

## **Impact of Social Media Marketing On Consumer Buying Behavior: A Study Based On Clothing Brands in Sri Lanka**

Devindee Tissera<sup>1</sup>, Thilini Lakmini Mudiyanse<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Postgraduate Candidate of Imperial Institute of Institute of Higher Education, Colombo, Sri Lanka, Validated Center of University of Wales Trinity Saint David

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer of Imperial Institute of Institute of Higher Education, Colombo, Sri Lanka, Validated Center of University of Wales Trinity Saint David  
Corresponding Author: Devindee Tissera

---

**Abstract:** *social media has become a component of the community that has been adopted in business operations, especially as a marketing tool in the retail fashion industry of Sri Lanka which is pushed by technological advancements. Social commerce derived through social media supports the user's comfort with occasions for seamless shopping experiences from discovery to checkout with virtual stores and in-app social commerce. Hence, the research problem of this study is to identify and analyze the impact of social media marketing that influence a person to purchase clothing brands in Sri Lanka. The research is carried out as a survey with a sample of 384 retail fashion consumers following a hypothetic deductive approach testing the hypothesis developed based on social media marketing. The results of the study reveal that social media marketing successfully influences fashion consumers to purchase clothing brands among other alternatives. Key words – Social-media, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Purchasing Behavior.*

---

### **I. Introduction**

Marketing is a part of significant business decisions that include public relations, brand, product development, communications, pricing, creative direction, customer relationship management covering the marketing mix (Kingsnorth, 2016). Social media marketing is the process of designing customized content for each social media platform to promote business and boost engagement with the audience or customers (Paquette, 2013). Social media is defined as a platform that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content and is made out of internet-based applications that develop on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0 (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010 cited in Suki, 2020). The collection of tools and online spaces that permit individuals and groups to produce content and engage in interactive, content exchange, and peer-to-peer discussions (Rath et al., 2015). In terms of conceptualization, four factors of social media marketing identify as more influencing the consumers through social media platforms namely social media mix, information satisfaction, virtual consumer relationship, and entertainment.

Social media mix refers to a marketing strategy that enables two-way communication and empowered social connectedness through effective collaboration of content communities (E.g.: TikTok, YouTube), social networking (E.g.: Facebook), visual storytelling (E.g.: Instagram), and microblogging (E.g.: Twitter) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The combination of the social media platforms defines based on four categories of business model objectives namely promote and sell (e.g: Facebook, Instagram), listen and learn (e.g: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn), empower and engage (e.g: YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest), connect and collaborate (e.g: Instagram, Twitter) accordingly business to customers, business from customers, business for customers and business with customers (Rydén, et al., 2015). Social media marketing is used by brands to improve consumer engagement with the concoction of three types of media; Paid media, Owned media, and Earned media (Sozer, 2019). Paid media is posted on a third-party platform created by the sender. Owned media content developed by the firm and carried out social media activities under the brand name. User-generated content is also categorized as a part of a social media mix that has no control over the content (Li, et al., 2020).

Information satisfaction of social selling describes as prospective consumer confidence in a product available on the social media platforms that turn shoppers into consumers of a particular brand (Alharthi, et al., 2017). Satisfied information is defined as emotionally compelling product information, high-quality multimedia messages, accurate and consistent product details capable of converting social media scrollers into loyal customers (De Vries, et al., 2017). Presenting the product with visual clarity, clear sounds, and captions in proper context and length is sufficient to answer consumer doubts and queries considered as satisfying information. Information satisfaction defines in terms of effort expectancy level in searching for product

information through social media. Spending a lower level of effort to obtain the desired information has a higher degree of perceived control and tends to be more confident (Artz, 2015).

The objective of the virtual consumer relationship can extend to retain long-term relationships that create loyal customers, enhance brand loyalty, spread positive brand image, gain feedback, spread positive e-word of mouth (Piccinini, et al., 2015). Consumers shopping online through social media are buying products sight unseen, paying in advance while providing personal data online. Hence consumer trust and positive relationships shall derive from a high level of commitment and open communication. Since the high degree of technology involvement, consumers expect real-time chat boxes to raise their queries and solve technical matters in the online purchasing systems (Kumar and Pansari, 2016).

