights

Hypothesis	Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P label
BD. → C.L.	0.541	0.106	3.198	0.003
CMT. → C.L.	0.621	0.168	3.697	0.000
COMM. → C.L.	0.505	0.238	3.050	0.007
SATIS. → C.L.	0.406	0.238	2.920	0.008
TRU. → C.L.	0.481	0.195	2.470	0.013

- BD. = BONDING
- CMT. = COMMITMENT
- COMM. = COMMUNICATION
- SATIS. = SATISFACTION
- TRU. = TRUST
- C.L. = CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Iqbal et al. (2019) have established a positive relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty. Researchers further tried to measure the impact of relationship marketing variables on customer loyalty. Relationship marketing was measured with the help of five variables: Bonding, Trust, Communication, Satisfaction, and Commitment, as done by previous literature (Iqbal et al.,2019). After running the structural equation modelling, it was found that the p-value for bonding is 0.003, which means that it significantly impacts on customer loyalty. On the other hand, the p-value for trust is 0.013, which means that trust has a partial impact on customer loyalty. Meanwhile, communication and satisfaction had a p-value of 0.007 & 0.008 respectively meaning that both of them had no significant impact on customer loyalty at a 5% significant value. However, when considering the significant level of the 10% scale, it could be stated that both communication and satisfaction had an impact on customer loyalty. The variable commitment had a p-value of 0.00, hence could be affirmed that the variable commitment has a strong positive impact on customer loyalty. So, in short, it could be concluded that bonding and commitment have a complete impact on customer loyalty which denotes that these two variables play an important role when it comes to customer loyalty. The results of the study were consistent with the study by Alrubaiee and Nazer (2010) who had concluded the same notion.

4.Conclusion & Implications

This study attempted to determine the importance of relationship marketing in improving customer loyalty in the banking sector. Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that relationship marketing does have a positive impact on customer loyalty which is true for both private and public sector banks. Therefore, it is inevitable to pay attention to consistently developing, maintaining, and improving customer relationships to reap the fruits of a long-term association with the customers, which is the result of customer loyalty.

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Keywords: Banking, Customer loyalty, Customer Relationship Marketing

IMPACT OF CONSUMER AWARENESS OF COLOUR CORDING ON PURCHASE INTENTION OF PACKAGED FOODS; SPECIAL REFERENCE ON YOUNG CONSUMERS IN KURUNEGALA DISTRICT

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1. Introduction

Non-communicable diseases increase all around the world day by day Various nutrient formats have been introduced globally to reduce unhealthy food consumption (Ares et al., 2018). Thus, colour coding for Sugar, Salt, and Fat is one of the methods of front-of-pack labels introduced by the UK food standard agency as one of the methods. It is inexpensive and reduces nutrition interpretation in foods (Sonnenberg et al., 2013). Youngsters are classified as individuals between the ages of 15 to 24 years. In Sri Lanka, 13% of the population (3.5 million people) is younger. It is a well-known fact that most lifestyle-related risk factors for non-communicable diseases are placed during this period, Annually, non-communicable diseases have increased drastically among young people. However, since the youngsters of this century are more knowledgeable than in other centuries, they can act on that information to prevent non-communicable diseases. To solve this problem, the Sri Lankan government has introduced colour coding for Sugar, Salt, and Fat to the solid, semi-solid, and liquid packaged food industry in 2019. Weerasinghe (2018) in his study, has highlighted that awareness of the Colour Coding System positively impacts purchase intentions. Though the traffic light food label is the newest part of the packed foods in Sri Lanka, there is a dearth in research studies that determined consumer preferences for this label and the influence created by the traffic light color coding on consumers' minds after introducing the new system. Accordingly, Madhusanka et al. (2021) has suggested conducting studies on consumer awareness and knowledge related to traffic light food labeling in Sri Lanka. Thus, the present study fills the knowledge gap contributing to the body of knowledge. The objectives of this research are to determine the effect of conceptual understanding, substantial understanding, and health inference on the purchase intentions of Youngers in the Kurunegala district.

2. Research Methodology

The research approach was quantitative since it followed the deductive approach. The time Horizon was a cross-section for this study, and convenience sampling was used to select the sample. The unit of analysis was the 15–24-year-old youngsters in Kurunegala District based on the census data 2022, and the sample was limited to 384 as per the Morgan table. The response rate was 63%. The researcher used SPSS Statistics version 20.0 to analyze the data.

The conceptual framework shows conceptual understanding, substantial understanding, and health inferences as independent variables, while purchase intention was the dependent variable. The TPB (Theory of Planned Behavior) and Dual–Process Theory were employed as the underpinning theories for this research. The 5-point Likert Scale was used to measure independent variables and dependent variables. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of each of the three sub-dimensions in the scale was used to measure the internal consistency. Data were analysed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. This research used descriptive statistical analysis tools such as frequencies, maximum, minimum, means, standard deviations, and variance.

3. Findings and Discussions

As per the analysis, the demographic characteristics of respondents are presented below.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Descriptive	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	124	52
	Female	116	48
Age	15-17	36	16
	18 - 20	84	35
	21- 24	120	50
Monthly income level	Less than 30,000	96	40
	31,000 – 80,000	112	47
	81,000 – 130,000	20	8
	More than 130,000	12	5
Education level	Pass grade 8	0	0
	O/L	16	7
	A/L	48	20
	Degree	164	68
	Other	12	5

Source: Survey Data (2022)

According to the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha value for all the variables was greater than the threshold value of 0.07, indicating that each item was positively correlated with one another, and the internal consistency reliability was satisfactory.

Table 2: Result of Reliability Analysis

Variables Source	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Conceptual understanding	05	.869
Substantial understanding	05	.882
Health inferences	05	.759
Consumer awareness	15	.862
Purchase intention	06	.821

Source: Survey Data (2022)

The multi-collinearity of the independent variable was tested to measure whether the predictor variables were highly correlated. In this research, all the VIF values were below 5.00. This indicated that there isn't a problem with multi-collinearity. This study used simple regression analysis for hypothesis testing.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Regression Coefficient (B)	Sig > 0.05	Decision
H1	0.339	0.000	Accepted
H2	0.044	0.307	Rejected
H3	0.460	0.000	Accepted

Source: Survey Data (2022)

The H1 of the study stated that there's a significant impact between conceptual understanding of color coding for sugar, salt, and fat and purchase intention in Youngers. According to the multiple regression analysis, regression coefficients (B) between conceptual understanding and purchase intention indicated a moderate positive relationship. The results supported the study's first hypothesis (H1), and the findings were consistent with an earlier research study conducted by Grunert (2010).

The H2 of the study stated that there's a significant impact between the substantial understanding of colour coding for sugar, salt, and fat and purchase intention in Youngers. The simple regression analysis indicated a weak positive impact but was not statistically significant. This result was consistent with Weerasinghe (2018). Therefore, the substantial understanding does significantly impact on purchase intention.

The H3 of the study stated that there's a significant impact between Health inferences of colour coding for sugar, salt, and fat and the purchase intention of youngsters. When considering the health inferences, there was a moderate positive impact on purchase intention as per multiple regression analysis. This result was consistent with an earlier study.

Subsequently, health inferences had a moderately positive impact on purchase intention.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The Traffic Light Colour-Coding Classification appears to be one of the essential practices in Sri Lanka for reducing non-communicable diseases and avoiding future problems. The study's results showed a significant strong positive relationship between consumer awareness of sugar, salt, and fat and purchase intention. In other words, increasing consumer awareness of sugar, salt, and fat will lead to purchasing intention of healthy foods. This study's findings help the general consumers and responsible authorities to enhance consumer awareness of healthy foods.

Consumer awareness could be enhanced by implementing awareness programs all over the country to educate the public about the potential risk of consuming unhealthy food trends. Simultaneously, young buyers' awareness could be increased through new interactive digital media platforms like the internet, social media, and mobile. Thus, adult buyers can be informed through traditional information channels like television, radio, newspapers, etc. Therefore, the study suggested expanding the research into other age groups to examine the impact of consumer awareness of sugar, salt, and fat on purchase intention.

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Keywords: Color Coding, Package Foods, Purchase Intention, Youngers

FACTORS INFLUENCING ON SWITCHING BEHAVIOR OF MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM 16-35 AGE CATEGORY IN NUWARA ELIYA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

According to Afzal et al. (2019), Switching behaviour is the process in which consumer switches the usage of one product to another product but of the same category. It can be concluded that switching behaviour occurs when a consumer moves to a different brand but still uses the same product or service. Along with the world's technological development, mobile phone service has been also developed drastically. It has become an essential service provider for people in the contemporary society. This was exacerbated by the fact that people could not go out for their daily activities due to the Corona epidemic. Currently, Sri Lanka's telecommunication industry is highly competitive, as only four mobile phone service providers operate in the industry. It is essential for the service providers to understand customer switching behaviour to retain their existing customers. Previous research has found that people between the age 16-35 have high levels of switching behavior (Kumudunie & Amitha (2019). Also, the use of mobile phone services in rural areas in Sri Lanka has become higher with the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is important to study those customers.

Mobile customer service switching behaviour is high in rural areas (Morgan, 2021). It is evident that consumers between the ages of 16-35 who use mobile phone services tend to switch their mobile services (Kumudunie & Amitha (2019). However, mobile service providers are taking great efforts to create and retain their customers. In 2019, the telecommunication service sector became the number one advertisement user sector in Sri Lanka using 21.2% of all advertisements. But a similar percentage of customers are changing their service providers. As this is a problem, it is crucial to address it. Accordingly, this study explores factors influencing the mobile telecommunication service switching behaviour pertaining to 16-35 age group with reference to the telecommunication industry in Nuwara Eliya district in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

This study used the quantitative method under the deductive approach. This study's methodology involved establishing hypotheses using a consumer service-switching behaviour model, collecting data through a structured questionnaire, and then deploying regression analysis to test the hypotheses. This study utilized an explanatory research approach, focusing on the numerical causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study considered responses from individuals who use a mobile phone between the ages of 15-35 in the Nuwara Eliya District and who had changed the mobile service provider at least once. Therefore, the unit of analysis was individual.

This study considered individuals living in the Nuwara Eliya district in Sri Lanka as the sample. The population of the current study is unknown, thus, the researcher followed an equation (Cooper & Schindler, 2008)and considered literature to determine the sample size. Accordingly, 384 respondents were identified as the sample size. The current study gathered primary data through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample profile, whereas multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the nature of the relationships between the variables.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The researcher applied multiple Regression Analysis to examine the strength of the relationship. According to the model's summary, the Adjusted R Square value of the study was 402 and 40.2% as a percentage. It can be indicated that price, switching cost, inconvenience, technology changes, and attraction by competitors variables explained around 40% variance of the switching behavior. The significant value of price, switching cost, inconvenience, technology change, and attraction by competitors were .000, .014, .013, .008, and .014 respectively, which were all at 95% confidence level. Further P-value (level of significance) can be used to test the hypotheses of the study. Core Service failures significant value was 0.415 at a 95% confidence level, employee responsiveness to service failure significant value was 0.887 at a 95% confidence level, and service encounter failures significant value was 0.105 at a 95% confidence level. As a result, it could be concluded that these three factors did not impact mobile telecommunication service switching behaviour to the selected sample participants in the Nuwara Eliya district, Sri Lanka.

According to the coefficient table of regression analysis, β coefficient value was used to find out the impact of independent variables on the dependent variables. β coefficient for price was 0.375, β coefficient for switching cost was 0.189, β coefficient for inconvenience was 0.177, β coefficient for technology change was 0.173, β and coefficient for attraction by competitors was 0.174 accordingly. This study found that price, switching cost, inconvenience, technology change, and attraction by competitors have a significant positive impact on mobile telecommunication service switching behaviour. However, employee responsiveness to a service failure, core service failures, and service encounter failures did not significantly impact mobile telecommunication service switching behavior. In this regard, in previous research, especially by Awwad & Neimat (2010) and (Kumudunie & Amitha (2019) the factors of price, switching cost, inconvenience, technology change, attraction by competitors had a significant positive impact on mobile service users switching behaviour. Similarly, inconsistent with the present study of Dissanayake (2010), Awwad & Neimat (2010) discussed through their research findings that employee responsiveness, core service failures, and service encounter failures do not have a significant impact on mobile users' switching behaviour.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of the current study was to examine the factors influencing the mobile telecommunication service switching behaviour of the age group 16-35 with reference to the telecommunication industry in the Nuwara Eliya district, Sri Lanka. The researcher found that price, switching cost, inconvenience, technology changes, and attraction by competitors had a significant positive impact on switching behaviour, and on the other hand, employee responsiveness, core service failures, and service encounter failures did not significantly impact the mobile telecommunication service switching behaviour for the selected group.

This study is important for mobile phone service providers in Sri Lanka and mobile phone consumers in Sri Lanka. This research is significant and beneficial to the organizations that provide telephone services since the use of telephones in rural areas is higher compared to urban areas in Sri Lanka currently. This is because various technical tools can be found to fulfil people's multiple needs in urban areas, while people in rural areas have minimal access to various technological devices, and the mobile phone is the most used device to fulfil the necessary needs. Likewise, there is a very high level of competition among the service providers providing mobile phone services in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, due to this competition, they have to put extra effort to retain their customers, and it is important for them to be aware of this service-switching behaviour to retain their clients. Similarly, it is essential to keep a close eye on the behaviour of consumers in rural areas since most of their market share covers these rural consumers.

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Keywords: Switching Behavior price, Inconvenience, Core Service Failures, Service Encounter Failures, Employee Responsiveness to Service Failure, Attraction by Competitor, Switching Cost, Technology Changers.

THE IMPACT OF SENSORY BRANDING ON BRAND LOVE TOWARDS PERERA AND SONS' RESTAURANT CHAIN IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Brand love (BL) is a marketing strategy that seeks to build loyal customers to the brand and get them to stand up or start their brand. The most beneficial benefits of having loyal consumers are that they spend more money on the business, recommend it to others, and form longer-term relationships with it. According to the studies, sensory marketing has become a new tool for marketing and a strong ally for maintaining and winning customers. Most of the time, people do not say what they mean or want but can feel what they want. Consumers most often behave differently than depicted in theories. Furthermore, marketers use more senses like sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste as an advantage.

Fast-food restaurants do not only serve a drink or a meal but also provides a pleasant atmosphere and other products and services. Accordingly, the fast-food industry can be considered the most competitive in the global context. In the Sri Lankan context, both international and local fast-food competitors can be found. According to the previous research studies, most of the research has been conducted for international brands in the restaurant industry as well as other industries. Empirical studies used the natural drink industry to examine the effect of sensory marketing. Simultaneously, a lot of research has been done in the retail sector concerning sensitive marketing. Furthermore, some researchers had used names of multinational fast-food brands like Pizza Hut, McDonald's, and KFC for their study. As mentioned above, most of the researchers used international fast-food restaurant brands. In contrast, Rasanthika and Gunawardana (2013) had stated a variety of fast-food restaurants, including international chains like KFC, McDonald's, Domino's, and Pizza Hut, as well as Sri Lankan brands like Perera and Sons (P&S) restaurant chain which serve across the country for culturally, economically, and socially diversified consumers. Due to that, this research focuses on understanding the impact of how sensory branding activities are used effectively toward BL.

2. Research Methodology

One of the foundational theories for sensory marketing is the theory of grounded cognition. The investigation of the visual, olfactory, tactile, auditory, and gustative senses was assisted by this theory. Most of the researchers had used the sensory marketing model for their studies. According to Dissabandara and Dissanayake (2020), this model is used for multinational fast-food restaurant brands. This study utilized the sensory marketing model to develop a hypothesis, gathered data using a structured questionnaire, and then data were analyzed to evaluate the hypothesis. This study focused on the numerical causal relationship between the independent variables (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustative) and the dependent variable (BL). In this research, the researcher collected responses from individuals visiting the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka more than ten times. Therefore, the unit of analysis was individuals. The researcher calculated the sample size based on the following formula and identified 384 respondents as the sample size (Cooper & Schindler, 2008).

$$N = \frac{Z^2 (P) (1-P)}{C^2}$$

Non-probability sampling technique was used since the sampling frame was unavailable. The researchers were unable to figure out the exact number of P&S restaurant visitors in Sri Lanka because the authority did not reveal the data or statistics regarding this. The purposive sampling method is the optimum method when the sample frame is unavailable., In addition, they stated that the key rationale for picking a judgmental or purposive sample was to select a sample that accurately represented customers who regularly visited the P&S restaurant.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

In the model summary, the Adjusted R Square value of the study was 0.538, and it was 53.8% as a percentage. This suggested that the independent variables (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustative) explained around 54% variance of the dependent variable (BL). According to research, Cronbach's alpha value of all variables (visual=0.818, olfactory=0.788, auditory=0.753, tactile=0.725, gustative=0.721, BL=0.722) was greater than 0.7. Hence, it can be concluded that all the variables were reliable. All independent (visual=0.820, olfactory=0.786, auditory=0.692, tactile=0.679, gustative=0.674) and dependent (BL=0.915) variables had KMO values more than 0.5, and the further significance value was 0.000, which was less than 0.05. Accordingly, it can be affirmed that the validity of the variable is high.

According to previous researchers, visual, olfactory, tactile, auditory, and gustative factors had a positive impact (Dodamgoda & Amrasinghe, 2019). Dissabandara and Dissanayake (2020) found that visual, olfactory, auditory, and gustative had a positive impact, and Tactile had no impact on BL. Visual and tactile had a strong positive impact, olfactory and gustative had a positive impact, and auditory had a negative impact. This study found that VI (P value=0.000), OL (P value=0.034), TC (P value=0.009), and GU (P value=0.000) had a significant and positive impact on BL toward the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka while AU (P value=0.167) had a significant and no impact on BL towards the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study's main objective was to examine the impact of sensory branding on BL towards the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka. To study the impact of independent factors (visual, olfactory, tactile, auditory, and gustative) on the dependent variable (BL), the researcher created a conceptual framework based on previous studies. The current study collected data from 384 respondents who visited more than ten times the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka. The researcher followed a purposive sampling technique. According to regression analysis, visual has the highest impact on BL towards the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka. Similarly, other variables gustative, tactile, and olfactory, had a positive impact on BL towards the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka. In contrast, auditory had no impact on BL towards the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka. According to the findings, marketing managers and restaurant vendors in Sri Lanka who serve fast food should focus on the mentioned areas and implement marketing activities and procedures to enhance BL for the restaurant chain. Managers may make better decisions about attractive packaging, comfortable lighting, engaging themes, and vibrant designs, and can make better decisions regarding the environment and smell of restaurants; atmosphere smell, food smell, and the smell in the washroom. Moreover. Marketers can focus on tactile factors, like comfortable furniture, fitting and surface, serving warm and crispy food items, and cleanliness of the restaurant. By considering the gustative variable, managers can make better decisions regarding serving tasted food, the way food is presented, and serving foods to suit customer lifestyle. Auditory did not influence BL towards the P&S restaurant chain in Sri Lanka. Therefore, decision-makers do not require to consider these factors since it will waste time and energy of the marketers and the organization.

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Keywords: Brand Love, Sensory branding, Sensory elements

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY: A STUDY OF ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY APPLICATIONS IN P2C SERVICE DELIVERY PLATFORMS IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

With the emerging COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, all governments around the world have taken decisions regarding lockdown measures to avoid the spread of the virus (Pal et al., 2021). The lockdown affected all types of businesses worldwide, including restaurants and the catering industry. Therefore, restaurants started focusing on e-commerce platforms to gain customer demand and deliver orders to the customers avoiding community engagement in the physical restaurant premises Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the consumption habits of customers, and catering enterprises accelerated to transform from physical retailers to Online-to-Offline (O2O) services (Zhao & Bacao, 2020).

Sri Lanka was affected by COVID-19 in January 2020, and thus most of the industries, including the food and beverage industry had to suffer. With the pandemic, online ordering placements increased drastically from 9% up to 47%, but after the COVID-19 pandemic, it suddenly decreased to 9% as before the pandemic situation. This sudden change in customers' online buying behavior was an unexpected situation for food restaurants. Hence, there was a lack of preparation from the seller's side to fulfil these sudden demands in online buying behavior, and it is interesting to examine the motivation given to online shoppers to keep making purchases even though Covid-19 gradually fades from society (Dissanayake & Ranasothy, 2020). Therefore, online delivery applications must focus on how much importance the app attributes together with delivery and food quality to continuous usage of the particular service provider (Dissanayake & Ranasothy, 2020; Pal et al., 2021).

The I study aims to examine the effect of perceived service quality on customer loyalty related to online food delivery applications in P2C service delivery platforms in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This study provides insights to the owners of online food delivery applications (OFDA) to increase customers' continuous use intention and maintain customer loyalty. Similarly, this study will help OFDA owners with marketing reward programs for the customer to be more loyal to the specific online food delivery application rather than the competitive mobile apps. Further, the findings of this research will be important to consumers since they can to identify the most crucial attributes of mobile apps when selecting an OFDA service provider and are important to future researchers interested in this area.

2. Research Methodology

The conceptual framework of this study was adopted from Pal et al. (2021) which was developed based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). This study considered interaction quality, environment quality, outcome quality, delivery quality, and food quality as the antecedents of customer loyalty. According to Saunders et al. (2019), since the hypotheses were developed using existing theory, the researcher employed a positivism research philosophy and used the deductive approach. A non-contrived research setting was used without changing the natural environment. The unit of analysis of the study was individuals because the researcher collected data from the customers in Western Province who still use any OFDA in P2C service delivery platforms even after the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey was conducted using a self-administrated structured questionnaire to collect primary data. 287 usable responses were collected from the respondents using the purposive sampling technique. Accordingly, data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis with the support of SPSS statistics 21 software.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The Cronbach's alpha values of all independent variables, interaction quality (0.958), environment quality (0.968), outcome quality (0.953), delivery quality (0.882), and food quality (0.896) were greater than 0.8 and the dependent variable; customer loyalty (0.949) was greater than 0.9. As a result, all variables had a high level of reliability. The KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity can be used to confirm that the data were adequate for factor analysis (Malhotra and Dash, 2010). The Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values of all variables were greater than 0.8, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity values of all variables were less than 0.05 at the 95% confidence interval. Hence all independent and dependent variables were significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables of the current study adequately explained the population of the study. This study's parametric assumptions were not evaluated because a non-probability sampling method was used to investigate the unknown population. Correlation analysis was used to find the relationships between dependent and independent variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient value range is typically spread from +1 to -1. Here, all independent variables had reported a strong significant correlation with the dependent variable because the p-values of all variables were less than 0.05 and Pearson's correlation coefficient values were greater than the 0.05 threshold level.

According to the regression analysis, the adjusted R square value was 0.745, which means a 74% variation in customer loyalty to online food delivery application services explained by interaction quality, environment quality, outcome quality, delivery quality, and food quality. The findings of the current study revealed that the interaction quality (0.201) of the apps had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty to OFDA services. Further, environment quality (0.201), outcome quality (0.169), and food quality (0.312) also had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty to

OFDA services because the beta values of the interaction quality, environment quality, outcome quality, and food quality were within the 0 to +1 level and P-values were less than 0.05 as shown in Table 1. Therefore, these findings of the current study were consistent with past research findings (Pal et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019). As well as food quality was the most influential factor on customer loyalty because it indicated the highest beta value (0.312) at the 95% confidence interval. Delivery quality was excluded from the current study because it indicated that there was no significant effect of delivery quality on customer loyalty to OFDA services since the P-value was greater than 0.05, as shown in Table 1. This finding was also supported by a recent study conducted by Cheong and Law (2022).

Table 1: Analysis of Coefficient

Model	**Unstandardized Value (B)**	**BetaSig.**
(Constant)	.095	.607
Environment Quality	.314	.000
Food Quality	.312	.000
Interaction Quality	.201	.000
Outcome Quality	.169	.004
Delivery Quality	-.215	.830

Source: Survey Data, 2022

4. **Conclusion and Implications**

The researcher concluded that interaction quality (visual design), environment quality (navigational design), outcome quality (information design), and food quality affect customer loyalty to OFDA services in Western Province, Sri Lanka, and delivery quality has no significant impact on customer loyalty to OFDA services in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Through this work, it is established how crucial food quality is in defining customer loyalty. Therefore, from a managerial point of view, it is crucial to pay close attention to the quality of the food delivered. The OFDA owners could collaborate with the restaurants to develop specialized and exclusive menu items based on local traditions and flavors to retain in the competitive market. Offering high-quality, innovative food with a local flavor can help OFDA vendors retain their existing customers because consumer demands constantly change. Additionally, this research provides restaurant business owners and OFDA service providers with a fundamental understanding of how consumers use these services as motivated by the loyalty component. The results of this study can help existing online food service providers and new startups build better reputations in the catering sector. Although the study's findings relate to the online food delivery scenario, they can be used as benchmarks for other O2O service sectors, such as the online hospitality, real estate, or even e-commerce sectors, by creating appropriate strategies based on the context. Also, the various features of the OFDA mobile app, along with delivery and food quality considerations, shape users' loyalty to the online food delivery system in the post-pandemic era.

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Keywords: Customer loyalty, Online Food Delivery Applications, Perceived service quality, Platform-to-Customer (P2C)

FACTORS AFFECTING PURCHASE INTENTION THROUGH OMNICHANNEL APPROACH: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KEELLS SUPERMARKETS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT

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1. Introduction

Omnichannel retailing is an extension of multichannel retailing in which all channels are completely integrated. According to the Chief Marketing Officer Council report. (as cited in Peiris et al., 2021, p. 83), when it comes to interacting with brands, over 85% of customers prefer a mix of digital and physical channels. Moreover, only 10% chose digital channels alone, and only 5% selected solely physical channels. The supermarket penetration in Sri Lanka remains at 17%, compared to 31% for regional peers with similar social and economic characteristics (Gunasekera, 2020). Even, one-fifth of those who joined the online purchasing bandwagon would not continue to buy online after Covid 19 (Ratnasothy & Dissanayake, 2020). This phenomenon appears to be a significant loss for sellers as retention is expected to be low. It is critical to investigate Sri Lankan customers' behavioural intent to use omnichannel retailing methods. The purpose of this study is to investigate the consumers' purchase intention through an omnichannel approach from the perspective of the Sri Lankan supermarket context. As an emerging area of research, the Omni channel approach should be investigated in the context of domestic market conditions in the focal country, as it appears in the literature (Silva et al., 2018). When determining variables for the study, the researcher relied on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), widely used in consumer behaviour studies, and one additional variable, namely, perceived risk, which is included based on literature to identify purchase intention. The objectives of the study are to examine the impact of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and perceived risk on purchase intention through an omnichannel approach in Keells supermarket in the Colombo District. The significance of the study is that supermarket owners and managers can better understand factors that would influence consumers' intention to purchase through omnichannel retailing to meet their needs and wants. Furthermore, this study extends the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by adding another explanatory variable, perceived risk.

2. Research Methodology

This was a quantitative study that began with a theory and followed a thorough review of the academic literature, in turn, developed a research methodology to evaluate the theory using pertinent hypotheses. Therefore, this study used a deductive approach, followed the positivism philosophy and employed a survey strategy. Simultaneously, this was a correlational study because the researcher collected data, analyzed them, and concluded with minimal inference. This study was applied in a non-contrived study environment because this evaluates research objectives without using any artificial or contrived setting. The research focused on gathering data just once, over two weeks, to achieve the research objectives; hence, this is a cross-sectional study. The purposive sampling technique was employed in the current study to gather primary data from the sample. 384 questionnaires were distributed, but only 283 of them were returned. Thus, the effective response rate of the current study was 73.6 9%. using SPSS 21 software and the data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

3. Results/ findings and discussion

The researcher used box plots to identify common outliers, and there were no common outliers in the current study. The Cronbach's Alpha values of each variable were greater than 0.6. Hence, the researcher concluded that all variables were reliable (Ursachi et al., 2015). All factors were significant at 0.000 and less than 0.05, according to Bartlett's test of sphericity. Convergent validity was examined using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) indices. Convergent validity can be established when the CR is greater than 0.6 and AVE is greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The composite reliability values of the study were greater than 0.6, which indicated that all measuring questions have a higher level of inherent consistency. The AVE values are more than 0.5. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the survey instruments were reliable and valid. The adjusted R squared for this study was 0.686. It can be concluded that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived risk explained 68.6% of consumers' purchase intention variation through the omnichannel approach. The p-value of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived risk was less than 0.05. Hence, it was considered statistically significant ($P > 0.05$), and the p-value of the perceived behavioural control was greater than 0.05, which is statistically insignificant. The ANOVA test's output p-value was 0.000. Therefore, it could be concluded that the fitted model was statistically significant with a 95% confidence interval.

The findings of the study suggested that independent variables such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived risk had a significant impact on purchase intention through omnichannel and perceived behavioural control had no significant impact on purchase intention through an omnichannel approach in Keells supermarkets in the Colombo district as shown in Table 1. These findings were consistent with the previous study's findings, especially Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) provided supportive evidence for the insignificance of perceived behaviour control.

Table 1: Analysis of Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	
Constant	.300	.146	.041
Perceived Risk	.392	.060	.000
Attitude	.285	.055	.000
Subjective Norms	.234	.069	.001
Perceived Behavior Control	.116	1.380	.169

Source: Survey Data, 2022

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to investigate the factors affecting consumers' purchase intention through an omnichannel approach in Keells supermarkets in the Colombo District. This research investigated four major independent variables attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and perceived risk, which affect consumers' purchase intention through the omnichannel approach. Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived risk have a significant positive influence on purchase intention through the omnichannel approach and perceived behavioural control has no significant influence on purchase intention through the omnichannel approach in Keells supermarket in Colombo District. This study provided a comprehensive investigation of consumers' purchase intention through omnichannel, allowing business people and marketers to get insights into their decision-making process. Retailers should always create an image in the minds of their customers that an omnichannel approach is favourable. With a promotional effort, businesses could inform customers about the favourable evaluation of an omnichannel approach. Furthermore, this study enriched the original TPB by adding another independent variable, perceived risk, which can be established as a comprehensive framework to study consumers' purchase intention through an omnichannel approach in the retail sector.

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Keywords: Attitude, Omnichannel, Perceived behaviour control, Perceived risk, Purchase intention, Subjective norms

FACTORS INFLUENCING DIGITAL NATIVES' PERCEPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-ENABLED MOBILE BANKING SERVICE ADOPTION IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The emergence of the Internet and the rapid penetration of mobile devices has profoundly impacted all industries worldwide during the last two decades, and the banking industry is not an exception (Rahman et al., 2021). Against this backdrop, mobile banking has emerged as a vital global distribution channel in the banking industry (Payne et al., 2018). Moreover, recent developments enable banks to offer artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled mobile banking services, which use AI and interaction-based algorithms to make mobile banking more interactive and accessible (Mathipriya et al., 2019). AI-enabled mobile banking is now gaining popularity among young bank customers, primarily digital natives (Suhartanto et al., 2021). Although the banks in Sri Lanka have also started introducing AI-enabled mobile banking services lately, their adoption is meager (Mathipriya et al., 2019). On the other hand, although mobile banking adoption has recently been a popular research topic, most studies were conducted in developed countries, with relatively little attention paid to developing countries like Sri Lanka (Rahman et al., 2021). Therefore, this paper aims to bridge this void by investigating the factors influencing digital natives' AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption in Sri Lanka. More specifically, this paper seeks to examine the relationships between constructs of attitude towards AI, relative advantage, security, perceived trust, quality of service, and need for service towards digital natives' AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption.

2. Research Methodology

Following the positivist research paradigm and deductive research approach, a cross-sectional survey research strategy was adopted in this paper. Key variables of the study were operationalized by adopting well-tested measurement scales from the prior literature. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google forms from 384 banking customers in Sri Lanka. It was decided to select the banking customers who are digital natives and have already used mobile banking services at least during the last six months but have not used any AI-enabled mobile banking services as the unit of analysis in this paper. Since identifying the study participants was difficult due to the lack of a suitable sampling frame, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the study sample. First, the participants had to answer two filtering questions about their mobile banking use and AI-enabled mobile banking services usage. To help participants comprehend the task, AI-enabled mobile banking services were distinguished from mobile banking services by providing some examples. These questions helped to filter unqualified participants. The qualified participants were then requested to complete the rest of the survey questions.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample profile, and multiple linear regression analysis was used to identify the factors influencing digital natives' AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption in Sri Lanka.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Due to the presence of unqualified participants, missing values, and illogical and unmatched answers, only 306 effective responses were considered for the final analysis, out of which 250 were females, 56 were males, and most of the respondents were employed in the private sector. Reliabilities ranged from 0.715 to 0.958 and exceeded the .70 benchmark suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Table 1: Results of multiple linear regression analysis

Endogenous variable	**Exogeneous variables**	**Beta-value**	**p-value**
AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption	Attitude towards AI	0.166	0.000
	Relative Advantage	0.194	0.000
	Security offered by AI-enabled mobile banking activities	0.357	0.000
	Perceived trust	0.283	0.000

Source: Developed by the researcher

As shown in Table 1, attitude toward AI, relative advantage, security, and perceived trust positively influence AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption. However, the quality of service and need for service were not influencing digital natives' AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption. Out of the four critical determinants identified, security and perceived trust emerged as the most influential factors influencing the AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption. As Suhartanto et al. (2021) pointed out, this paper emphasized enhancing the security features of AI-based mobile banking services and, through that, building trust is critical to encouraging digital natives to adopt AI-enabled mobile banking services.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The factors influencing mobile banking adoption have been well-researched in prior literature. However, the literature has not given adequate attention to factors influencing AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption, especially in the Sri Lankan context. This study bridged this gap and revealed that attitude toward AI, relative advantage, security, and perceived trust positively influence AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption in Sri Lanka.

From a managerial viewpoint, this paper suggests that banks need to make periodic improvements and enhancements to security features in AI-enabled mobile banking services to foster a positive perception of AI-enabled mobile banking service adoption among digital natives. Moreover, it is revealed that AI-enabled digital banking services use is still not optimal in Sri Lanka. Although digital natives are pretty active in using AI-enabled digital banking services, banks in Sri Lanka must focus on increasing the excellence of AI-enabled digital banking services to boost digital natives' attitudes and ensure that their financial bank interests are safeguarded.

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Keywords: Adoption, Artificial intelligence-enabled mobile banking, Digital natives.

THE IMPACT OF EPHEMERAL CONTENT SHARED ON INSTAGRAM ON CUSTOMERS' FASHION PRODUCTS PURCHASE INTENTION

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1. Introduction

With the rapid penetration of the Internet and social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, into the business landscape, presence on social media platforms has become a crucial part of a firm's marketing strategies (Campbell et al., 2021). Promoting brands and products via social media platforms has proven efficient in recent times. Concerning marketing in social media platforms, ephemeral content, a time-limited feature of social media, has become one of the trending marketing techniques today (Campbell et al., 2021). The psychological effect of ephemeral content extends beyond the recollection of memories and information to create more personalized interactions among social media followers and brands (Lim et al., 2021; Paramitha et al., 2021). Among many social media platforms, ephemeral content shared on Instagram has become more popular among the younger audience and is tied to the most popular themes (Mahatmavidya & Yasa, 2020). This is because Instagram is considered a popular vehicle to promote brands among social media followers due to its visually appealing nature. Although people are increasingly accepting ephemeral content in social media, scholarly research into how to use this feature to promote brands is still in its infancy (Wimalarathna & Ranwala, 2020). Prior literature emphasized that despite the growing popularity of ephemeral media, how the ephemeral content shared on Instagram stimulates customers' purchase intention has not been adequately investigated (Lim et al., 2021). This study addresses this void in prior literature by examining the impact of ephemeral content shared on Instagram on consumers' purchase intention toward fashion products in Sri Lanka. By doing so, this paper contributes to social media marketing literature by proposing a model explaining how ephemeral content on social media platforms stimulates customers' purchase intention.

2. Research Methodology

Building on the Advertising Value Theory (Ducoffe, 1995), this study developed a conceptual framework delineating the relationships between informativeness, entertainment, irritation, and credibility of ephemeral content shared on Instagram and consumers' purchase intention toward fashion products. Following the positivist research philosophy and deductive research approach, the survey research strategy was used to empirically test the proposed conceptual framework. Well-developed measurement scales adopted from the prior literature were used to operationalize the key constructs of the study., Data were collected from

384 Generation Z customers who are active users of Instagram and have purchased fashion products in Sri Lanka using the purposive sampling. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample profile, whereas multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the nature of the relationships between the variables.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Out of the 317 effective responses received, most respondents were females (77.92%), employed, and had used Instagram for over three years. Internal consistency reliabilities (coefficient α) of all the measurement scales ranged from 0.767 to 0.857 and exceeded the 0.70 benchmarks suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Table 1: Results of multiple linear regression analysis

Endogenous variable	Exogenous variables	Beta-value	p-value
Consumers' fashion products purchase intention	Informativeness provided by the ephemeral content	0.296	0.000
	Entertainment provided by the ephemeral content	0.275	0.000
	Credibility provided by the ephemeral content	0.147	0.000
	Irritation provided by the ephemeral content	-0.074	0.000

Source: (Survey Data, 2022)

As shown in Table 1, informativeness, entertainment, and credibility provided by the ephemeral content shared on Instagram positively impact consumers' purchase intention toward fashion products in Sri Lanka. Out of the three factors positively influencing customers' purchase intention towards fashion products, informativeness of the ephemeral content emerged as the most significant factor. Further, the findings indicated that irritation from the ephemeral content shared on Instagram negatively affects consumers' purchase intention towards fashion products in Sri Lanka. The findings of this paper are in line with Mahatmavidya et al. (2020) and Campbell et al. (2021), who emphasized that entertainment, informativeness, and credibility provided by Instagram stories positively contribute to creating a favourable customer attitude about the advertised products/ brands.

4. Conclusion and Implications

In recent years, ephemeral content has emerged as a novel trend in social media marketing interest. This paper adds to this trend by examining how specific features of the ephemeral content shared on Instagram (i.e., informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and irritation) influence consumers' purchase intention toward fashion products. The findings revealed that customers prefer receiving timely, relevant, up-to-date, and immediately accessible information about fashion products from the ephemeral content shared on Instagram. From a marketer's standpoint, the findings suggested that marketers must create ads with the most relevant and appropriate information. Further, the ephemeral content must make the customers more likely to have joy, pleasure, enjoyment, and exciting content. This paper also revealed that customers ignore annoying, intrusive, confusing, and misleading ephemeral content. Therefore, marketers must create ads that should not confuse and irritate customers. Moreover, the findings revealed that the credibility of the ephemeral content matters a lot as the audience is more likely to receive credible, trustworthy, and referable ephemeral content. Therefore, marketers must create ads that are more credible to consumers.