Social media marketing that augmented entertainment-specific contexts and media is referred to as entertainment marketing in the new digital era (Deh, et al., 2021). Entertaining and pleasing content encourage social media involvement and screen-scrolling that build a psychologically positive experience to recall and recognize the brand (Naqvi, et al., 2020). Entertainment is also defined as social interactive activities like games, competitions, give-away, posting consumer images with products, tagging of consumer profiles that boost social satisfaction and pleasure.

In the global context, information related to fashion goods is shared among people at a high frequency as the social media platform stimulates the window shopping experience (Tariq, 2021). The concept of everything has to be physical is gradually being disproven by individuals' need to express themselves in a virtual world (second world) with a virtual product.

## **II. Research Problem**

The local apparel fashion market of Sri Lanka is led by several established players on a large scale. Nonetheless, traditional apparel fashion is reforming with fast fashion trends by small and medium fashion entrepreneurs who adapt to the new reality of the digitally driven economy that enables the spread of awareness at regular intervals via social media.

Considering demographic facts of Sri Lanka in 2021 records 21.46 million population consisting of 10.9 million internet users (51% internet penetration) across the country (Kemp, 2021). The country reports 7.9 million active social media users mainly spread through the use of Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok. Sri Lanka's population comprises 52.1% of females and 47.9% of males that record similar usage weight of social media applications accordingly.

In the year 2021 highest monthly internet users were recorded from the age category of 25 to 34 years. Users of age between 19 to 34 years have a higher frequency of unlocking mobile phones per hour. Sri Lankan average internet user checks social media notifications 15 times per hour and the majority of users the age 19 to 34 years (Asia Pacific Institute of Digital Marketing Pvt Ltd, 2021).

The clothing brands maintain a Facebook business account for their online community engagement and as a digital marketing strategy. Also, in the current scenario, clothing brands have smoothly extended to Instagram accounts identifying the target audience in the online social network. Furthermore, several brands enable to reach other platforms like YouTube with their enhanced capacity. Nevertheless, it portrays that Sri Lankan retail apparel fashion brands are exposed to a limited digital network in terms of social media platforms.

Social media marketing is necessary to address the sufficient level of information required for all genders to build trustworthiness to make a purchasing decision in an e-commerce platform. The consumption of social media platforms for purchasing intentions has a gap between age categories, mainly due to the lack of confidence. Therefore, it requires building healthy consumer relationships to bridge the difference between online and physical shopping experiences.

## **III. Research Objectives**

The research objectives for this study are:

To identify the dimensions of social media marketing

To analyze the factors of the social media marketing

To provide recommendations to successfully improve social media marketing strategies

## **IV. Significance of the research**

The research would be an advantage and more important for the small and medium apparel fashion entrepreneurs to cope with the digital marketing strategies. Moreover, this study will present wide scope for the marketing consultant and social media managing companies to improve their quality services according to the market trends and consumer expectations. The findings of this study would be benefited potential entrepreneurs in any industry that required automation and digitalization. Furthermore, this study would support all academic purposes to identify emerging preferences and expectations of fashion consumers through social media platforms.

## **V. Literature Review**

### **5.1 Social media Marketing**

Marketing is a part of significant business decisions that include public relations, brand, product development, communications, pricing, creative direction, customer relationship management covering the marketing mix (Kingsnorth, 2016). This new screen ecology dominates a predominantly convergent zone between social media entertainment and communication content, and it is defined by a level of viewing and interactivity, as well as audience-centricity, that is unprecedented in screen history (Cunningham and Craig, 2019). Unlike traditional media (such as television), where viewers are passive recipients, social media give an interactive and updated platform for active social involvement, which has revolutionized the way information is sent and received (Austin and Jin, 2018).

Social media networks and blogs have been reconceived as the information search engine, communication, human interactions, and relationships to the next level (Walter and Gioglio, 2014). Social media has mainly been accepted as an effective tool for assisting firms and businesses in achieving their marketing goals and plans, particularly in areas such as consumer contact, customer relationship management, and collaboration (Jacinto, et al., 2021).

The concept of “the medium is the message” initiated by McLuhan elaborates that the media itself will alter individual behavior and have an effect on society and its’ wider culture. The actual message shared among people in the new form of media will not make a significant difference (McLuhan and McLuhan, 1988).

Social media contains the elements that intensify the medium or resolution enabling interaction, creativity, and communication (Agnese, et al., 2020). With the introduction of the new medium, the focus on the previous condition is removed (Agnese, et al., 2020). Social media diminish the one-way communication and traditional media that enable global connectedness.

The establishment and expansion of social association highly depend on social attraction and its’ derivatives (Blau, 1964). Every individual conducts a cost-benefit analysis before initiating a relationship as a review of risk and rewards (Cook and Rice, 2014). Perception of the cost varies from a fall of a monetary value to harm to the mental and physical well-being of a person (Emerson, 1976). Positive attributes of a social exchange that is expected by the individual with self-interest motives. The relationship becomes positive when the advantages of the exchange are significant compared to the disadvantages (Blau, 1964).

Developing a living relationship with product results in 3 gestures: investing in a target product, getting to know a target intimately, exerting control over the target. The close-knit relationship between the company and the customer makes sense of affinity (Pierce et al., 2003 cited in Asatryan, 2006). The consumer's willingness to repeat purchasing in long term from the same brand is derived from relationship intentions on the social media platforms (Asatryan, 2006).

Consumers tend to quest in advance about consumption acts and such information is gathered mentally for the decision-making of subsequent consumption. Careful consideration, rational thinking, wise deliberation are paramount important, and heroic even if the consumer decided to reject the product. EKB model has been constructed by tracking the psychological state of human behavior from product awareness to consumption evaluation (Longart, et al., 2016). The consumer is exposed to all types of stimuli that hold the consumer's attention. The information would collect through marketing (advertising, social media feeds, personal selling) and non-marketing sources (e-word of mouth, peers) (Longart, et al., 2016).

### **5.2 Consumer Buying Behavior**

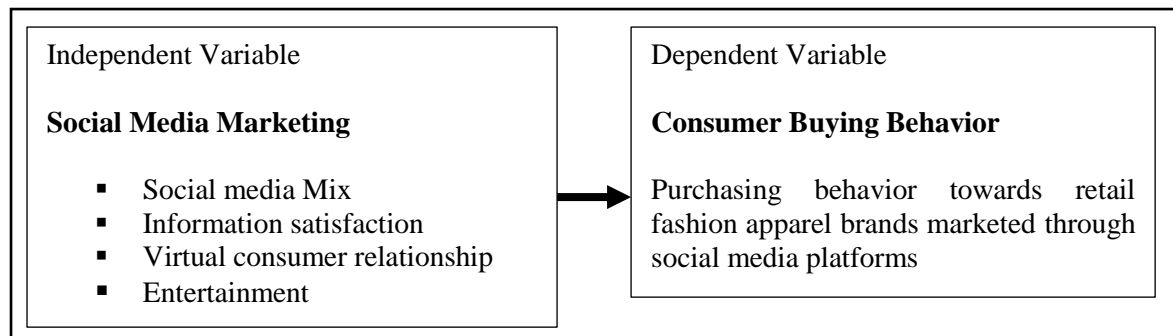
Consumer purchasing behavior is defined as the act of individuals directly involved in using, obtaining, and disposing of economic goods and services including the decision-making process that encourages the act (Madhavan and Chandrasekar, 2015). Consumer behavior refers to a process of actions that leads to satisfaction of needs and wants through the use of input information (Qazzafi, 2020). The process of selection, purchase, and consumption of goods and services is defined as consumer buying behavior which considers an act of satisfying human needs and wants (Ramya and Ali, 2016). Driving factors of consumer buying decisions determine through the examination of consumer purchasing behavior. Consumer behavior is directly involved in obtaining, using, and disposing of economic goods and services, including the decision processes that precede and determine these acts (Madhavan and Chandrasekar, 2015).