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Keywords: Ephemeral Content, Fashion products Purchase Intention, Instagram

IMPACT OF HEDONIC SHOPPING MOTIVATION ON IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR ON INSTAGRAM; SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UNDERGRADUATES OF A PRIVATE CAMPUS IN MALABE

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1. Introduction

Over the past fifty years, there has been a tremendous shift in how business has been conducted overall. The development and transformation of the modern business environment have been driven by innovation and technology. The widespread adoption of the internet and the rise in social media users have made it easier for suppliers and customers to communicate, broaden the consumer base, and have given small and medium-sized firms access to the market at relatively cheaper costs. Concerning social media and online shopping, Instagram marketing is one of the most popular social media tools in the business world today. Users are constantly exposed to digital ads on social media and that they check Instagram at least five times a day from social media tools in contrast to traditional communication tools that involve efforts to communicate with text, Instagram is one of the cutting-edge and communication-focused social media platforms with picture sharing that plays a significant role in determining consumer purchasing preferences both nationally and globally which increase the sales rates of businesses. (Che et al., 2017; Nedra et al., 2019) (as cited by Erdem & Yilmaz, 2021). According to Erdem and Yilmaz (2021), examining the individual effects of hedonic incentive factors on impulsive buying and customer confidence in purchases made on Instagram is unique, as Instagram has no direct payment channel. Hedonic shopping motivation is described as an individual's endeavor to maximize their sensation of pleasure while executing a specific action. Furthermore, the hedonic buying motive is a decisive element in the acceptability and adoption of online systems such as social media, as well as having a substantial impact on people's intentions to use social networking sites. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to identify the impact of hedonic shopping motivation on the impulse buying behaviour of undergraduates on Instagram. Besides, hedonic shopping motivation was studied under six dimensions; value shopping, adventure shopping, idea shopping, social shopping, role shopping, and relaxation shopping.

2. Research Methodology

The research philosophy that underlies this study was positivism. A deductive research approach was applied as this research used a survey as the research strategy. The Mono method was selected as the research choice, and the time horizon for this study was cross-sectional. Simple random sampling was used to choose 323 undergraduate students from the selected campus as the sample size for the study. Additionally, the dimensions of hedonic buying motivation social shopping, relaxation shopping, adventure shopping, value shopping, role shopping, and idea shopping were measured using a 7-Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) that was adapted from Arnold and Reynolds (2003) study. Impulse buying behaviour was measured using a 5- point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

3. Results/Findings and Discussion

The results showed that there is a significant impact of value shopping, adventure shopping, and social shopping on impulse buying behaviour. However, idea shopping, role shopping, and relaxation shopping had no effect on impulse buying behaviour. Moreover, the study illustrated that value shopping, adventure shopping, and social shopping were positively associated with impulse buying behavior. The study of Erdem and Yilmaz (2021) also explicated that there is an impact on value-shopping and impulse buying behaviour on Instagram in the study context of Turkey. The same study had further figured out that there is a positive impact of adventure shopping and social shopping on impulse buying behaviour. Previous studies witnesses there is a positive impact on adventure shopping and impulse buying behaviour. Consistent with the current study, Erdem and Yilmaz (2021) proved that there is no impact of idea shopping on impulse buying behaviour. Empirical evidences showed that there is no impact on idea shopping and impulse buying behaviour. Accordingly, the study ascertained that there was no impact of role shopping on impulse buying behaviour. Previous research has revealed that, as predicted, the impact of impulse buying and role shopping among online shoppers was negatively significant. Even though the current study has found that there is no impact of relaxation shopping on impulse buying behavior, Song lyrics in an online purchasing environment have a more positive impact on obsessive customers than a still image did.

4. Conclusion

Instagram, one of the social media tools, is more important now than ever because of how frequently images appear in content created by social networking websites. Social networking sites, which are widely used by both businesses and consumers for online shopping, must therefore be thoroughly investigated. The primary objective of this research was to examine the impact of hedonic shipping motivation on impulse buying behaviour on Instagram. The study's specific objectives were to identify the impact of social shopping, laxation shopping, adventure shopping, value shopping, role shopping, and idea shopping on impulse purchase behaviour. According to this study, only value, adventure, and social shopping had a positive impact on impulse buying behaviour, while idea, role, and relaxation shopping had no such effect. The study's findings can be used to get a better understand how these hedonic characteristics relate to Impulse Buying Behavior on Instagram marketing while taking into account the factors that are particular to Sri Lanka.

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Keywords: Hedonic shopping motivation, Impulse buying behavior, Instagram marketing, Online shopping, Technology

THE PURCHASING INTENTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARD SKINCARE PRODUCTS

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1. Introduction

In recent years, consumer interest in health issues has been increasing, so consumers are paying more attention to healthy habits and lifestyle benefits for consumers' physical and mental health. Hence, the awareness about the dangers of chemical products has increased the demand for organic skincare products. Accordingly, this demand has helped to increase the consumer preference for organic skin care products (Vergura, Zerbini & Luceri, 2020). Male and female university students are more likely to engage in the consumption of organic green goods and services as well as they are highly motivated to buy chemical-free products. Green cosmetics products help to protect human skin with minimal or no environmental harm. Similarly, the Sri Lankan cosmetics industry is gradually witnessing growth. Organic product development is better accepted by young university students. The growth of green care products is influencing undergraduates to purchase green care cosmetics and their increased awareness of fashion and health care. The main objective of conducting this study was to assess reasons/ factors that encourage male and female university undergraduates to purchase skincare products.

2. Methodology

The methodology is generally concerned with the purchasing intention of undergraduate students of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. The survey was personally administered using structured questionnaires. The current study involved a probability clustering sampling technique, and the data were gathered through a questionnaire. The responses were collected via an online platform to selectthe sample. All the survey items & conceptual frameworks were adopted from previous empirical studies with modifications. This study included demographics and independent variables questions. There were two variables affected by this research; dependent variables and independent variables respectively. Accordingly, all variables showcased a total of 34 questionnaires. Measurement for all the variables was designed on a five-point liker scale with 1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, and 5- Strongly Agree.

Independent variable **Dependent variable**

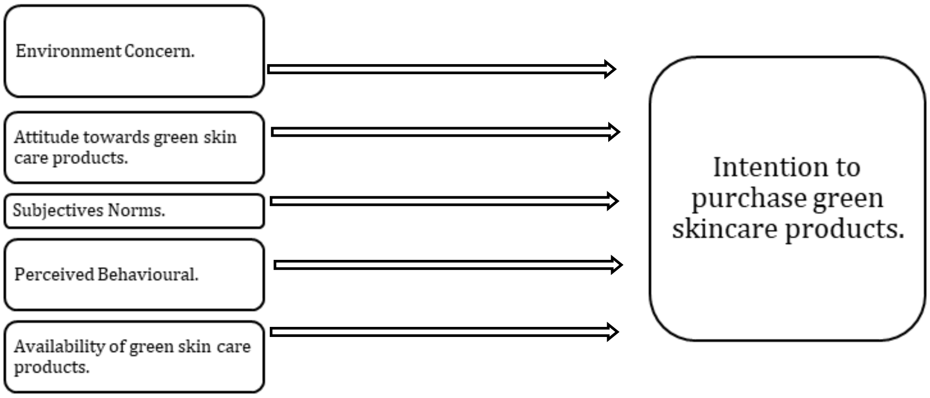

Figure 01: Conceptual framework of the study

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study generated through the data analysis. The reliability of the study constructs was determined in this research, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability. It was 0.940, indicating all independent variables and dependent variables can be accepted at 0.940. The correlation derived by assessing the variation in one variable from another variable also varied. The highest positive relationship (Bivariate) between attitude and perceived behavioural control was at 0.871 and p=000 at significant. Meanwhile, the moderate positive relationship (Bivariate) indicated between the availability of green skincare products and environmental concern was at 0.527 and p=000, which was at a significant level. R^2 value of 0.75, 0.50/0.25 for endogenous latent variables can, as a rough rule of thumb, be respectively described as substantial, Moderate, / weak. The model's performance was evaluated in terms of the coefficient of determination; R2 was 0.758 (75%), indicating the influence of 75% of the independent variable on the dependent variables.

Table 01: Coefficient table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.139	.243		.574	.568
	Environmental concern	.048	.091	.048	.529	.599
	Attitude	.315	.145	.304	2.178	.033
	Subjective	-	.096	-.004	-	.96

Norms	.004			.040	8
Perceived Behavioral control	.394	.141	.378	2.790	.007
Availability of green skin care products	.238	.088	.225	2.701	.009

Source: (Surveyed data output, 2022)

When concerned on hypothesis testing, the above table illustrates that environment concerns and subjective norms are not statistically level significant Therefore, those two independent variables could be rejected. Nevertheless, attitude, perceived behavioural control, and the availability of green skin care products are highly accepted hypotheses at a statistically significant level.

Henceforth, Anova can be used to examine the effect of two nonmetric independent variables on a single metric dependent variable Consequently, the F value was 46.981, which was at an acceptable significant level of 000. This indicated that all independent variables are at a significant level in this research.

Moreover, KMO & Bartlett's Test was also used for factor analysis. Accordingly, it could be stated that the KMO value was 0.904, which indicated that factor analysis was acceptable and Bartlett's value was at a 000 significant level; hence, it was at a more acceptable level (Vergura, Zerbini & Luceri, 2020).

This study confirmed that attitude, perceived behavioural control, and the availability of green skincare products significantly influenced the intention to purchase green skincare products. However, environment and social influences negatively impacted the intention to purchase green skincare products (Mamun et al., 2020).

4. Conclusion

There were many factors influencing the purchasing intention when purchasing a product. However, the researcher only considered two variables: the dependent variable (purchase intention) and independent variables (Environment concern, Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral control, and availability).In addition, this research considered the Department of Accountancy and Finance undergraduates who use green care products in their daily skincare routine Accordingly, out of the 89 undergraduates in the department, it was observed that 81 respondents are mostly using green care products in their skincare routine. 34 questionnaires comprised this research. The data collecting method was the primary data collection method, and the Multiple Regression Analysis techniques (SPSS) was used to analyze the overall data.

Consequently, there was an insignificant relationship between two variables; environment concern, and subjective norms. These two variables didn't affect the purchase intention. However, there was a significant relationship between purchase intention and attitude, perceived behavioural control, and availability which were highly concern factors when purchasing skincare products. Hence, the study findings confirmed that the primary research objective was achieved, and the researcher recommended Skincare industry stakeholders to be concerned about the individual preferences of the everyday customer and highlighted that it is important to be concerned about the young adult attitudes from time to time when they market the products. Moreover, the producers should enhance the availability of skincare products in the market. As a future direction, the researchers can consider more geographical locations and all Sri Lankan citizens in the study.

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Keywords: Exploratory Factor Analysis, Natural, Organic Cosmetics Products, Purchase Intention, Skincare Products.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON MOBILE APP-BASED FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The improvement of wireless technology is significantly advancing, enabling m-commerce-related activities. Restaurant operators can use apps for advertising their restaurants to more specific customers and interact with them by responding to their delivery service reviews(Choi, 2020). Customer satisfaction in service delivery plays a key role in a company's ability to grow its market share through recommendations and repeat purchases. His study will go further by studying the factors influencing customer satisfaction with using mobile app-based food delivery services to encourage the restaurant sector to identify areas of weakness and make further improvements on these applications to increase customer satisfaction.

Due to the novelty concept, only a few studies have been conducted on the mobile app-based food delivery services (Annaraud & Berezina, 2020). In the Sri Lankan context, using such mobile applications to a limited extent has been a major challenge (Dinesh, 2019). It is evident that there are only 2.23%, 1.46%, 1.41%, and 1.11% downloads on the Google Play store of Domino's Pizza, Pizza Hut, KFC, and McDonald's apps from the total smartphone users in Sri Lanka in 2022 respectively. The number of mobile connections in Sri Lanka increased by 612 thousand (+2.1%) between 2020 and 2021. So, the widespread mobile phone subscriptions had not impacted on the use of food delivery applications. It is clear that customers' satisfaction level with using food delivery applications is still very low in Sri Lanka. The general objective of the research is to investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction on mobile app-based food delivery service in the Western Province, Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

In this study, the researcher applied a deductive approach when conducting the quantitative research study since it used hypotheses to test the theories. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which has been extended as UTAUT2, served as the foundation for the research model provided in this study.

The current study collected data from Millennials who use the mobile food delivery application in the western province. So, the unit of analysis of the present study was individuals. Although Millennials rely heavily on the internet to learn how to do things, they may have little understanding of how it all operates. Meanwhile, the use of the food delivery service is widely spread in the western province, and it represents 47%. The researcher selected Millennials from the Western province as respondents who are using mobile app-based food delivery services. This study was conducted based on primary data gathered. In the current study, an online questionnaire was administered to collect data. The population of this study was unknown, hence, the researcher used the convenience sampling method and the sample size was 384 according to Morgan's table. The researcher used non-parametric testing to conduct the analysis because the population was unknown. Moreover, the current study used correlation and regression analysis under inferential statistics to test the hypothesis. Hence, the gathered data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis through SPSS version 21.0 software.

3. Result/ Findings and Discussion

The researcher applied Multiple Regression Analysis to examine the strength of the relationship. According to Cronbach's Alpha, values were 0.881, 0.939, 0.787, 0.839, 0.892, and 0.906 respectively. Accordingly, all Cronbach's Alpha values were above 0.7. Therefore, all variables were accepted and reported as reliable. On the other hand, KMO values were 0.820, 0.881, 0.636, 0.783, 0.790, 0.833, and all variables were greater than 0.5. Similarly, all the Sig values of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity values were less than 0.05. Hence, all the variables were significant, and the research instrument was validated. According to the model Summary, the Adjusted R Square value of the study was 0.430, and it was 43% as a percentage. Henceforth, it can be indicated that 43% of the variance in customer satisfaction was described by trust, social influence, perceived usefulness, mobility, and perceived enjoyment meaning that 57% of variation in mobile food delivery app-based customers' satisfaction is described by other variables not included in the current study.

According to the Coefficient table of Regression Analysis, β Coefficient value can be used to determine the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. Accordingly, β Coefficient for trust was 0.116, β Coefficient for perceived usefulness was 0.365, β Coefficient for mobility was 0.137, β and the Coefficient for perceived enjoyment was 0.107. Simultaneously, the trust significant value was 0.019, and perceived usefulness significant value was 0.000, the social influence significant value was 0.015, the mobility significance value was 0.004, and the perceived enjoyment significance value was 0.042 at a 95% confidence level respectively. According to the survey results, the researcher has identified perceived usefulness as the most influential factor in customer satisfaction for food delivery apps. Further, the researcher found that trust, social influence, perceived usefulness, mobility, and perceived enjoyment had a significant positive impact on customers' satisfaction toward mobile app-based food delivery services.

Trust positively impacted on customer satisfaction in m-commerce. Thus, social influence had a significant and positive impact on customer satisfaction towards food delivery apps. Meanwhile, Lee et al. (2015) stated that perceived usefulness positively impacted on customer satisfaction with mobile services. When customers adopt mobile commerce as an integral part of their identities and lifestyles, there is a positive and significant relationship between mobility and customer satisfaction (Kalinic, 2017). In addition, that perceived enjoyment is positively related to customers' satisfaction, which is a significant predictor of the intention to mobile commerce.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The result of this study indicated that all the independent variables positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction with using mobile food delivery applications. According to the survey results, perceived usefulness was identified as the most influential factor towards customer satisfaction to use mobile food delivery applications, and social influence, mobility, trust, and perceived enjoyment were identified as the next highest influential variables respectively. This study suggests including additional variables of familiarity, perceived risk, and perceived ease of use. Subsequently, this study has substantial implications for fast food companies and their relative authorities. The findings of this research will help and guide mobile app-based food delivery service companies to improve their operations and eliminate weaknesses in their services to increase customer satisfaction. Further, by identifying the determinants of customer satisfaction, they can use these findings to develop new strategies to enhance their customers' satisfaction level. When customers are satisfied, they help to improve the customer base, which in turn will extend the online customer network and social mobility among people within this network.

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Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Mobile Application, Online Food Delivery

ANTECEDENTS TOWARD CONTINUANCE INTENTION TO PLAY MOBILE GAME APPS AMONG GEN Z USERS IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The fast growth of Information Technology (IT) and the commercialization of the internet have drastically altered the corporate landscape (Mehra et al., 2020). Users have been encouraged by personalization options for numerous technical devices as a result of technological advancements. In recent years, mobile devices (m-devices) have become indispensable in modern lifestyles, as the number of m-devices is expected to exceed the world's population. Accordingly, because of the implausible expansion and development of the smartphone market, mobile applications (mobile apps) have grown increasingly popular over the globe and have become an inseparable part of our daily life (Buildfire, 2022). Today, technology users have a wide range of deployments of their m-devices, including entertainment. Social media, movie apps like Netflix, and mobile games are a few examples that can be used as entertainment sources (Silaban, 2021). Mobile gaming has recently become increasingly popular among Sri Lankans, especially among vulnerable youth. However, Generation Z (Gen Z), born from 1997 to 2012, engages in mobile applications more than any other generation (Dimock, 2019).

This social movement has created extensive opportunities for business ventures. However, a considerable number of mobile game Apps have failed to capture the intention to play mobile games continuously. According to Yang and Lin (2019), in the information system and marketing domains, the ultimate success of a product or service depends on continuous use, which also presents low retention costs for customers. Hence, mobile game application providers should try to establish long-term relationships with existing users, not only because they are cheaper to retain but also because they are more likely to play mobile game applications intensively (Kim, 2010). Thus, continuous usage should be the primary goal of mobile game app providers to retain their market share and increase their revenue. As the intention is the root of actual behaviour (Davis, 1989), it is essential to understand the motivations influencing users' continuance intention for mobile game applications. Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the antecedents of continuance intention to play mobile game apps among gen Z users in Sri Lanka.

This study will contribute to the existing empirical literature since most of the scholars have focused on mobile commerce adoption, where only a handful of studies aimed to investigate the motivation of users' continuance intention of mobile entertainment service.

2. Research Methodology

This study followed a quantitative research design under the deductive approach. Further, a cross-sectional survey was conducted, and a self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from generation Z mobile game users in Sri Lanka. 353 usable responses were gathered using the purposive sampling technique from the users who used at least one mobile game app.

Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this study considered perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, perceived playfulness, social influence, and flow experience as antecedents of intention to play mobile game apps, adopting the study of Yang and Lin (2019). Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables anchored as Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). After ensuring the initial reliability of the instrument through a pilot survey, the questionnaire was distributed among the respondents, and data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics 21 software.

3. Results/Findings and Discussion

Under the reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables were greater than 0.7, and thus reliability of the study was assured. Bartlett's test of sphericity, KMO, AVE, and composite reliability values of variables adequately satisfied the relevant threshold levels by establishing the convergent validity of the study.

According to the regression analysis, R square was 0.783, indicating the selected antecedents explained 78.3% of the variations in mobile game app continue intention, whereas the rest of 21.7%, accounted for factors outside the scope of this study.

Table 1: Analysis of Coefficient

	Unstandardized B Coefficients	**Sig**
(Constant)	-.362	.007
Perceived ease of use (EU)	.391	.000
perceived convenience (CO)	.272	.000
Perceived playfulness	.013	.874
Social influence (SI)	.211	.005
Flow experience (FE)	.180	.002

Source: (Survey Data, 2022)

According to Table 1, the p-values of perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, social influence, and flow experience were below 0.05, and the beta coefficients took positive values. Accordingly, it can be argued that perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, social influence, and flow experience positively influenced users' continuance intention to play mobile games. Further, perceived ease of use recorded a b coefficient of 0.391, depicting the greatest influence towards continuance intention to play mobile games. Additionally, the p-value of perceived playfulness was 0.874, which is above 0.05. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant influence of perceived playfulness on users' continuance intention. Accordingly, the regression equation can be developed as follows:

Continuance intention to play mobile	*= - 0. 362+ 0.391EU+0.272CO+0.211SI+ 0.180FE+ e*

The findings of the study were more or less compatible with the literature. Yang and Lin (2019) and Cho (2016) found that perceived ease of use positively relates to users' continuance intention, which was consistent with the findings of the current study. In addition, Yang and Lin (2019) and Yoon and Kim (2007) revealed a positive impact of perceived convenience on continuance intention in mobile games, which was further confirmed by this study. Findings revealed that there was no significant influence of perceived playfulness on users' continuance intention, which contrasts with Yang and Lin (2019). However, Moon and Kim (2001) considered perceived playfulness as an additional variable that reflects entertainment. This can result because the people's usage patterns may differ from country to country, generation to generation. Moreover, Yusof and Iahad (2019) and Munasinghe and Kanchanamala (2018) identified that social influence positively impacts continuance intention in mobile games. Further, Yang and Lin (2019) argued that floor experience positively impacts continuance intention in mobile games. These findings were further confirmed and established by the present study.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of this research was to investigate the impact of antecedents on the intention to continue playing mobile game apps among gen Z users in Sri Lanka. This study followed the TAM model and collected data from 353 generation Z mobile game users in Sri Lanka using the purposive sampling technique. The results demonstrated that perceived ease of use, perceived convenience, social influence, and flow experience positively impact mobile game apps' continued intention. Further, the study did not reveal any significant impact of perceived playfulness on the intention to continue mobile game apps.

In addition, findings revealed managerial implications for Sri Lankan and international marketers to create mobile game apps targeting the users' continuous playing intention. Accordingly, mobile game programmers, developers, and service providers need to focus more on ease of use and convenience since users perceive more value in them. Moreover, the current study helps mobile game app marketers to add more creative ideas to emphasize their mobile game apps, promotions, and advertising ideas to differentiate their game apps.

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Keywords: Mobile game apps, Continuous playing intention, Generation Z

IMPACT OF FACEBOOK USER-GENERATED CONTENT TOWARDS ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM FRANCHISE FAST-FOOD INDUSTRY IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

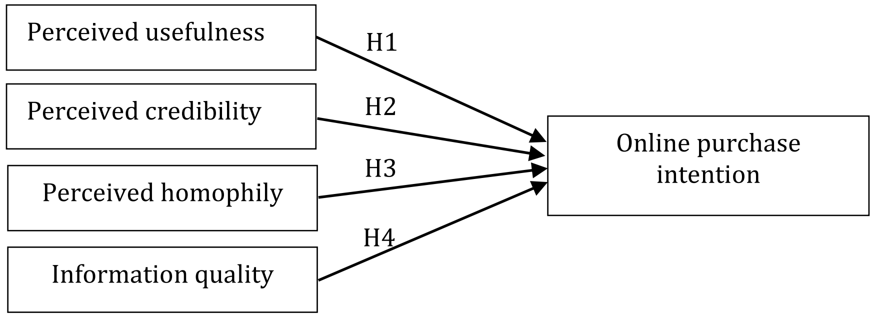
In the modern world, the digitalization of communication is a common phenomenon. Today, social media leads to receiving more information than any other source. User-Generated Content (UGC), a type of social evidence, has eclipsed past marketing trends. This global movement depicts diverse effects on thriving business performance. Though several marketing tactics are frequently discussed in the subject literature, little is known about how social media User-Generated Content (UGC) and its effect on subsequent behaviours.

The pace at which the fast-food industry is changing has been brisk and shows no signs of stopping while being extremely competitive. In Sri Lanka, culture takes an important place in the food, however, globalization surpasses traditions. Franchise fast foods in Sri Lanka are an emerging industry that makes revolutionary transmutations within consumption patterns. However, the industry is experiencing significant brand-switching behaviour and unequal buying pattern (Jiffry et al., 2022).

Today, people are looking for the most noteworthy, most suitable, and less risky options, which tend to rely more on the recommendations of others (Separamadu et al., 2021). Thus, people tend to browse social media UGC before making purchases since what others share, their ideas, views, and comments would be more reliable than what the firm tells themselves as advertisements. Accordingly, this study aims to identify the impact of Facebook user-generated content on online purchase intention concerning the franchise fast food industry in the Colombo district.

2. Research Methodology

The conceptual framework of the study was adopted from Muda and Khan (2020), which was developed based on the Information Adoption Model and Homophily theory.



Source: Adopted from Muda and Khan (2020)

This study followed a positivist research philosophy and descriptive design. This quantitative survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire concerning Facebook users in the Colombo district. 324 usable responses were collected under the purposive sampling technique and analyzed by using the multiple regression method of SPSS statistics 21 software. Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables anchored from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

According to the descriptive statistics, more female responses were received than male. All of the Cronbach's Alpha values were above 0.7, assuring the reliability of the study. The convergent validity of the study was confirmed by Bartlett's test of Sphericity, KMO, AVE, and composite reliability values. Discriminant validity was also satisfied by further establishing the validity of the study.

Table .1 Regression analysis summary

	Unstandardized B Coefficients	**Sig**
(Constant)	1.640	.000
Perceived usefulness (PU)	0.028	.717
perceived credibility (PC)	-0.027	.689
Perceived homophily (PH)	0.165	.001
Information quality (IQ)	0.501	.000

Source: (*Survey Data*, 2022)

According to the regression analysis, 41% of the variation of franchise fast food online purchase intention was explained by perceived usefulness, perceived credibility, perceived homophily, and information quality. Based on table 1, the p-value of perceived homophily and information quality was below 0.05, and the corresponding beta coefficient denoted positive values. Therefore, it can be confirmed that perceived homophily and information quality positively impact online purchase intention. However, the p-value of perceived usefulness and perceived credibility were above 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that perceived usefulness and perceived credibility had no significant impact on online purchase intention.

Muda and Khan (2020) revealed that perceived homophily and information quality positively influence purchase intention towards a beauty product brand, per YouTube UGC. Simply, the closer they felt to the author of the Facebook post, the more homogeneous the post they saw, and the quality of the provided information was essential to influence the purchasing decision. Moreover, it can be assumed that the same age groups perceived the same values, likes, and preferences. Diwanji (2017) and Park et al. (2012) revealed that there was no significant impact of perceived usefulness and perceived credibility on online purchase intention. Further, this can be proven with the argument that users hesitate to provide constructive opinions, suggestions, and criticism and that they have negative attitudes about Facebook and inaccurate knowledge about it.

4. Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the current study examined how Facebook user-generated content impacts the intention to purchase online. Findings exhibited that perceived homophily and information quality considerably impact online purchases. Surprisingly, the results showed that perceived usefulness and perceived credibility had no effect on the intention to purchase online to franchise fast food.

This study significantly benefited marketers, fast food organizations, and future entrepreneurs. Many people today led busy lives and are more time-conscious and, thus, more concerned about fast foods. Hence, this study has practical significance for practitioners by pointing out how user-generated franchise fast food content on Facebook influences consumer desire to make an online purchase. However, organizations can’t directly control the social media UGC since the general public does it. However, they can gain knowledge about customers' preferences. Therefore, strategic formulators should create tactics by ascertaining the components that increase customers’ values and preferences.

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Keywords: Franchise fast food industry, Online purchase intention, User-generated content

IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM MICRO INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT FOR COSMETIC PRODUCTS IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Day by day, people are moving closer to living in a digital age, and today many people tend to spend a substantial amount of time on social media platforms. As a result, social media have become an essential source of information and a powerful marketing tool. Accordingly, social media influencers' recommendations are likely to receive a higher trust than traditional marketing, which records a high potential to change consumer behaviours. Today, most organizations are looking for influencers who speak directly to their target audience and have expertise in a particular field but devise fewer followers rather than depending on those with an enormous follower base (Hudders, 2020). Thus, there is an imminent tendency for brands to avoid powerful influencers since influencers with small followers are more reliable and effective. Despite the fact that this is a noteworthy area for discussion since only a handful of scholars have focused on the role of micro-influencers on brands.

In the cosmetics industry, brands are competing aggressively to win customers. Therefore, receiving high customer engagement is one of the foremost intentions of brands' online advertising. However, user interaction with cosmetic brands is highly volatile, and they expect recommendations from industry experts or celebrities to select brands. Accordingly, micro-influencer marketing is an effective way to win consumer trust; advertisements should possess the power of engagement. Hence, this study aims to examine the impact of Instagram micro-influencers on consumers' brand engagement of cosmetic products referring to the Western province of Sri Lanka. The significance of this study is more towards digital marketing firms and cosmetic firms to realize factors that affect good influencer marketing campaigns. Since today social media influencers are the individuals setting the societal trends, it's critical for high brand engagement.

2. Research Methodology

The conceptual framework of the study was adopted from Inseng-Duh (2021), which was developed based on Source Credibility Model and Source Attractiveness Model. Accordingly, the expertise of the influencer, trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity, likeability, and similarity were considered with consumer brand engagement.

This study followed a deductive research approach under the positivism philosophy. Further, a quantitative survey study was deployed, and a self-administered questionnaire was used to gather data. 373 usable responses were collected following the purposive sampling method from Instagram users in the Western province. Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables anchored as Strongly Disagree (1), to Strongly Agree (5). Data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics 21 software.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables were above 0.7, assuring the reliability of the study. KMO values were greater than 0.5, and Bartlett's test of sphericity values were less than 0.05. Further, all variables had AVE values greater than 0.5 and composite reliability greater than 0.7. Accordingly, the validity of the study was adequately assured.

Table 01: Cronbach's Alpha values

	Unstandardized B coefficient	**Sig.**
(Constant)	1.145	.000
Expertise	-.165	.000
Trustworthiness	.360	.000
Attractiveness	.099	.000
Familiarity	.256	.000
Likeability	-.095	.001
Similarity	.212	.000

Source: (Survey Data, 2022)

According to regression analysis, the R square value was 0.816, depicting that brand engagement is explained by 81.6% of the selected independent variables; expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity, likeability, and similarity. According to the result, all the p-values were less than 0.05, thus, all hypotheses were accepted. Most of the findings were compatible with the existing literature. B coefficient of expertise depicted a negative value of -0.165, interestingly concluding that the expertise of influencers had a negative impact on cosmetic product brand engagement. This is because the impact of expertise is only more noticeable when people do not want to or are unable to process brand information or when people initially have a nonexistent opinion about a brand (DeLamater et al., 2018). Further, likeability also reported a negative impact on cosmetic brand engagement. Unlikeable endorsers were more effective at generating purchase intention than their liked counterparts. That explains this phenomenon and states that while Instagram influencers are popular, their high numbers of followers might not be the best marketing choice for promoting divergent products, as this decreases the brand's perceived uniqueness and, consequently, brand attitudes (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness, attractiveness, familiarity, and similarity positively influenced brand engagement. Among those, source trustworthiness denoted the highest positive vibe towards cosmetics brand engagement with a B coefficient value of 0.360. This is in line with Lou and Yuan's (2019) endorser trustworthiness; they tend to be widely regarded as believable, honest, and dependable to recommend a brand for consumers to accept and engage.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to examine the impact of Instagram micro-influencers on consumers' brand engagement of cosmetic products, referring to the Western province of Sri Lanka. According to the findings source, attractiveness, trustworthiness, familiarity, and similarity had a significant positive impact on brand engagement, while expertise and likeability negatively impact consumer brand engagement. Further, trustworthiness had the highest positive impact on customers' brand engagement, and expertise had the highest negative impact on customers' brand engagement. osmetic companies are still not employing Instagram marketing effectively in Sri Lanka as global hikes. This study will be a guideline for marketers, small businesses, and advertisers in the cosmetic industry to understand the factors to be considered in selecting suitable marketing methods, especially micro-influencers. Today, consumers tend to get product/brand suggestions from people who are not specially considered experts. Further, cosmetic companies should find out with micro-influencers who seem trusted by followers since customers tend to believe endorsements done by most trustworthy influencers. Individuals' attractiveness reflects their personality, lifestyle, and behaviours; thus, cosmetic marketers should focus on micro-influencers who display those attributes. Further, marketers should select micro-influencers with similarities as they are more effective at connecting with followers.

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Keywords: Consumers' brand engagement, Cosmetic products, Instagram, Micro-influencer marketing

THE IMPACT OF BRAND PERSONALITY ON EMOTIONAL BRAND ATTACHMENT OF APPLE PHONE USERS (SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE IN SRI LANKA)

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1. Introduction

Today we are live in information communication technology (ICT). As a result of it, Mobile phones have prominent place among various kind of ICT devices. In the current context, have a lot of mobile brands like Samsung, Huawei, Apple, Nokia, Oppo, Xiaomi, and Vivo in the Worldwide. According to the mobile brand market share last years in Worldwide, In the apple phone context, which have 21.98%, 24.79%, 26.91%, 29.24% and 27.49% respectively 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. According to Interbrand best global brands, Apple brand is a world best brand from 2013 to 2021. According to the mobile brands market share last years in Sri Lanka, In the apple phone context, which have 8.36%, 8.09%, 11.52%, 8.13% and 11.82% respectively 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. According to the compare Apple brand market share, we can say Apple phone market is not huge growing. Therefore, apple phone need to find competitive advantages for maintaining the market shares. They achieve this goal; they should be concern brand personality. The concept of Brand personality is a set of human characteristic associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997).Emotional brand attachment denote as customer feelings of connection, affection and passion towards a brand (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). According to Fallahai, Brand personality is not significantly related to customers' attachment to the brand (Fallahi, 2013). But according to Gouteron, All dimensions of brand personality have significant influence on brand attachment (Gouteron, 2008) cited by (Louis , Lombart, 2010). Previous researches delivered different significant relationship, as a result, we can identify literature gap. Apple brand is a world number one brand, but Apple Mobile brand is not market leader in Sri Lankan context as well as world context. It's reason for, Apple brands market share is less than Samsung. According to Mobile Brands Market Share in Sri Lanka, Huawei market share has decreased last four years, but Huawei Mobile Market share more than Apple phone up to now.

Previously D.W. Fiske has introduced big five model of Brand personality. But Aaker has improved this model limitation in 1997.But Aaker not provided descriptive definitions. As a result of it, some researcher introduced different perspective of brand personality. It's a theoretical gap Therefore, this study focus "What are the impact of Brand Personality on Emotional Brand Attachment of Apple Phone users in Sri Lanka. To examine impact of brand personality on emotional brand attachment of Apple phone users in Sri Lanka. We can learn about dimensions of brand personality, dimensions of Emotional Brand Attachment how to affect to the apple brand in Sri Lanka. As a result, companies or brands can know these concepts how to use our brands or companies.

2. Research Methodology

Conceptual Framework developed by Dong-Hyun Ha (2012). This framework has used dimensions of brand personality, these are brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand competence, brand sophistication, and brand ruggedness as independent variables and emotional brand attachment as dependent variable. Deductive approach and Quantitative method are appropriate. Its reason for, this study used brand personality theory for developing hypothesis, and collect data through a structured questionnaire and analyze the data to test the hypothesis. This study uses an explanatory research approach, which focuses the numerical causal relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Researcher get response from any person who are using Apple phone in southern province. Therefore, the unit of analysis is individuals. This study considered southern province as sample. It reasons for, Western, central and southern provinces are more mobile phone in household Equipment and Southern province has highest mobile facility (Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2021). This study uses purposive sampling as sample technique. It reasons for, Apple phone users selected deliberately in southern province. The Population of Current study is consumers who are using Apple mobile phone in Sri Lanka. It's unknown, as a result, the researcher has followed equation (Cooper & Schindler, 2008) and previous researcher Sample Size used for calculating Sample Size and identified 384 respondents as a sample size. This study used primary data collection through structured Questionnaire. Its reason for, this study used fresh data and Fernando, Madhusanka, & Watta (2021), Manoppo & Pandowo (2020) and Amarathissa & Pathmini (2021) have used Primary data collection for measuring these concepts.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The researcher applied multiple Regression Analysis for examining impact of variables. According to model summary, Adjusted R Square value of study is 0.689 and it's 68.9% as a percentage. It can be indicates 68.9% of the variance of Emotional Brand Attachment describe by Sincerity, Competence, Excitement, Sophistication. According to Coefficient table of Regression Analysis, Brand sincerity has an impact on emotional brand attachment of Apple phone users in Sri Lanka, β Coefficient for Sincerity is 0.263 and P- Value is 0.000. Brand excitement has an impact on emotional brand attachment of Apple phone users in Sri Lanka, β Coefficient for excitement is 0.284 and P- Value is 0.000. Brand Competence has an impact on emotional brand attachment of Apple phone users in Sri Lanka, β Coefficient for Competence is 0.288 and P- Value is 0.000. Brand Sophistication has an impact on emotional brand attachment of Apple phone users in Sri Lanka, β Coefficient for Sophistication is 0.124 and P- Value is 0.003. Brand ruggedness has not impact on emotional brand attachment of Apple phone users in Sri Lanka. β Coefficient for ruggedness is -0.041 and P- Value is 0.377, this P- Value is more than 0.05 at 95% confidence level.

Previous researchers found that impact of brand personality on emotional brand attachment of mobile phone industry and another industry. There is a positive impact of brand sincerity, brand Excitement, brand Competence, brand Sophistication, and brand Ruggedness on emotional brand attachment in laptop industry in Sri Lanka (Ubeyachandra & Aberathna, 2017). According to Madumal (2019), there is a strong positive impact of brand sincerity, brand Excitement, brand Competence, brand Sophistication, and brand Ruggedness on emotional brand attachment in mobile phone user in badulla (Madumal, 2019). According to Pandowo & Manoppo (2020), Brand personality like brand sincerity, brand Excitement, brand Competence and brand Sophistication have positive relationship with brand attachment in Apple products (Pandowo & Manoppo, 2020) and these researchers not highlighted brand Ruggedness, but have used brand personality theory.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of current study is to examine the impact of Brand personality on Emotional Brand Attachment of Apple phone users with special reference to Southern Province in Sri Lanka. The researcher identified conceptual framework has examined Brand personality as independent variables and Emotional Brand Attachment as dependent variable. The current study collected data from 384 respondents who are using Apple phone in Southern Province, Sri Lanka. Researcher followed purposive sampling technique. But researcher can be gathered data from 352 respondents with 91.6% respond rate. Researcher found that Brand Sincerity, Brand Excitement, Brand Competence, Brand Sophistication have Significant positive impact on Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Ruggedness hasn't significant impact on Emotional Brand Attachment of Apple Phone users in Sri Lanka.

Through Above research findings contributed to Brand Personality theory and practical insight for Apple phone retailers and dealers as well as can be applied Apple Phone Company for improving businesses, Achieving Differention, Competitive advantages and building relationship with customer emotions. Above findings can be used to get strategic decisions, when making branding plan or Advertising campaigns. Mobile phone industry is high competitive industry, as a result, Marketers can be used band personality qualities for highlighting Apple mobile brand in Advertising campaign. Brand personality dimensions and features can be used to touch people heart and can influence people to purchase Apple phone.

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Keywords – Apple Phone, Brand Personality, Emotional Brand Attachment

ANTECEDENTS OF VIEWING FACEBOOK ADVERTISING OF RADIO BRAND PAGES IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Social media has been identified as the most influential and important virtual space where the platform is not only used for social networking but is a great way of digitally advertising brands and products too (Henderson, 2020). According to Facebook Statistics (2022) 86% of marketers use Facebook as an advertising platform. Radio broadcasting as a mass communication channel is still popular in Sri Lankan society. Other than radio streaming, radio brands in Sri Lanka now trying to engage their fans over Facebook by launching competitions, applications, entertaining and engaging content published through their Facebook fan pages. There are 151 radio stations in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka - Radio Stations, 2022).