## **VI. Methodology**

### **6.1 The conceptual framework and operationalization of concepts**

The formulated research question is: “What are the social media-related factors affecting consumer buying behavior with respect to clothing brands in Sri Lanka?” The conceptual model is generated with the support of a literature review and the hypotheses are developed accordingly

**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework



The hypotheses are developed as follows:

- H1<sub>1</sub> - Social-media mix has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands
- H2<sub>1</sub> - Information satisfaction has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands
- H3<sub>1</sub> - Virtual consumer relationship has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands
- H4<sub>1</sub> - Entertainment has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands

**Table 1:** Operationalization of variables

Concept	Dimension	Indicators
Social media marketing	Social media mix	Effective engagement / Social media composition / Cost of marketing / Active hours of audience
	Information satisfaction	Information clarity / Sufficient information / Stimulate ability / Consumer confidence
	Virtual consumer relationship	Two-way conversation / Personalize response / Electronic word of mouth / Trustworthiness
	Entertainment	Community reactions / Social interactivity / Active communication / Online presence
Concept	Indicators	
Consumer buying behavior	Consumer reviews	
	Online purchases	
	Product queries	
	Loyalty customer volume	

## 6.2 Research Design & Data Collection

The research onion model was used to conduct the study on consumer buying behavior. Throughout the methodology of the research, it performed the analysis to direct a sequence of steps that implies the peeling off the layers of an onion (Saunders, et al., 2016). The study was based on “Positivism” philosophy which is backed up with an objective ontology where the phenomena under deliberation were explained by a generalized set of rules (Crossan, 2013). The deductive approach was applied to this research as the most appropriate method considering the positivism philosophy. In order to describe the relationship between variables, a well-structured methodology was employed to gather quantitative data (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009).

The quantitative mono method was utilized in this research as the data collection was followed by the questionnaire survey and subsequently analyzed the collected data by using statistical tools. Data collected over large samples condensed the results by implementing the quantitative method. Therefore, the selected quantitative mono method was regarded as the most suitable method since research required a large sample. Further, the large sample of data collection was supported by the questionnaire (Prusan, 2016). The time horizon applied in this research is cross-sectional since the data collection was done only in a limited period (short term) during the study. This layer of the research onion describes the time frame for the research (Melnikovas, 2018). A research population is explained as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects that have common binding characteristics (Dawson, 2009). In this research selected population, would-be consumers in the Western province of Sri Lanka documented as 1,856,393 (Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka, 2012). Further, the selected population consists of both females and males who are in the age category of 24 to 43 in Western province. The sample size implies in basic terms as the number of participants comprised in the

research work that reflects the population considering the variability (Malterud, et al., 2015). The sample size of this research has been determined using the Morgan table based on the population. Morgan table is considered as the most commonly used method to decide the sample size required to test to achieve the purpose of the research and the formula used in according to Morgan Table. The population of the Western province is greater than 1,000,000. Therefore sample size of the research is 384.

Gathered data were analyzed and presented by utilizing SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software for quantitative data analysis. The research questionnaire consisted of the Likert scale of 1-5 scale that stated “strongly agree as 5 and strongly disagree as 1” for the responses. Furthermore, regression analysis and correlation were used to test the hypothesis. A questionnaire is a research instrument that is pre-prepared and consists of a series of questions for respondents for the purpose of gathering information. The questionnaire provides a relatively efficient method of collecting information from a large sample of respondents. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the conceptual framework (Goodman, 1997).

## **VII. Findings**

The responses were analyzed in two segments; initially evaluating demographic factors and descriptive analysis of the social media marketing followed by the test of hypothesis. The validity and reliability of quantitative data was tested.

### **7.1 Analysis of demographic factors**

Highest amount of 55% of respondents are female and 45% of respondents are males. Highest amount of 49% respondents is contained in the age category of 25-31 and 28% of respondents are from the age category of 32-38 which are representing the millennial generation by both age categories. Data shows 52% of the respondents are married and 46% of the respondents are single. highest number of respondents are included in the monthly income category of above LKR 100,000 which records 60%. Collected data displays 48% of the highest number of respondents from the graduate education level whilst the lowest of 12% individuals from the advanced education level. The result of demographic analysis is shown in Table 02.