Simon (2022) analyse the global Facebook advertisement audience overview and Sri Lankan overall Facebook advertisement audience overview. Accordingly, in 2019 global Facebook advertisement audience overview is 43% and in 2022 it represents 34.1%. also considering the Sri Lankan context in 2019 it represents 36% and it shows 33.2% in 2022. Therefore, the possible conclusion was the audience watching Facebook advertisements fell and in Sri Lanka Facebook advertisement audience indicates a relatively low percentage and at least it could not be able to maintain 50% of the viewing audience annually in Facebook advertisements. According to the Sri Lankan context, all the radio brands are not using Facebook pages under their marketing strategies (Streem.com, 2022). However, advertisers might not be sure effectiveness of these ads and what kind of response will give from viewers (Trichob & Ngamkroeckjoti, 2018). Therefore, each of the radio pages haven't sufficient viewers for their advertisement because, at least they have not been able to reach 5% of viewers per day (Facebook Statistics , 2022). Thus, the general objective of this study can be stated as to investigate the antecedents of viewing Facebook advertising on radio brand pages in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methodology

A deductive approach and quantitative method were used for this research. This study used the users and gratification theory and Ducoffe web advertising model when developing hypothesis, collecting data through a

structured questionnaire and analyzing the data to test the hypothesis. The survey strategy is the research strategy of this study. The researcher decided to collect data through a structured questionnaire in the form of a survey. In this study, the researcher collected data from individuals on their perception of Facebook advertising viewing by radio brands.
The population of the current study is users of Facebook, who have to view advertisements by Sri Lankan radio brand pages on Facebook. Therefore, the current study population is unknown and the researcher can't directly identify the viewers of the radio brand's Facebook page. According to that researcher used the purposive sample method as a sampling technique. As a result, the researcher has followed the formula (Cooper & Schindler, 2008) and considered the previous researcher's Sample Size for calculating the current study Sample Size. Finally, 384 respondents were identified as the sample size in this study. Primary data is first-hand data and researchers use primary data for their own purposes. In this study, the researcher used a well-prepared questionnaire to collect data.
In this study, researcher analyse descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics discuss both correlation and regression analysis and hypotheses are tested based on the regression analysis. Finally, all the data were analysed by using SPSS 21.0 software.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

In the current study, the researcher used multiple regression analysis to identify the impact of four independent variables and one dependent variable. According to the model Summary, the Adjusted R Square value of the study is 0.258 and it indicates that 25.8% of the variance in the Facebook advertising viewing can be explained by the independent variable of entertainment, informativeness, credibility and irritation in this study.
Considering the results and findings entertainment significant value is 0.081 at 95% confidence level and it can be concluded that there is no impact of entertainment on viewing of Facebook advertising on radio brand pages in Sri Lanka, accordingly, in this study hypothesis 1 (H1) is rejected. Also, informativeness, credibility and irritation significant values are respectively 0.000, 0.000, 0.017 at 95% confidence level and it can be concluded that hypotheses of H2, H3 and H4 are accepted in the study. According to the Coefficient table of Regression Analysis, β Coefficient value can find out the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable.β Coefficient for entertainment, informativeness, credibility and irritation are respectively 0.098, 0.309, 0.281, - 0.138. Based on the result, informativeness and credibility have significant and positive impacts on viewing Facebook advertising on radio brand pages while irritation has a significant and negative impact on viewing Facebook advertising on radio brand pages and entertainment has no significant impact on viewing Facebook advertising on radio brand pages in Sri Lanka.

Previous researchers found that factors influence advertising on different social media platforms and different industries (Puwandi et al., 2020). Puwandi et al. (2020) state that entertainment, informativeness, and credibility have a positive impact and irritation negatively impact on viewing the advertisement on YouTube. Lee et al. (2011) state that entertainment and informativeness positively influence viewing online videos detriment. According to Chungviwatanant et al. (2016) found that entertainment, informativeness and credibility have significant positive predictors while irritation has a significant negative predictor of consumer attitude toward viewing YouTube advertisements.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The study aims to investigate the antecedents of viewing Facebook advertising on radio brand pages in Sri Lanka. The researcher identified a conceptual framework that has examined entertainment, informativeness, credibility, and irritation as independent variables viewing Facebook advertisement as the dependent variable. The current study collected data from 384 respondents who have viewed advertisements by Sri Lankan radio brand pages on Facebook. The researcher followed a purposive sampling technique. The researcher received 366 questionnaires Which represents a 95.31% response rate. Researchers found that informativeness and credibility have Significant positive impacts while irritation has a significant negative impact and entertainment has no significant impact on viewing Facebook advertising on radio brand pages in Sri Lanka.

This study emphasizes the direction of essential antecedents for viewing Facebook advertisements. According to the research findings contributed to practical insight for radio channels and Facebook advertisers for improving business, getting competitive advantages and building a strong relationship with customers. Further, managers should focus on factors influencing viewing Facebook advertisements and research findings can be used to get a strategic decision when creating an advertising campaign. Further, managers or decision-makers should consider to impact of entertainment, informativeness, credibility and irritation while creating an advertisement. If not, it is a waste of the company's time and energy. So, these findings give future directions to managers and Facebook advertisers to rethink their company strategies.

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Keywords – Consumer Viewing, Facebook Advertisement, Radio Brand Pages

THE EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (E-WOM) ON THE CONSUMERS' ADOPTION OF E-WOM INFORMATION (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COSMETICS USERS IN SRI LANKA)

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1. Introduction

The internet is the most convenient tool for conveying information to millions of people all over the world. With the development of the Internet and its interactive features, a new type of WOM emerged called electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). The study used IAM (Wang, 2016) as the theoretical foundation rather than the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) because TAM has a limited ability for an explanation. Le-Hoang (2020) and Bickart & Schindler (2001) have found that trust of e-WOM, quality of e-WOM, quantity of e-WOM, and consumer expertise positively impact the adoption of e-WOM information. Cosmetics are currently a necessary component of the daily lifestyle of people. There is an incremental development of cosmetic users in Sri Lanka (Jocelyn, 2022). However, there is a major difference between cosmetic users online vs offline.

Table 1: Online vs offline cosmetics users

Sales Channel Year	Online	Offline
2017	11.8%	88.2%
2018	13.6%	86.4%
2019	15%	85%
2020	21%	79%
2021	24.2%	75.8%
2022	25.1%	74.9%

Source: Jocelyn (2022)

Table 1 shows a big proportion is offline channel users to purchase cosmetics in Sri Lankan context. Therefore, the researcher focused on the "Does the e-WOM has an effect on the consumers' adoption of e-WOM information in Sri Lanka for cosmetic products?"

The study underpinned four research objectives.

1. To investigate the effect of trust of e-WOM on the adoption of e-WOM information.
2. To investigate the effect of quality of e-WOM on the adoption of e-WOM information.
3. To investigate the effect of quantity of e-WOM on the adoption of e-WOM information.
4. To investigate the effect of consumer expertise on the adoption of e-WOM information.

The study's findings may be helped for online community moderators, managers, and businesses to facilitate their websites more effectively and to promote the spread of information and e-WOM.

2. Research Methodology

The conceptual model has been developed by Le-Hoang (2020) to identify the effect of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on the adoption of consumer e-WOM information. The model has been developed based on the Information Adoption Model (IAM). The framework has been based on the dimensions of e-WOM as independent variables and the adoption of e-WOM as the dependent variable.

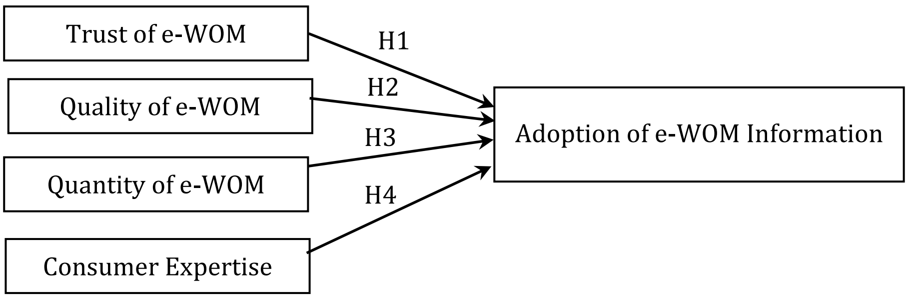

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Le-Hoang (2020)

The researcher selected a quantitative research approach and since the current study is going to investigate the effect of e-WOM on the adoption of e-WOM information by cosmetics users, it can be identified as a correlational study. The researcher distributed a structured paper questionnaire to individuals. The sample size is 250 consumers in Sri Lanka who are using at least one cosmetic online and are above 18 years old. The researcher uses the purposive sampling method under the non-probability sampling because the current study population is unknown and it is not possible to directly identify the followers of the cosmetics users. Data would be analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics 21 software.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed 243 questionnaires were received. Hence, the effective response rate is 97.2%. The age group 26 - 35 respondents had the largest percentage of responses at 58.8%. The highest percentage of respondents search for information about hair care products. The majority of respondents spend 3.5 - 4.5 hours per day online which is 41.6% and received information about cosmetics products through social media which is 81.5%. The mean value of each variable is more than 3.0. It elaborates that variables are performing up to the standard level. The degree of error-free is known as reliability, and the measurement is usually established using Cronbach's alpha. The discriminant validity has been evaluated using the Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin measure of sample adequacy and Bartlett's test (KMO & Bartlett's test). Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables are above 0.7. Though each variable can be interpreted as a reliable variable. KMO values are greater than 0.5 and Bartlett's test of sphericity values is less than 0.05. Therefore, all the variables have become significant.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient value of trust of e-WOM vs information adoption is 0.724, quality of e-WOM vs information adoption is 0.683, quantity of e-WOM vs information adoption is 0.749, and consumer expertise vs information adoption is 0.643. Therefore, all factors are positively correlated. R square value is 0.692 and it is emphasized that 69.2% variations in the adoption of consumers' online cosmetics information can be explained by trust of e-WOM, quality of e-WOM, quantity of e-WOM, and consumer expertise. The rest of the 30.8% of the variance of online cosmetics information adoption is explained by the other variables which are not covered by this study. P-value should be less than 0.05. According to the result, all the p-values are less than 0.05 and all hypotheses can be accepted. Khwaja & Zaman (2020) found trust of e-WOM and information quality has a significant positive impact on information adoption. Le-Hoang (2020) found trust of e-WOM, quality of e-WOM, quantity of e-WOM, and consumer expertise are positively affected on consumers' adoption of e-WOM information of cosmetics. In this study also, variables are positively affected on consumers' adoption of e-WOM information of cosmetics.

5.Conclusion and Implications

According to the interpreted outcome, quantity of e-WOM can be identified as the most influential factor on the adoption of consumers' cosmetics e-WOM information. Respectively consumer expertise, trust of e-WOM, and quality of e-WOM impact positively on the adoption of consumers' cosmetics e-WOM information in Sri Lanka. As the theoretical implications, social media is the most suitable online platform for consumers to share e-WOM among other websites. The findings provide several contributions for cosmetics retailers and dealers who have greater intention to develop and improve their businesses and consumer relationship within the competitive field of cosmetics.

As the practical implications, increasing the number of e-WOM in the community makes it easier for customers to consult information and feel more secure in accepting information about cosmetic products. The company should create many topics to discuss products through forums, group meetings, fan pages, etc. Only 69.2% of the study's variants on the consumer's adoption of online cosmetics information by e-WOM trust, quality, quantity, and consumer expertise are covered. The remaining 30.8% of the variance can be found in future research. Furthermore, the researcher could not provide an in-depth analysis. It will be better to examine qualitative approaches for future research.

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Keywords: Adoption of Cosmetics Information, Consumer Expertise, E-WOM, Quality of e-WOM, Quantity of e-WOM, Trust of e-WOM

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION OF HEALTH INSURANCE: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WORKING ADULTS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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1.Introduction

Recently health problems have become the most common problem worldwide, and these health issues, like world pandemics and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), are arising continuously, and the economic crisis also increased at the same time. Therefore, people cannot afford unexpected health expenses because prices for doctors, medicines, surgeries, and medical treatments are high. Health insurance provides better solutions to minimize unexpected expenses for health treatments (Mamun et al., 2021). In Sri Lanka, most people have no health insurance, which puts them in health crises and financial difficulties brought on by unfavourable circumstances like the death, illness, disability, or accident of a family's primary breadwinner. The majority of people lack basic knowledge of personal insurance, and many do not understand its significance and worth of insurance (Weedige et al., 2019). To change the unfavorability of having health insurance into a favourable situation, it is necessary to determine the variables influencing the decision to purchase health insurance. The current study aims to identify the factors affecting consumers' purchase intention of health insurance among working adults in the Colombo District. The conceptual model was developed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), while insurance literacy (IL) was an additional variable. Working adults above 18 years living in the Colombo district have been selected to conduct the study. Since there is a paucity of studies related to health insurance in Sri Lanka, the findings of this study provide an opportunity for insurance companies in Sri Lanka to identify factors that affect consumers' purchasing intention for health insurance and they can define their market and expand the scope of their operations. Moreover, this study will be an important source for future researchers interested in this field.

2.Methodology

Since the current study gathered information from reliable sources, formulated hypotheses based on theories and literature, tested validated hypotheses, and generalized findings to the entire population, the study used positivism as the research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, the deductive approach has been used to conduct this study. The researcher used a survey strategy to collect primary data. When considering the data collection method, a self-administered structured questionnaire was distributed among 384 employed individuals over 18 years living in the Colombo district in Sri Lanka using the purposive sampling method. The unit of analysis for the current study is an individual. Collected data were analyzed using correlation and regression analyses with the support of IBM SPSS 21 software. Further, the researcher used a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 = 'Strongly Disagree' to 5 = 'Strongly Agree'.

3.Results/ Findings and Discussion

The researcher distributed 384 printed questionnaires and 300 questionnaires were selected for further analysis. Out of 300 respondents, 50.3% were females, and 43.7% were males. Moreover, the majority of respondents were between the age of 26-35, and it was 43.3%. Further majority of sample respondents were single (51.7%), and 53% represented a Bachelor's degree or equivalent education level. Moreover, among the five categories of income levels, Rs. 25001-45000 includes the highest response rate of 25.7%. All variables represented more than 0.7 Cronbach's Alpha value. Therefore, variables are reliable. To test sample adequacy, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used. Moreover, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to test convergent validity. Since all variables satisfy the threshold values of the above tests, validity and reliability are confirmed. Furthermore, measures of dispersion were used to examine the spread or variety of the data set. Here, all six variables have mean values greater than 3.0 and standard deviation values less than 1, representing the data set with fewer variations.

Insurance literacy (IL), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude toward health insurance (AT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PB) are the independent variables (IDVs), and intention to purchase health insurance (IHI) is the dependent variable (DV) of the current study. A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between the DV and IDVs. Since all IDVs represent 0.000 p-values and Pearson correlation coefficient values are positive and within -1 to +1, therefore all IDVs have a positive relationship with DV. A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine IDVs' impact on DV. At a 95% confidence level, the adjusted R^2 value is 0.849, representing IL, PU, AT, SN, and PB, explaining 85% of variations in IHI. The remaining 15% of IHI can be accounted for by other variables that are not included in the study. Furthermore, according to the ANOVA table, the p-value is 0.000, and it can conclude that all IDVs have a significant impact on IHI. According to the coefficient, the most influential factor on IHI is PB. Further, since the p-value is less than 0.05, at a 95% confidence level, PU, AT, SN, and PB positively impact IHI, while IL negatively impacts IHI. Therefore, all developed hypotheses were accepted, as shown in Table 1. Adgboyega et al. (2020) and Kim et al. (2013) provided supportive evidence for the negative impact of IL on IHI.

Table 1: Coefficient Measurement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	
(Constant)	.314	.094	.001
Perceived behavioural control	.756	.091	.000
Perceived usefulness	.139	.063	.028
Subjective norms	.101	.038	.009
Insurance literacy	-.206	.096	.032
Attitude toward health insurance	.124	.058	.034

Source: Survey Data (2022)

4.Conclusion and Implications

The study focused on factors affecting consumers' purchase intention of health insurance among working adults in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. The conceptual framework of the study represents five IDVs; IL, PU, AT, SN, PB, and DV is IHI. Since there are limited studies related to determining the purchasing intention of health insurance in the Sri Lankan context, the current study is also important for insurance companies, the government, customers, and future researchers.

When considering the practical implications of the study, the findings of the study can be used by private and government-owned insurance companies. They can use these findings to expand their market and increase sales. Moreover, they can conduct promotional campaigns to increase the customer base. Further, insurance companies can use these findings to define their market better and expand the scope of their operations. Moreover, future researchers can use this study for their study purposes, and the findings of the study can be used as supportive evidence to develop their studies. Further, international researchers also can use this study for their references. Furthermore, this study enriched the original TPB and TAM models by adding another independent variable, insurance literacy, which can be established as a comprehensive framework to study consumers’ purchase intention of health insurance.

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Keywords: Health insurance, Insurance literacy, Purchase intention, Working adults.

CONSUMER REVIEWS TOWARDS ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION OF BEAUTY CARE PRODUCTS: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MILLENNIALS IN SOUTHERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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1.Introduction

The internet and the application of web 2.0 have a significant impact on electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication among consumers. Online consumer reviews, as a type of eWOM, are a useful information source for consumers in the virtual platform. In the age of e-commerce, every industry is involved with online sales, and the beauty care industry is no exception. However, for several reasons, e-commerce still contributes less to the entire retail sector in Sri Lanka (Jayamaha, 2016). In online shopping, risk has forever been an area of concern among online customers (Aboobucker, 2019). The perceived risk of online shopping is one of the most important obstacles driving consumers away from buying online. In the Sri Lankan context, despite the high awareness of e-commerce platforms, most internet users are hesitant to involve purchasing goods and services due to a lack of trust (Fernando, 2019). In this scenario, online consumer reviews can be used as a mechanism for gaining consumer trust (Baek et al., 2012). Perceived risk of online shopping is one of the most important obstacles driving consumers away from buying online.

User-generated online reviews are a significant source of information that can enable consumers to make a better purchasing decisions while reducing product uncertainty. Moreover, online consumer reviews can stimulate consumers' purchase behaviour by providing helpful product information. Further, the pace at which the beauty care industry is changing has been brisk and shows no signs of stopping. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of online consumer reviews on online purchase intention towards beauty care products concerning millennials in Southern province, Sri Lanka.

2.Research Methodology

The study follows the positivism research philosophy and deductive research approach. A quantitative survey research design was used in this study. 341 effective responses were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from people aged between 26-41 and residents in Southern Province, who are using any beauty care product by deploying a purposive sampling technique.

The conceptual framework of the study was adopted from Cheong et al. (2020), which was grounded with the argument of Information Adoption Theory. Five-point Likert scale has been used to measure the variables anchored as 'Strongly Disagree' (1), to 'Strongly Agree' (5). After ensuring the initial reliability of the instrument through a pilot survey, the questionnaire was distributed among the respondents. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis.

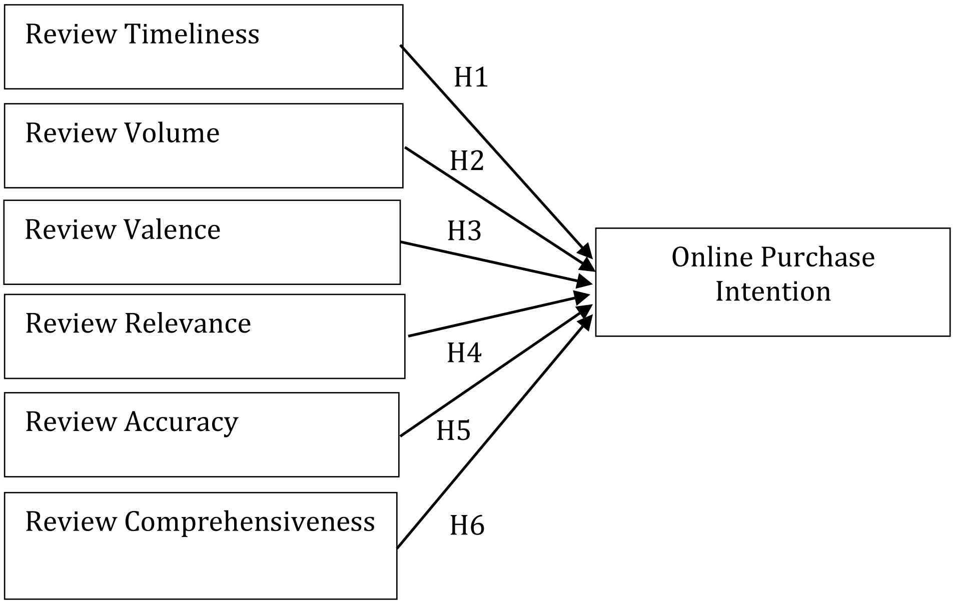

Figure: Conceptual Framework
Source: Adopted from Cheong et al. (2020)

3.Results/Findings and Discussion

Based on the reliability test results, all the variables satisfied the standard requirement, establishing the reliability of the study. Convergent validity of the study assured using Bartlett's test of sphericity, KMO, AVE and composite reliability. Further, since all the AVE values were greater than the squared correlation values, discriminant validity of the study was also assured. Accordingly, the reliability and validity of the study were adequately satisfied. According to the results of multiple regression analysis, the adjusted R square value was 0.569, indicating that review timeliness, review volume, review valence, review relevance, review accuracy, and review comprehensiveness explain the 56% variation in online purchase intention. Moreover, based on the results, review timeliness and valence have no any significant impact on online purchase intention. Furthermore, review volume, review relevance, review accuracy and review comprehensiveness have significant positive impacts on Sri Lankan millennials' online purchase intention of beauty care products. Findings revealed that review accuracy (0.299) is the salient influential online review element on beauty care products' online purchase intention of Sri Lankan millennials, followed by review volume (0.165), review relevance (0.181) and comprehensiveness (0.166).

Findings of this study are more or less compatible with the literature. Zhao et al. (2015) revealed that review timeliness significantly influenced online purchase intention. However, Cheung et al. (2008) argued that review timelines has no significant contribution on consumer purchase intention, which was further confirmed by this study. This could be possible since Sri Lankans trust the reviews despite their coined date. Cheung and Thadani (2012) argued that review valence significantly impacts online purchase intention, whereas Mishra (2021) found that review valence has no substantial influence on online purchase intention. The latter argument was further evident from the present findings. Zhao et al. (2015) observed a positive impact of review volume and review comprehensiveness on online behavioural intentions. The finding of this study confirmed the above argument since Sri Lankan millennials are holding a crowd mentality (bulkiness) and think that beauty care products are well-liked, which ultimately leads to higher online purchase intention. Further, online community today think that reviews provide them generous and complete information required for their purchase decision. Accordingly, Sri Lankans need more cues to judge information based on the rigorous arguments in virtual communities because of the sparsely present views and anonymity on the internet.

Mumuni et al. (2020) found that review relevance is vital to online purchase intention. Further, Mishra (2021) argued review accuracy as the most significant influencer on online purchase intention. This is further proven because Sri Lankan millennials believe that online reviews have few or no errors; thus, they are accurate. Moreover, they find their experience similar to the reviews of beauty care products. Thus the outcome of this study corresponds with the findings comprehended in prior studies.

4.Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the current study examined the impact of consumer reviews on online purchase intention towards beauty care products among the millennials in the Southern province. The findings of this study emphasized that review volume, review relevance, review accuracy and review comprehensiveness have significant positive impacts on online purchase intention, whereas review timeliness and review valence have not recorded any substantial impact toward online purchase intention.

The findings revealed the most recent developments in the virtual environment for online businesses, particularly for beauty care products. These findings will benefit the companies by providing the business communities with a better grasp of how users and online consumer reviews influence others' decision-making. The findings will assist beauty care firms by providing valuable insights that can increase customer trust. Moreover, the findings highlighted that online retailers must focus on generating more relevant and comprehensive reviews in order to persuade new buyers and maximize their returns. Further, this provides new perspectives to online market owners of beauty care and other entrepreneurs on managing and handling online consumer reviews on their web pages. Thus, the study provides marketers with more clarity into the unpredictable, dynamic, and continuously uncertain market of online purchase intention for beauty care products.

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Keywords: Beauty care products, eWOM, Online consumer reviews, Online purchase intention

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE ADVENTURE TOURISM SECTOR IN SRI LANKA FROM SERVICE PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVE: A CASE STUDY OF KITHULGALA SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry is considered one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world economy (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2013), and it's a dynamic engine of employment opportunities (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). With the outbreak of the COVID-19 world pandemic, many countries have begun implementing healthcare policies recommended by the World Health Organization, including lockdowns and imposing travel restrictions. Meanwhile, the tourism industry, which is related to human movements suffered a severe setback with this COVID-19 pandemic. Adventure tourism is a niche market and a rapidly growing sector in the tourism industry, and Kithulgala is one of the famous adventure tourism destinations in Sri Lanka. Kithulgala adventure tourism industry also reached a complete standstill with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the people who earn an income providing services to tourists are facing many challenges and issues. Therefore, it is required to provide recovery solutions and programmes. Accordingly, this study aims to undertake a real-time assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Kithulgala adventure tourism site from a service provider's perspective.

Research question(s)

- What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the adventure tourism sector in the Kithulgala area?
- What are the resilience and survival strategies for Adventure Tourism under the new normal conditions of COVID-19?

Objective(s)

- To identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the adventure tourism sector in the Kithulgala area
- To identify resilience and survival strategies for Adventure Tourism under the new normal condition of COVID-19

This study is significant for the Kithulgala tourism-related service providers to identify resilience and survival strategies under new normal conditions, and this is beneficial for the public sector to design national and regional policies, and future tourism planning. The study is significant to private sector investors who are willing to involve in the tourism industry in the Kithulgala area for their future investments. Moreover, this is more significant for academics to be involved in the tourism sector, and is a guideline for future researchers.

2. Research Methodology

Research philosophy describes the systems of beliefs and assumptions about how knowledge is added to the existing knowledge base. With this philosophy, the researcher conducted a study about a particular field (Saunders et al., 2019). This study encompassed post-positivist philosophy since the study envisaged exploring reasons and meanings of the observed phenomenon by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The inductive approach was used in this study to find solutions to the existing phenomenon. Thus, it helped to find answers to the exploratory research questions methodically.

The study adopted the qualitative research methodology to collect data in real-world contexts and get detailed descriptions of people's feelings, experiences, and perceptions. The choice of a particular research strategy will depend on the research objective(s) and (the type of) research questions of the study (Sekaran, 2003). Hence, this study was conducted as a case study since it was the best-suited strategy to conduct a study of this nature.

Kithulgala was selected as the research conducting area since it is a well-known seamless adventure tourism hub in Sri Lanka containing about 30 adventure activities. The population of this study consisted of all the tourism-related service providers in the Kithulgala area. The unit of analysis of the research was tourism service providers. The total population couldn't be determined while doing interviews since the population varied and had to be explored until data collection came to saturation. Finally, data was saturated at a sample size of 15. Hence the sample size of this study comprised fifteen (15) members representing different service sectors, including hotel owners, tour guides, and rafting centre owners. In this qualitative study, the convenience sampling technique was employed to collect data considering easy accessibility, and close at hand. With the intention of getting first-hand experience and more reliable data, the study consisted of primary data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a series of essential questions to target the two main objectives of the research. The interview averaged approximately 15-30 minutes, and the Sinhala language was used for conducting the direct interviews. Each interview was audio recorded using a mobile phone with the respondent's consent. After conducting all 15 interviews, the researcher developed the transcripts using the audio recordings while categorizing them under the objectives. Is a well-developed and widely used method in social content analysis used for data analysis.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

As demonstrated in the study's findings, few key philosophies were formed. Results revealed social, physical, financial, and policy impacts on service providers. During the COVID-19 period, all the tourist service centres in the Kithulgala area have been closed for about 2 years. Accordingly, minimum travel interest, staff firing, fear of work, loss of job opportunities, and people's carefulness can be identified as the main features of social impacts. The travel restrictions, employee health concerns, and reduction of demand was the reason for the closure. However, the vigilance of the people in the Kithulgala area has greatly helped in controlling the spread of the virus in this area. As physical impacts, many items, including rafting boats, jackets as well as linens in hotels were damaged since they were not used for a long time due to the pandemic. Simultaneously, this epidemic has also severely affected them financially since the majority of people in this area were highly dependent on the tourism industry.

Unfitting & tough health and safety measures also have negatively impacted tourism-related service providers. Since rafting is a team effort, practically, it’s difficult to maintain social distance on the boat, and it’s difficult to wear face masks while doing adventure activities. So, the service providers have faced several challenges with unfitting safety measures. Respondents perceived both positive and negative perceptions toward the government. Most of them expect further support from the government in terms of financial support, compensation for their damaged goods and removing of the hydropower project. They also anticipate government backing for increased promotion of Kithulgala as a tourism destination, particularly in the new normal condition of COVID-19, to rebuild their business because tourism promotion aids in attracting potential tourists, changing the behaviour of present buyers, and influencing them to visit a destination (Christian, 2016). Furthermore, every respondent mentioned that the hydropower project constructed in the Kithulgala area is the biggest obstacle they have under the new normal conditions of COVID-19. Thus, they are requesting the government to scrap this project to continue their business. Against the backdrop of the need to increase power generation in the country, anyone cannot be forced to stop this hydropower project altogether, and on the other hand, it’s unethical to destroy the Kithulgala rafting business since it’s the main income source for the local community of this area.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Several researchers have focused on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector in Sri Lanka. However, there have been no currently accessible studies on the impact of COVID-19 on the adventure tourism sector in Sri Lanka. According to the research's findings, the COVID-19 pandemic substantially influenced on tourism-related service providers in the Kithulgala area. In the recovery process, local-global collaboration is critical. In terms of infection monitoring and reconciliation, a strong link between hospitality and tourism organizations, supported services, destination management organizations, and public health authorities is critical. Moreover, introducing effective mechanisms to boost employee confidence is very important. Consequently, the study recommends increasing government involvement in developing infrastructure facilities and promotion activities. Further, in addition to the tourism industry, introducing other sources of income, providing vocational training opportunities, introducing an insurance scheme that can cover the damage caused to businesses in emergency and organizing risk reduction and emergency protocols awareness programs are recommended. Further, destination rebranding is critical. Future research can further study the subject widely, taking more geographical areas than used in this research.

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Keywords: Adventure tourism, COVID-19 pandemic, Kithulgala, Service providers, Tourism industry

A STUDY ON IDENTIFYING THE POTENTIAL OF PROMOTING BOTANICAL GARDEN TOURISM (BGT) IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Garden Tourism can be interpreted as visitors traveling to various types of gardens, including botanical gardens, historical gardens, tropical gardens, parks, zoos, and so on, which is a type of niche tourism segment that is nowadays becoming the exclusive new travel and tourism trend (Gunawan, 2015). Gardens are a major source of leisure activities in most countries in the world. With the rise of garden tourism in the world nowadays, there is a pressing need for more information, particularly on the potential of garden tourism and the garden owners' motivation to attract more visitors (Čakovská, 2017). Botanical gardens date back to the 15th century when famous explorers brought plants from new worlds back to Europe on their return voyages. Botanical Garden Tourism (BGT) is a blooming new travel trend. Botanical gardens are designed to accomplish three objectives: for conservation, for a dedicated engagement with nature, and as a destination site for recreation (Benfield, 2013). In this context, this study mainly focuses on identifying the potential to promote Botanical Garden Tourism in Sri Lanka. The most significant gap identified is that the current scope of botanical garden tourism in Sri Lanka can be developed to promote botanical garden tourism in Sri Lanka since there is a huge future potential to be identified to captivate visitors and entice them to revisit. The other gap identified is the resource gap since the current resources are insufficient to identify the potential of botanical garden tourism as an opportunity to develop and promote Sri Lanka. The study aimed at investigating the potentials and challenges of promoting Botanical Garden Tourism (BGT) in Sri Lanka. The study will aid as a basement for the scholars expecting to conduct future studies related to this area. In addition, it will assist in adding value to the literature by providing insights into the Botanical Garden Tourism potentials as a niche tourism market due to the lack of literature available about botanical garden tourism. Further, the results of this study will also benefit the travel and tourism industry, the local community, environmental conservation, and tourism stakeholders.

2. Research Methodology

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach since this study was about identifying the potential of botanical garden tourism to promote Sri Lanka as a botanic garden destination. Accordingly, the qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the Destination

Management Organizations (DMOs) to achieve the research objectives with semi-structured questions aiming to explore in-depth information of respondents' point of view, experiences, feelings, and perspectives to accomplish the research objectives. The population of the research was the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) related to Botanical Gardens, including both private and public sectors. The rationale for selecting DMOs was because they were the people who are responsible for promoting the destinations like botanical gardens, representing the local community and connecting the destinations, local community and visitors together using different destination marketing strategies to promote destinations like botanical gardens. Accordingly, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted, including 10 interviews from the public sector representing government sector bodies such as the Department of National Botanic Gardens, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), and 10 travel agencies as private sector bodies to gather the required data for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify and access the exact subset of DMOs since they are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest. The data for this study was gathered through semi-structured questions conducting in-depth interviews, which are one of the most prevalent qualitative research procedures. The researcher collected data through content analysis since this is one of the most common methods to analyze qualitative data to achieve the research objectives, and was helpful in analyzing the responses from interviews.

3. Results /Findings and Discussion

There were two primary codes identified as potentials/opportunities and issues/challenges to promote botanical garden tourism in Sri Lanka using content analysis. Several categories existed under these two codes. All these codes were extracted from the information provided by the interviewees. When determining the potential for promoting BGT in Sri Lanka as the first objective of the study, the researcher recognized the key code of potential as the destination attributes and classified it into five main categories, including attraction, activities, accessibility, amenities, and accommodation. The researcher identified natural landscape and biodiversity as the subcategories of attraction, recreational, educational, economic, social, and environmental activities as the subcategories of activities, transportation as the subcategory of accessibility, and physical and human resources as the subcategories of amenities. The researcher categorized the major response as issues and challenges under the second objective based on the responses given by the interviewees to the related questions such as lack of government contribution, financial barriers, lack of awareness, and land use issues. The first research question of this study; what are the potentials of promoting Botanical Garden Tourism (BGT) in Sri Lanka, was successfully addressed by the researcher, identifying the results as the destination attributes to promote and develop the botanical garden tourism in Sri Lanka, to attract both local and foreign visitors and to generate more revenue to Sri Lanka. Furthermore, to address the second research question of this study; what are the challenges of promoting Botanical Garden Tourism in Sri Lanka, the researcher outlined the obstacles that can be faced and the strategies to overcome them when promoting Botanical Garden Tourism. Accordingly, the botanical gardens in Sri Lanka have been taking some actions for the development of the garden facilities for visitors (Gardens, 2018). Thus, the researcher realized that it should not be enough for the promotion of botanical garden tourism and it should be increased more while improving the destination attributes identified in the research, and the facilities should be developed for the visitors as well for the employees as per the research findings based on DMOs perspectives. Each stakeholder group highlighted three critical roles: recreation (visitors), education (volunteers), and conservation (gardens as organizations) (Moskwa, 2012). Similarly, if the botanical gardens in Sri Lanka can enhance and develop the botanical garden activities within the gardens without just being restricted to visiting the gardens, it will be an ideal potential to promote Botanical Garden Tourism in Sri Lanka as other foreign countries.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This research identified the potential to promote Botanical Garden Tourism (BGT) in Sri Lanka. Destination attributes of the botanical gardens and issues/challenges to promote botanical garden tourism are considered to identify the potential of botanical garden tourism in Sri Lanka. All findings reflected that there is enough potential to promote Sri Lanka as a niche tourism market for botanical garden tourism. The researcher recognized the recommendations as experiencing marketing strategies for the better promotion of botanical gardens in Sri Lanka, enhancing the destination marketing strategies and programs to promote the botanical gardens as a tourism product, constant controlling and monitoring the implementation of the long term promotional plans for promoting botanical garden tourism, ensuring the sustainable and lucrative gain by the regulatory authorities, introducing innovative botanical garden tour packages for the visitors by the tour operators, enhancing the engagement of local community in botanical garden tourism, integrating botanical garden tourism with other special tourism market segments to gain competitive advantage, improvements in implementing botanical garden tourism activities which make the repeat visitation of the visitors while ensuring sustainable tourism, implementing different kinds of botanical garden activities, promoting botanical gardens in Sri Lanka as a tourism product under M4s in marketing and government strategic actions for land use problems and promoting botanical garden tourism in Sri Lanka in a sustainable way while fulfilling one of the key research objectives of this study respectively.

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Keywords: Botanical Garden Tourism, Niche Tourism, Potential, Sri Lanka, Tourism Growth

EXPLORING THE POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY - BASED TEA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT WITH REFERENCE TO SMALL TEA HOLDERS IN DENIYAYA AREA

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a growing industry today and generates a considerable impact on the country. A more sustainable tourism sector has been developed through community-based tourism (Koththagoda, and Thushara, 2016). The researcher started by evaluating prospective tea tourism products that may be created by the small tea estate owners in Deniyaya and the nearby region. The research was mainly undertaken to identify why small tea farmers in Deniyaya have neglected tea tourism development. The objectives of the study are to identify the significant role of small tea holders in the local economy of Deniyaya, investigate the existing tourism practices, and explore the potential for tea tourism development in small tea gardens. The study also intended to identify the emerging opportunities and challenges in sustainable tea tourism development for small tea holders. Mainly this study magnifies the potential tea tourism development of small tea estate holders in Deniyaya. The results of the study will support potential investors in tea tourism to expand their businesses through innovations and repurposing of tea gardens, heritage, and culture (Aslam, and Jolliffe, 2015). On the other hand, the industry can use the study's results for their business development. Eventually, the prevailing knowledge gap in community-based tea tourism will be filled to enhance the sustainable tea tourism development in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, community-based tea tourism can be recognized as an ideal tool for countryside capitalization and rural destination development.

2. Research Methodology

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach through inductive empirical investigation under the purview of the postmodernist paradigm. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews using judgmental sampling methods. The study used Constructivism research philosophy since it is a knowledge theory that claims humans build knowledge and meaning via the interaction of their experiences and ideas (Mohajan, 2018). As an ideal tool to interpret the socially constructed world, the case study research design was to study these opportunities and challenges for community-based tea tourism development in small tea holders. The first-hand data were collected from small tea holders, community members, and tourists at the research site. As a qualitative data collection tool, semi-structured personal interviews were carried out at a saturation point of eighteen respondence. As respondents were selected from different stakeholders related to tea and tourism, it unveiled multiple truths from the landscapes of tea smallholders. The widely accepted qualitative data analysis tool, narrative analysis, was used to interpret the transcribed interviews from different respondents. Narrative analysis was further enriched through triangulated analysis of the data collected from multiple respondents. Contextually, generalized findings of the study authenticated and ensured the rigor of the research through authentic sources and member-checking process.