**Table 2: Analysis of Demographic Factors**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	174	45%
	Female	210	55%
Age	18-24 years	22	6%
	25-31 years	190	49%
	32-38 years	109	28%
	39-45 years	49	13%
	Over 46 years	14	4%
Marital Status	Married	198	52%
	Single	178	46%
	Other	8	2%
Occupation	Full-time employee	330	86%
	Part-time employee	12	3%
	Self-employee/Business	28	7%
	Unemployed	20	5%
Monthly Income	Below LKR 25,000	24	6%
	LKR 25,000 – LKR 50,000	49	13%
	LKR 50,001 – LKR 75,000	40	10%
	LKR 75,001 – LKR 100,000	40	10%
	Above LKR 100,000	231	60%
Highest Education Level	Ordinary Level	1	0.26%
	Advance Level	46	12%
	Undergraduate	50	13%
	Graduate	184	48%
	Postgraduate	103	27%

### **7.2 Analysis of quantitative data collected through 5-point Likert scale**

**7.2.1 Testing the reliability and validity of data**

**Table 3: Results of Reliability Analysis**

Variable	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
Independent Variable	Social Media Mix (SMM)	0.835
	Information Satisfaction (IS)	0.887
	Virtual Consumer Relationship (VCR)	0.894
	Entertainment (E)	0.821
Dependent Variable	Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB)	0.814

Reliability defines as the extent of a test measure that could be errorless and across the period it confirms a constant measurement (Livingston, 2018). Cronbach's Alpha measures the degree of the close relationship between items are as a group that mirrors the internal consistency related to the acceptable level of Cronbach's Alpha value which is greater than 0.7. The internal consistency of the dimensions of independent and dependent variables was evaluated for the main study. Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.7 for all the dimensions that validate the internal consistency of the variables.

**Table 4: Results of Convergent Validity**

Variable	Dimensions	KMO	P-value of Bartlett's test	AVE
Independent Variable	Social Media Mix (SMM)	0.825	0.000	0.605
	Information Satisfaction (IS)	0.812	0.000	0.692
	Virtual Consumer Relationship (VCR)	0.830	0.000	0.706
	Entertainment (E)	0.782	0.000	0.585
Dependent Variable	Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB)	0.807	0.000	0.575

KMO, P-value of Bartlett's test, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) tests were used to assess the convergent validity and the results of the dimensions of the independent and dependent variables. Every dimension of the independent and dependent variables of all the KMO values are greater than 0.5, the P-value of Bartlett's test recorded values less than 0.05, and AVE values are greater than 0.5. It ensures the fulfillment of convergent validity since all the values have reached the accepted levels.

**Table 5: Results of Discriminant Validity**

Correlations				
Variable	Social Media Mix	Information Satisfaction	Virtual Consumer Relationship	Entertainment
Social Media Mix	AVE = 0.565			
Information Satisfaction		AVE = 0.604		
Pearson Correlation	.589**			
Squared Correlation	0.346			
Virtual Consumer Relationship			AVE = 0.647	
Pearson Correlation	.480**	.727**		
Squared Correlation	0.230	0.528		
Entertainment				AVE = 0.546
Pearson Correlation	.575**	.622**	.663**	
Squared Correlation	0.330	0.386	0.439	

The discriminant validity shall be achieved by deriving values of squared correlation that are less than the AVE values in relevant dimensions of the variables. Squared correlation is less than the respective AVE values which are greater than 0.5. Therefore, the variables have confirmed the discriminant validity.

### 7.3 Univariate Analysis

Univariate normality tests as descriptive statistics provide vital information on independent and dependent variables. The application of various techniques with the purpose of measuring the central tendency that contains mean, median, mode, and measuring of dispersion include range, inter-quartile range, quartile range, variance, and standard deviation. Moreover, it measures the shape of the distribution which involves skewness and kurtosis (Park, 2006).