3. Results and Discussion

Small tea holders play a significant role in the local economy, to increase the productivity of tea smallholdings, especially those below the poverty line who have tea plantations of less than one hectare and no other stable source of income, the tea supply chain must be improved (Praburaj, 2018). Deniyaya is one of the best tea plantation areas with a high potential to develop Tea tourism in down South Sri Lanka. Consequently, the research has achieved its objectives.

Accordingly, the research has attained its first objective to identify the significant role of small tea holders in the local economy of Deniyaya. According to the participant's responses, the researcher identified the production contribution to the local economy and the contribution to the local economy by providing employment opportunities. The production contribution can be identified as the main income source of the local community, which is helpful in reducing inequality, and contribution of agriculture to economic growth. The second objective focused on identifying the existing tourism practices and products of tea tourism found with small tea state holders. Accordingly, the researcher identified mainly two aspects; directly involved existing tourism practices of small tea holders and indirectly involved existing tea tourism products of small tea holders. Providing homestay and other accommodations, tour guiding, safari jeep service, community-based eco-camping and food, shopping, and other small businesses were involved. Meanwhile, the researcher considered two factors in the third research objective. The researcher identified emerging opportunities to support sustainable development through tea tourism as an alternative or upcycling livelihood for local communities and development. Simultaneously, emerging challenges for small tea holders in supporting sustainable tea tourism development included lack of awareness, insufficient capacity, economic difficulties, lack of government attention, and other external challenges such as limitations in marketing, accreditation, and networking. Although the tea smallholders embraced the huge potential of tea tourism with lucrative opportunities, lack of accessibility and awareness of emerging tea tourism prevented active participation, and lack of knowledge and skills on community-based tea tourism curtails capitalize tourism on the countryside capitalization related to tea for sustainable rural development. Further, the absence of merging traditional small tea gardens and nontraditional alternative tourism infringes sustainability in rural areas (Aslam, 2014).

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study identified the importance of tea smallholders to the local economy in Deniyaya considering the production amount they made and the employment opportunities they obtained. The findings showed that most of the local community earns from tea cultivation. Even though the Deniyaya area is rich in natural beauty and is already a tourism destination, the community is not educated about tea tourism. Only a few people have some experience with conventional tourism, and the majority of local people were not aware of tourism practices. None of the tea smallholders was aware of community-based tea tourism. Lack of government interventions in tea tourism development has been revealed in the small tea gardens of Deniyaya.

In addition, problems with facilities, poor service, lack of specialized knowledge, and unlikeliness to invest in new things were noted as the most common challenges in the area. Yet, the interpretation of the natural setting confirms the keen interest of tea smallholders and the local community in obtaining extra income, promoting small-scale businesses, gaining the advantages of infrastructure developments, getting the government's attention on development as positive attitudes towards community-based tea tourism development. Finally, the research confirmed the huge potential and willingness of tea smallholders and the local community to merge alternative tea tourism having all the present challenges with small tea gardens. Thus, these positive attitudes and potentials for community-based tea tourism can be capitalized on to ensure sustainable rural development while establishing a sustainable rural destination.

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***Keywords**:* Community-Based tourism, Tea tourism, Tourism in Sri Lanka, small tea holders, Sustainable development

SKILLED LABOUR MIGRATION OF THE SRI LANKAN HOTEL INDUSTRY; WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE

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1. Introduction

Skill is a prominent factor for labourers in the hotel sector as it is a service industry. Baum (2012), further illustrated the interdependence of migrant workers and the global hotel sector. Nevertheless, compared to past years, employers in the global context highly demand skilled labourers to increase their service standards competitively. Hence, most hotels in developing countries face a huge challenge when managing and retaining their skilled employees. Most skilled workers from the Sri Lankan tourism industry also migrate overseas in search of better opportunities (ILO, 2021). Among them, skilled hoteliers lead the industry in UAE and Maldives (IMO, 2020). Furthermore, City Hotels Association President M. Shanthikumar stated that nearly 30 percent of the industry workforce and specially trained staff leave the hotel sector (Dias, 2021). It means that the hotel sector, as a key player in the Sri Lankan economy, is highly vulnerable to this problem.

Even though skilled labour migration in the hotel industry happened over time, industrial experts highlighted that the rapid boom in the hotel industry took place from 2019 onwards. However, it can be noted that the country did not give enough attention to skilled labour out-migration in the hotel industry. Hence, the research involved studying this problem under three objectives. First, it attempted to identify the factors that affected skilled labour migration in the hotel industry and second, to identify the issues and challenges faced by the hotel sector due to skilled labour migration. Finally, it aimed to reveal the appropriate strategies to decrease skilled labour migration in the hotel industry. In this sense, the study is significant to all stakeholders involved in the industry, especially hotel owners, government, and academic staff to have a clear insight before addressing this timely issue.

2. Research Methodology

This research adheres to the social constructivist philosophy since it allows the researcher to analyze the diversity of the problem from the participant's perspective. Further, the inductive approach directed the researcher to deeply analyze the information, experiences, and ideas on the skilled labour migration in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. In addition, the qualitative exploratory case study design was used to examine the problem deeply.

Accordingly, three sampling techniques were used, which belonged to the non-probability sampling method. For the first objective, the purposive sampling technique was used to specifically identify the group of skilled hotel migrants according to the pre-set criteria, while the snowball sampling technique was used to reach the participants. The researcher utilized the convenient sampling technique to collect data for the second and third objectives. method. In addition, two interview protocols were used to conduct face-to-face and telephone semi-structured interviews in collecting data from 10 skilled migrants in the hotel industry and 5 HR-related persons such as HR directors, HR managers, and HR executives in 5-star hotels in the Western province until theoretical saturation was achieved. When analyzing the gathered data using thematic analysis, thirty-six focus codes were discovered under fourteen categories related to the three objectives.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

Skilled hotel employees are one of the primary elements that make authentic hospitality alive. For the first objective, with the use of migrated skilled hotel labourers and HR-related persons, the researcher identified several factors that affected skilled labourers to migrate from the Sri Lankan hotel industry. In this case, low salaries and benefits, poor working conditions, less career development, guest-related issues, working culture and norms, crisis environment, and life goals were highlighted. Further, agreeing to the workforce and migration patterns of Sri Lanka's tourism industry report; better wages, better working conditions, and quality of life were identified as factors that directly affected them to migrate (ILO, 2021). From the HR persons' point of view, the attractive salaries in destination countries, opportunities to get professional experience, generational differences, personal ambitions, and external industry challenges were captured under three categories, namely, overseas' better employment opportunities, social and personal factors, and instability of the local hotel industry.

As per the second objective, the researcher revealed four major issues and challenges faced by the hotel sector due to skilled labour migration. Issues and challenges related to organizational cost, brand value, HRM, marketing, and managerial aspects were identified here. Agreeing with Al-Suraihi et al. (2021) and other scholars, the salary increments of existing employees, the cost of searching for skilled personalities, difficulty in finding newcomers, cost of training and development, damaged service standards, marketing issues, and lack of long-term industry plan to attract labour were identified. For the third objective, the researcher revealed the appropriate strategies to decrease skilled labour migration in the hotel industry under labour retention, workforce building, and government-focused plans and programmes. Moreover, career development, better compensations, internal transfers, attracting workforce, training, and development, and giving priority to the tourism industry were keys to implementing the above strategies.

Simultaneously, the researcher found that skilled employees in the operational level department suffered the highest labour migration. In that case, the "kitchen" and "food and beverages" departments were highlighted. Further, the researcher found that generations Y and Z made a huge impact on the decision to migrate as they were always attracted to better career opportunities. In addition, the researcher found a narrowly demarcated definition for a skilled migrant in the hotel industry with potential. Even though the authorities considered those movements are short-term, the gathered data represented that most of the skilled labourers migrated permanently.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The main purpose of this research was to study the skilled labour migration in the local hotel industry because keeping a skilled labour force is a vital factor for the industry. Focusing on the objectives of the study, this research attempted to provide suggestive measures to support the hotel industry in Sri Lanka.

With the knowledge gathered through this study, stabilizing the country and developing the tourism industry should be the primary concerns. The government authorities should take immediate action toward the growth of the sector. Similarly, the contribution of industry to the national GDP should be taken into account. In that case, a destination marketing plan needs to be implemented smartly, ensuring both short- and long-term sustainable tourism workforce. Further, the statistics on skilled labour migration in the Sri Lankan hotel industry need to be precisely calculated. Moreover, the hotel management should strategically address the customers changing needs and try to enhance the business while giving priority to its back-born, skilled labour. Accordingly, all parties must continually focus on reducing the migration rate aiming at the long-term success of the Sri Lankan hotel industry.

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Keywords: Hospitality, Hotel industry, Human resource, Skilled migration

GREEN ATTRIBUTES ELICIT REVISIT INTENTION IN DOMESTIC GUESTS: A STUDY FROM GREEN RESORTS IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

There is an accelerating interest among consumers worldwide to care for the environment. Tourists are also more likely to visit natural places while minimizing the environmental impacts. The intention to revisit has been identified as one of the critical factors for the survival and development of the tourism industry because the cost of acquiring a new customer is higher than the cost of bringing back an existing customer into the organization (Alshurideh, 2016). For the Sri Lankan tourism sector, the easter attack, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the economic crisis have resulted in a massive heartbreak, and thus international tourist arrivals to resorts and hotels declined rapidly over the past years Hence, domestic tourism can be considered one of the vital aspects of the tourism industry today. Sri Lankan resorts implement different green attributes into their service offers. Nevertheless, converting a traditional resort/destination into a green resort/destination requires considerable investment. Thus, as profit-oriented organizations, green hotels and resorts must know whether there is an actual benefit by applying green attributes to maintain their investments effectively. A green resort usually charges an expensive amount from the visitor. However, the price would not be the focal concern that could affect consumers' decision to visit a hotel. Thus, exploring this phenomenon in the Sri Lankan context is essential to determine whether green attributes impact domestic tourists' revisit intention.

Further, though some scholars have examined this subject phenomenon in the world context, only a handful of studies have focused on the Sri Lankan context. Among those few, the majority discussed green applications in the hotel industry, but very few on revisit intention toward green resorts. Accordingly, this study examines the impact of green attributes on domestic tourists' revisit intention of green resorts. These findings suggest managerial implications for hospitality sector marketers to create and develop green attributes to increase tourists' revisit intention and increase their profits by managing cost-effectively.

2. Research Methodology

This study followed a quantitative research design under the deductive approach. Further, a cross-sectional survey was conducted, and a self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the respondents. The population of the study was the domestic tourists who had visited any selected green resorts at least once. 362 usable responses were gathered using the purposive sampling technique from the customers who had visited selected five green resorts or if there were any green resorts other than the selected resorts for their travelling needs. Mainly, five green resorts were identified as Aarunya Nature Resort, Kalundewa eco-resort, Uga Jungle beach, Anantara peace heaven Tangalle Resort, Amaya Lake Resort Dambulla, which are registered under the Sri Lanka Tourist Board hotel classification with eco certifications.

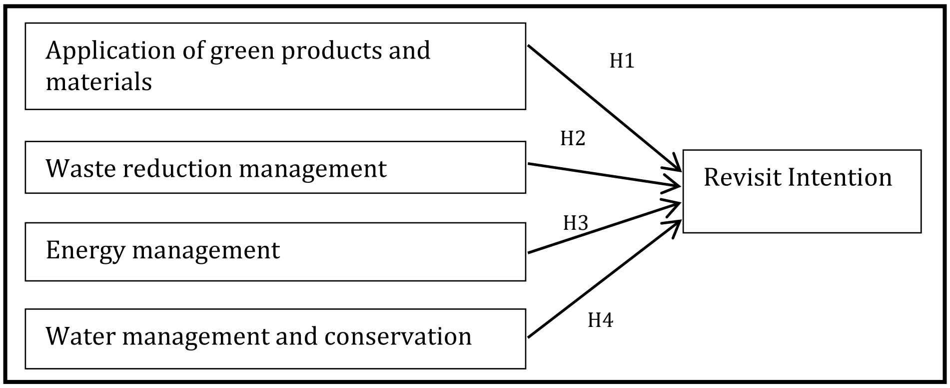

Figure 01: Conceptual Framework adopted from Astuti and Ermawati (2020)

The conceptual framework of the study was adopted from previous research, which was initially developed based on the argument of cognitive appraisal theory. Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables anchored as ‘Strongly Disagree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Agree’ (5). After ensuring the initial reliability of the instrument through a pilot survey, the questionnaire was distributed among the respondents through an online platform, and the response rate was 80.4%. Accordingly, data were analyzed using the SPSS software.

3. Results/Findings and Discussion

In this study, all the variables were reported as reliable, and further, validity was fairly assured through convergent and discriminant validity.

According to the analysis, the application of green products and materials was significant, with a beta coefficient of 0.345. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a positive influence of the application of green products and materials on revisit intention. This finding is in line with the main literature findings. Zulfikar and Mayvita (2018) found that green products significantly influence attitude and behaviour intention. Further, Suki (2016) also found green products substantially affect purchase intention.

Waste reduction management recorded a P value of 0.983. Hence there was no significant influence of waste reduction management on domestic tourists’ revisit intention. According to Chen and Jai (2018), waste reduction management did not directly influence behavioural intentions in the USA restaurants. Hence, the result of the current study can be accepted to a certain extent. Accordingly, the researcher can assume that, due to the cultural differences, awareness, and green consumerism level in Sri Lanka, waste reduction management has no influence on domestic tourists’ revisit intention towards resorts.

Further, energy management depicted a significant positive impact on domestic tourists' revisit intention towards green resorts in Sri Lanka. The Beta value was 0.295. Energy management significantly influences revisit intention. Recently, Azam et al. (2020) also noted that energy management greatly influences visitors' revisit intention. Thus, the result was consistent with the previous research findings. Moreover, water management and conservation also recorded a positive influence with a 0.239 beta coefficient on domestic tourists' revisit intention toward green resorts. Accordingly, Azam et al. (2020) found that water management and conservation depicted a significant positive influence on tourists' revisit intention toward resorts in Malaysia. Further, water management significantly influences customers' revisit intention. Thus, the result was consistent with the previous research findings.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of green attributes on domestic tourists' revisit intention toward green resorts in Sri Lanka. The study concluded that the application of green products, energy management, and water management and conservation positively influenced and waste reduction management was not found to significantly influence domestic tourists' revisit intention toward green resorts in Sri Lanka.

These findings provide the most appropriate green ideas and information that managers can use when developing positioning strategies for their resorts. Managers can identify their product/service in terms of tourists' willingness and differentiate them from their competitors by underlining the green attributes that are most important to their target market. Moreover, investors can be more concerned about the application of green products and materials since that variable has the most decisive influence on attracting tourists over and over again. Furthermore, the current study suggests an appropriate set of green resort attributes that can help resorts marketers to set up their eco-friendly resorts accordingly. In addition, green resorts/hotels can invest more in the environmental education of their employees relating to the discussed green attributes.

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Keywords: Domestic tourism, Green resorts, Revisit intention

IMPEDIMENTS OF ADOPTING E-MARKETING PLATFORMS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTREPRENEURS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE COLOMBO DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Internet growth and internet-related marketing activities lead the first step of the concrete pathway of E-marketing platforms nowadays and have a transformational power to influence business operational functions. Social media, website, e-mail marketing, mobile phone marketing, and other online sites can be identified as categories of E-marketing platforms. As per internet statistics, 11.34 million people consume internet facilities; among them, 8.20 million were connected to social media platforms in Sri Lanka in January 2022 (Kepios, 2022). Further, it is mentioned that the most popular social media platforms, such as Facebook users were 7.15 million, YouTube users were 6.68, Instagram users were 1.55 million, and website marketing is using hoteliers for information sharing. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority & Christian affairs (2017) have viewed digital marketing as the most important element of marketing because online and social media platforms are the first resources where tourists get information about destinations and accommodations. Those tools direct tourist flows to hotels, and destinations are communication and information.

Ministry of Industry Commerce has clearly mentioned that modern technology involved in the SME sector is not at the proper level and not updated with modern technology. Thus, it affects SME entities in decreasing their quality, productivity, innovation, and survival in the market. Therefore, the study objectives are exploring the impediments to adopting e-marketing platforms in SMEs and exploring the suggestion and solutions to overcome the impediments of adopting E-marketing platforms in SMEs in the hospitality sector. According to the Colombo commercial development plan (2019), the Colombo district has the highest hospitality establishment with modern technology and is a destination where tourists stay an average of two days while spending 100 to 500 dollars. Therefore, the researcher considered the Colombo district as the research site. This study will be useful to entrepreneurs who are willing to enter the industry, and government policy makers and can be used academic purposes as secondary data source.

2. Research Methodology

Accordingly, the study focused on the impediments to adopting E-marketing in SMEs in the hotel industry with respect to different viewpoints of stakeholders. Therefore, the study has followed the social-constructivism philosophy. Further, the study approach was inductive based on the issue addressed and developed empirical generalization to identify basic relationships. To accomplish the established objectives, detailed information, ideas, and experiences of small and medium enterprises in the hotel industry were required to answer the determining questions. Consequently, the author utilized a qualitative approach to describe the established objectives in a detailed way. A multiple case study design was used to explore a programme, event, or phenomenon in their surroundings deeply. The convenience sample method was used to reach hospitality SMEs, and snowball sampling methods were used to reach small scale medium service providers., Further, eight face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with SMEs to gather deep ideas or exploration from respondents in the relevant area. Simultaneously, five telephone interviews from SME service providers were used to achieve data saturation point. Thematic analysis was used to derive codes and themes from the interview responses.

3. Results and findings

Accordingly, impediments to adopting e-marketing platforms for small and medium entrepreneurs in the hotel industry can be categorized as internal and external impediments. Key findings of the study were lack of knowledge on benefits of e- platforms, and fear of using it, lack of competencies like no proper management, no entrepreneur skills when handling e- platforms, inadequate knowledge of e-platforms like poor quality maintenance for media platforms, no innovations/e-commerce practices, influence on familism and marketing issues such as no product developments, no specific digital strategy respectively. External challenges such as ineffective government, challenging factors, lack of technical infrastructure, and business disasters were the identified barriers to adopting e-marketing platforms in SMEs. Suggestions and solutions to overcome these barriers can be divided into two as actions to overcome internal and external barriers. Redesigning the operational functions, redesigning the hotel outlook, and proper recruitment process were actions to, and standardizing the quality of service was the action to overcome internal barriers. Under the government's support, the necessity for knowledge, skills development programmes on electronic media, ICT infrastructure development projects, entrepreneurship development projects, increased travel awareness, and policies for tourism and hospitality industry development were highlighted. Instead of constructing the hotel most of them tended to construct residency. According to the authors' perception, that would be an inventible effect on the industry in the future. Especially every entrepreneur should have a Business Continual Plan (BCP) to address business disasters, but due to a lack of knowledge and management skills, they do not have this kind of plan. Further, government issues emphasized by the respondent included government authorities' incapability to reach international non-government organizations to get financial and technical support., Moreover, different key barriers were founded, such as Familism, unawareness on e- platforms, and ineffective government projects Nevertheless, key programmes such as ICT infrastructure development and knowledge skill development programmes were suggested based on the study findings.

4. Conclusion and Implication

Accordingly, the researcher has achieved two objectives. The study focused on the pertaining gap which is on small medium entrepreneurs in the hotel industry. The researcher could get a clear understanding of impediments that effect on SMEs to adopt e- platform through the interviews conducted with the hotel entrepreneurs and small medium service providers. Mainly identified internal barriers were unawareness about e-platform, unfamilism, inadequate knowledge of the e-platform, economic crisis, pandemic situation, inflation, travel restrictions to Sri Lanka, insubstantial infrastructure, and no adequate guidance and training programs have been identified as external barriers to adopting e- marketing platforms in SMEs while preparing actions to overcome those barriers. The government and non-government organizations established to amplify entrepreneurship would be helpful to identify current problems and to develop projects. This study would be useful to entrepreneurs expecting to enter the hotel industry, informing issues and difficulties to survive in the market. In addition, the facts mentioned here would be helpful to academic purposes, and policymakers can use them as secondary data resources. Simultaneously, actions which was revealed in this study will help to the future development of both small medium entrepreneurs and the industry. Especially any investors willing to invest in small businesses can use this study to understand the current situation’s effects on SMEs.

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Keywords: E-Marketing platforms, Small Medium Entrepreneurs

EXPLORING SURFACE ACTING OF FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES IN CLASSIFIED HOTELS IN COLOMBO

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1. Introduction

Hospitality in the commercial domain is people businesses and service providers are bound to make the guests' expectations a reality (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). Frontline employees, as the heart of the hotel, have become emotional labours with a tremendous brand commitment to represent the hotel; hence they need to continuously maintain present emotions in guest contacts (King, 2010). Surface Acting (SA), an emotional regulation strategy, has been used by emotional labour to fake or hide their real emotions, like donning a mask to make pleasant guest encounters to fulfill the organizational requirements (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, emotional labour frontline employees also need to deal with it during the service. Although SA has both positive and negative impacts on emotional labour (Gabriel & Grandey, 2015), previous studies have shown that this impact may vary in different cultures, yet more scientific studies are required to study the adoption of emotional labour contexts within the Sri Lankan culture (Wanninayake, 2020). Sri Lankan classified hotels have been structured and standardized to build a strong brand identity and credibility for the hotel. The availability of a standardized front-line department is a mandatory requirement for classified hotels. As the first impression-building party, the service quality of the frontline employees in classified hotels has become more crucial and noticeable within this standardized nature. Thus, this study was developed to identify surface acting as an emotional labour strategy, to identify the factors that lead to surface acting, and to identify the consequences of surface acting from the frontline employees' perspective in classified hotels in Colombo, Sri Lanka amidst a dedicated situation for a standardized service.

2. Research Methodology

Accordingly, this research was designed according to the social constructivism research philosophy. A qualitative multiple case study was conducted to obtain an in-depth analysis considering the frontline employees in classified hotels in Colombo as the cases. Meanwhile, data were collected through semi-structured telephone interviews in view of classified hotels in Colombo as the research site. This study consisted of 10 frontline employees in 10 classified hotels in Colombo considering frontline employees in classified hotels in Colombo as the study population. The respondents were selected through a convenience sampling technique during August 2022. The sample represented both female and male frontline employees with varying degrees of working experience in each classified hotel except grade 01. Consequently, the thematic analysis and content analysis were utilized as analytical tools to obtain a more comprehensive view of the study.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The thematic analysis of data revealed that frontline employees believe SA is a must-used strategy in classified hotels though the perception towards SA varies according to the working experiences. Structured job image, limited personal identity by the job title and the guest is always right attitude leads frontline employees to believe SA as the must–used strategy. Frontline employees with fewer experiences (less than one year) always find SA a burden, while well–experienced employees (more than five years) take strategic advantage of SA. In the meantime, frontline employees with average work experience (more than one year) also considered it a burden at the beginning of their career life, however, when more matured in the job, they used to believe that it was a necessity of the job role. Furthermore, frontline employees identified the leading factors of SA based on their job as a person. Job-based factors such as the nature of the job role, organizational behaviour, and the experiences of the real service encounter caused them to use SA in service encounters as frontline employees. In contrast, personality and physical conditions lead them to use SA due to the influence of personal factors.

Accordingly, the findings indicated that SA creates both positive and negative consequences for frontline employees. Positive consequences can be identified as SA being a good strategy in customer relationship management and an industry–fitted employee. However, findings indicated that SA might cause emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the negative consequences of SA can be minimized by organizational support. If a hospitality service provider makes reasonable efforts to help and train frontline employees, especially recruits, to manage their emotions in guest-host interactions, that service provider can be a real example setter to genuine service in the commercial domain. It is because such kind of service providers leads their employees to the strategic use of SA and create fewer burdens on employees from the negative consequences of SA while ensuring the promised service to the guests.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This research developed several vital conclusions based on the qualitative analysis. Accordingly, classified hotels in Colombo, Sri Lanka, focused on ensuring real value for their guests' money by serving an extremely satisfying service in a hospitable manner. In this attempt, SA significantly impacts on frontline employees in classified hotels; thus, they need to maintain continuous pleasant emotions as the facet of the hotel. According to the findings, they believe SA is a mandatory requirement for frontline employees as emotional labour, and their perception of SA varies with their years of experience. The frontline employees with less experience believed SA was a burden, while well- experience frontline employees strategically used SA. Further, the finding of the study depicted both jobs related and personal factors that lead frontline employees to utilize SA in guest encounters. Thus, it can be concluded working experiences act as a source of learning; hence over time, frontline employees learn how to deal with guests by strategically using SA. Although the frontline employees in classified hotels find both positive and negative consequences, the findings of the study showed that the negative consequences of SA can be minimized with organizational support. Therefore, it can be concluded that if the management of the classified hotels in Colombo focuses on supporting their n recruiters to deal with surface acting to obtain its benefits, then such kinds of hotels will be real examples of genuine hospitality since they are concerned about their employees' wellbeing while serving extremely satisfying service to the guests.

Accordingly, this study contributes to SA and emotional labour strategies literature as an in-depth analysis of SA in classified hotels in Colombo from frontline employees' perspective. This research provides valuable insight into the adoption of SA in classified hotels in the Sri Lankan context. The outcomes of this research will benefit the management of the classified hotels in Colombo to make their HRM decisions. Furthermore, the researcher of this study suggests that tourism education providers need to provide practical applications of emotional labour and emotional regulation strategies to their students to make them academic experts and industry-fit human resources in the tourism and hospitality industry.

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Keywords: Classified Hotels, Emotional Labour, Emotional Regulation Strategies, Frontline Employees, Surface Acting

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON TOURISTS' TRUST IN SELECTING A TRAVEL DESTINATION: A STUDY ON GENERATION Y AND Z

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1. Introduction

Tourism and hospitality can be considered one of the industries that adapt to technology fastest and the earliest (Wijesundara, 2018). Social media has widened its wings beyond just being a platform and has become a marketplace in the tourism industry. Accordingly, social media influencers can be identified as an engaged and influential user of social media who is respected by their peers for being the reliable source (Agostino et al., 2019). Social media influencers also act as middlemen between the tourists and the service providers in the industry, and their content on social media significantly impacts travel decisions, including the destination selection of the tourists (Kim & Kim, 2021). In recent years, generation Y and Z have been the most sensitive age group to social media, and highly dependent on influencers' content in selecting a travel destination (Poll, 2021). Some European countries have studied the impact of social media influencers on tourists' trust in making travel decisions among generations Y and Z (Paul, Roy & Mia, 2019). However, considering the Sri Lankan context, there is a need for more particularized research relevant to the Sri Lankan context that could help in understanding the excrescence of tourist synergy on social media marketing and their influence on decisions on different age groups (Sarathchandra et al., 2020). Therefore, the researcher of this study intended to look into the impact of social media influencers' characteristics on tourists' trust in selecting a travel destination among tourists in generations Y and Z.

2. Research Methodology

The study was conducted under the positivism philosophy as an explanatory quantitative study. Thus, the approach of this study was deductive. The data were gathered from Facebook users in generations Y & Z. The self-administrated questionnaire was utilized, and 314 usable responses were collected by utilizing the convenience sampling technique. Accordingly, the questionnaire was developed using a Google form, and it consisted of mandatory questions for the respondents. Data analysis was statistically performed through correlation analysis and regression analysis since the researcher of this study had two objectives; to identify the relationship between each characteristic of Social Media Influencers and tourists' trust in selecting a travel destination among generations Y & Z and, to identify the impact of the characteristic of Social Media Influencers on tourists' trust in selecting a travel destination among generations Y & Z respectively.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The study evaluated the impact of the characteristics (Expertise, Authenticity, Physical Attractiveness, and Homophily) of social media influencers on tourists' trust in selecting a travel destination among generations Y & Z. According to the research findings, the characteristics of social media influencers; expertise, authenticity, physical attractiveness, and homophily significantly and positively impacted on the tourists' trust in selecting a travel destination among generation Y and Z tourists. Moreover, the finding of this study, expertise, authenticity, physical attractiveness and homophily, have unstandardized coefficient beta values of 0.473, 0.326, 0.223, and 0.252 respectively. The adjusted R2 value of this study was 88.2%. According to the findings, all of the study's independent factors accounted for 88.2 percent of the variation in tourists' trust among generations Y and Z. Thus, the additional variation of 11.2 percent signaled that there are other constraints effects on tourists' trust of generation Y and Z in selecting a destination.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This paper contributed to the tourism and social media marketing literature by empirically validating the concerned source credibility and attractiveness models referring to generation Y and Z tourists in Sri Lanka.

According to the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the characteristics (Expertise, Authenticity, Physical Attractiveness, and Homophily) of the social media influencers significantly impact the tourists' trust in selecting a travel destination among generations Y & Z. Accordingly, this research provides valuable insights for the social media influencers on the effect of their characteristics on tourists' trust, and it is ultimately profitable for the marketeers in tourism for their promotions as well. Furthermore, this improves tourists' knowledge, and the government tourism-related authorities will be beneficial for promoting tourism in the country. It filled the empirical gap of limited studies in Sri Lanka regarding social media influencers on tourists' trust in selecting a destination among generation Y & Z. Thus, hotels, tour operators, and online travel agencies can utilize the findings of this study on social media campaigns and by selecting the social media influencers to destinations.

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Keywords: Social media, Influencers, Tourists' Trust, Travel decision, Destination selection

WHY IS BELIHULOYA UNAPPEALING TO FOREIGN TOURISTS? - A TRAVEL AGENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

Belihuloya is one of the lesser-known destinations among foreign tourists, although it has a wide range of attractions. It is endowed with heritage, culture, wildlife, and natural resources offering a unique and authentic experience for all tourists (Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council, 2018). The limited literature on Belihuloya suggests that it is well suited for a stopover destination However, the area still plays a part as a transit region, and even though Belihuloya has more tangible and intangible resources, those do not seem to be well-known (Menike, 2005). The previous research that has been conducted is dated 2005, but now the context has changed quite significantly. Therefore, there is an overall lack of research regarding how to promote Belihuloya tourism and the ways of attracting foreign tourists. Thus, it is necessary to revisit this topic and reassess its validity. The researcher has undertaken a preliminary study with 9 hoteliers in Belihuloya to identify whether foreign tourists are staying overnight in Belihuloya hotels. The results of the study identified the current state of tourism in Belihuloya and concluded that the area is mostly patronized by locals, and there is a possibility of promoting the area through travel agents. Further, the preliminary study found that the hoteliers are willing to provide services for foreign tourists, although fewer foreigners are visiting. So, the current research focuses on identifying 1) whether the travel agents include Belihuloya in their tour packages, 2) identifying the reasons for their choices, and 3) the requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to include Belihuloya in their tour itineraries.

2. Methodology

The current study is based on social constructivism because the travel agents' perception may vary from agent to agent, and thus it believes that actors construct a reality that is subjective and there are multiple realities. Since the research deals with the experience and consciousness of the participants, the researcher uses a qualitative approach to answer the research problems. A generic qualitative research design (Percy et al., 2015) is used for the study because the study focuses on describing the perception and opinions of travel agents. The generic qualitative inquiry will investigate people's subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on their experiences of things in the outer world. Dealing with the perceptions and viewpoints of people require more flexibility. So the generic approach was chosen as the best approach to conduct the research. In this study, all travel agencies in Sri Lanka were considered as the population. The researcher used a purposeful sampling method to select the sample of travel agency managers/ executives, and they were interviewed until theoretical saturation was reached with 9 respondents. The study used semi-structured interview methods to collect primary data since it is open and allows new ideas to be brought up during the interview., Simultaneously, it was the ideal data collection method for the current study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

According to the results, although travel agents were aware of Belihuloya, the majority did not tend to include Belihuloya in their tour packages unless they receive a special request from a client. The travel agents who, include Belihuloya considered the natural aspects such as biodiversity and sustainable practices more than the tourist arrivals. Apart from the natural phenomena, the different tastes of the tourist market were also considered. Accordingly, they intended to send fewer tourists by considering the environment in the area. Even though the travel agents who did not include Belihuloya are aware of the importance and value of Belihuloya. In contrast, they mainly consider including famous places in the regular round tour route. The time, uniqueness, and cost will also be considered when selecting a destination. Since Belihuloya is an isolated area with no nearby attractions, they do not tend to include the area. The low hotel facilities, infrastructure failures, and lack of emergency support are among the other reasons for not including Belihuloya.

Thus, findings indicated that one of the most important requirements to be included in Belihuloya is networking with the stakeholders in Belihuloya. Consequently, the development in the region, such as the accommodation sector, infrastructure facilities, product development, promotion, and identification of tourism patterns, will be considered important by travel agents. Previous research suggested that the constant flow of tourists' arrival matters the most to a prosperity of a destination (Souiden et al., 2017). However, the current study proved that more attention should be given on the environmental factors apart from the tourists' arrival.

4. Conclusion and implications

The study concluded that fewer travel agents include Belihuloya in their tour itineraries, while others do not consider the route to Belihuloya. The development in the area and proper coordination with the stakeholders are required in order to include Belihuloya in their tour packages. Further, the product development must be done by the stakeholders who live in the Belihuloya area. Since travel agencies are only mediating parties, they only provide solutions for their clients. Therefore, tourism development in Belihuloya cannot be done by only the travel agents. The contribution of all the stakeholders is needed to attract foreign tourists and develop tourism in Belihuloya.

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Keywords: Belihuloya, Foreign tourists, Lesser-known destinations, Promotion, Stakeholders

TRANSFORMATION OF PLACES DUE TO TOURISM: THE CASE OF ELLA TOURIST DESTINATION FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

Tourism plays a significant role in the transformation of places. On the one hand, it supports the reconfiguration and restructuring processes that tend to create new opportunities for satisfying people's wants and needs (Lonela et al., 2015). On the other hand, those changes create negative impacts (Environmental pollution, increased noise level, limited freedom, etc.) and positive impacts (Income generation, increased job opportunities, etc.) on both the residents and visitors (Chandralal, 2010). Ella area is identified as a fast-developing tourist destination in Sri Lanka, and as a result, increasing tourist arrivals to Ella has changed the area both physically and culturally. Subsequently, those environmental conditions affect the physical and psychological well-being of residents living in that area. Many tourist destinations have emerged and caused a lot of transformations to places, but considerable scholarly attention has not been paid to studying such transformations from the environmental psychology perspective in Sri Lanka. Environmental psychology is the discipline that studies (Gifford, 2014) the interplay between individuals and their built and natural environment, and that perspective is very important for policymakers, local government, and academicians to know how people of an area feel and respond to the changes taking place before further development is planned. Accordingly, this study captures residents' perception of the transformations taking place in Ella from an environmental psychology perspective.

2. Research Methodology

The study's primary data source was the Ella residents' subjective perceptions. Hence an exploratory approach was required. This research took a qualitative case study approach and took Ella as a case of a transforming tourist destination. Semi-structured interviews were conducted following the convenient sampling technique. Eleven (11) residents from Ella took part in the study as participants whose data were analyzed by employing the thematic analysis.

3. Results/ Findings and Discussion

The primary purpose of the research was to study residents' perceptions and responses to the transformation of places due to tourism development from an environmental psychology perspective in Ella tourist destination. Basically, three parental themes were developed according to the research objective. Sub-themes and sub-sub-themes were constructed in the analysis as per the interview responses. Accordingly, these themes were the information mentioned by the interviewer, and were taken from the questions asked by the researcher. Consequently, these themes were constructed based on the questions asked by the researcher

Table 1: Summary of themes

Parental themes	Sub-theme	Sub/ sub-theme
Resident's perceptions and responses to the transformation of places	Tourism causes changes to the physical environment	• Infrastructure development • Impacts for environment
	Tourism causes changes to local lifestyle	• Earnings • Behavioural changes • Freedom • Education • Personal relationship
The transformation of Ella tourist destination in relation to physical and cultural geographical	Physical changes	• Positively changes • Negatively changes
	Cultural changes	• Positively changes • Negatively changes
Transformation to the feel of place by residents	Physical geography	• Positive feelings • Negative feelings • Moderate feelings
	Cultural geography	• Positive feelings • Negative feelings • Moderate feelings

Source: Developed by the researcher

In view of Ella residents, the natural environment, geographical conditions, and culture in the Ella area have been subjected to changes due to tourism developments. These changes have been felt by residents differently and affected them both positively and negatively. According to the findings, the residents of the Ella area have confirmed that there have been negative impacts on the natural environment. For example, with the increasing number of hotels and restaurants, no proper mechanism for waste disposal has been implemented, and wilderness has been destroyed for development. Hence, this has led to an adverse impact on the environment.

One of the previous researchers has mentioned that there are significant issues for the long-standing surface environment with globalization, such as hazards in a regional setting, climate change, and the impact of human activity on the natural environment (Ashmore & Dodson, 2017). According to residents, the natural environment has been polluted by young local tourists who go camping. The opinion of the Ella residents is that the responsible parties should focus on preventing damage to the environment because their attention has not been sufficient. The physical environment of the Ella area has changed both positively and negatively. The infrastructure development of that area has supported them in carrying out their daily activities easily.

On the other hand, their environment has been polluted in recent years. Although their culture has changed both positively and negatively due to the tourism development, the people of the Ella area are willing to start tourism industry-related businesses like restaurants, hotels, guiding work, etc., to increase their income and job opportunities instead of traditional farming. Moreover, their clothing styles, and food patterns have changed. It was noted that the younger generation welcomes such changes while elders disapprove. Freedom of residents has been limited due to tourism, and they ascribe increasing drug usage in that area to tourism development. In addition, their educational level, and personal relationships have impacted both positively and negatively. The summary of the findings can be indicated as below.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This research generated several important conclusions resulting from analyzing residents' views on tourism development in Ella. This research concluded that Ella residents' lives have become easier and more convenient after the development took place in Ella due to tourism. However, in areas with fewer tourism activities, infrastructure development is still not at a significant level, and thus environmental damage has taken place. Although the development of tourism has opened up avenues for job opportunities, increased income level, and increased education level, directly and indirectly, some areas such as religious places, use of drugs, family relations, and people and environment relations have been negatively affected for the residents. Some of the conflicts are derived from residents' sense of place, dissatisfaction with unplanned buildings, and loss of nature due to tourism development in the area. Similar research has been done before, but it has been done from the tourists' perspective (Munasinghe et al., 2022). Hence, no such study has been conducted from the residents' side. The local government can use the results of this study to identify how the residents have psychologically bonded with their place and respond to the transformation of their place. Further, the finding of this study have implications for further developing tourism in Ella, simultaneously protecting the physical and cultural environments and addressing the problems and issues faced by the residents. Accordingly, these implications will be helpful for further investigations of regenerative tourism.

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