**Table 6:** Univariate analysis of all variables

Measure	Social Media Mix (SM)	Information Satisfaction (IS)	Virtual Consumer Relationship (VCR)	Entertainment (E)	Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB)
N Valid	384	384	384	384	384
Mean	4.1203	3.9812	3.9078	3.8807	4.0630
Median	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	3.8000	4.0000
Mode	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.80	4.00
Std. Deviation	0.51404	0.61899	0.63947	0.56109	0.56761
Skewness	-0.765	-0.819	-0.620	-0.348	-0.576
Std. Error of Skewness	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125
Kurtosis	3.287	1.626	0.755	0.733	0.445
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.248	0.248	0.248	0.248	0.248
Range	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

This section analyzed the findings of the research questionnaire which was prepared based on a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale denotes 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree. All the measures pertained to the central tendency (Mean, Median and the Mode) are around the value of 4. This means that the majority of respondents have agreed with the elements of social media mix, information satisfaction, virtual consumer relationship, and entertainment which were measured via the questionnaire. Consumer Buying Behavior, mean value as 4.06, the median, and the mode as 4.00. This indicates that the central tendency values (Mean, Median, and Mode) are almost identical and categorized under a high level. The majority of the responses are clustered around the mean value of 4.06 which depicts the positive perception towards the characteristics of the consumer buying behavior.

### 7.4 Hypotheses Testing

The independent and dependent variables developed through the conceptual framework which has been a result of literature analysis. In the deductive approach, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables has been tested using the 4 hypotheses developed.

As per the acceptable level of correlations, all the independent variables; social media mix, information satisfaction, virtual consumer relationship, and entertainment have moderate correlation values. Moreover, the table exemplifies that all the correlation values are below the significance level of 0.01 which is held in the threshold limits. The information displayed in the above table depicts that there is a positive relationship among the independent variables: social media mix, information satisfaction, virtual consumer relationship, entertainment, and the dependent variable; consumer buying behavior. Hence it is acceptable to reject the null hypothesis since it contains sufficient shreds of evidence.

**Table 7: Hypothesis Analysis**

Hypothesis	Correlation Coefficient	Significance of Coefficients	Conclusion
H1 <sub>0</sub> - Social-media mix has no significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands H1 <sub>1</sub> - Social-media mix has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands	0.537	0.000 Significant	<b>H1<sub>0</sub> – Rejected</b> <b>H1<sub>1</sub> - Accepted</b>
H2 <sub>0</sub> - Information satisfaction has no significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands H2 <sub>1</sub> - Information satisfaction has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands	0.683	0.000 Significant	<b>H2<sub>0</sub> – Rejected</b> <b>H2<sub>1</sub> - Accepted</b>
H3 <sub>0</sub> - Virtual consumer relationship has no significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands H3 <sub>1</sub> - Virtual consumer relationship has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands	0.642	0.000 Significant	<b>H3<sub>0</sub> – Rejected</b> <b>H3<sub>1</sub> - Accepted</b>
H4 <sub>0</sub> - Entertainment has no significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands H4 <sub>1</sub> - Entertainment has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior of clothing brands	0.669	0.000 Significant	<b>H4<sub>0</sub> – Rejected</b> <b>H4<sub>1</sub> - Accepted</b>

### VIII. Conclusions

Technological advancements make a change in human lifestyles shaped by business models and data-driven decision-making approaches. With the boom of social media, the digital ecosystem expanded to online communities and social networks where the majority of the people spend the time and even engaged in their works through social media platforms. Information exchange in the virtual space was accelerated by the growth of social media platforms and it became a medium of education and marketing in the commercialized world. The smooth transition to social media and its stabilization among the vast community generate business opportunities, especially in the retail fashion industry. Frequent visibility of fashion models and any other fashion-related content scroll through the home feed automatically stimulate consumers to reach the brands and subsequently become a customer of particular fashion brands. Thus, the main principle of this research is to identify the dimensions of social media marketing that influence an individual to purchase clothing brands in Sri Lanka.

The research was conducted in the deductive approach by implementing four theoretical models in the literature review namely Marshall McLuhan’s tetrad theory, Social exchange theory, Psychological ownership theory, and EKB model. A critical review of literature along with empirical research has identified key factors or dimensions related to the consumer buying behavior for social media marketing namely social media mix, information satisfaction, virtual consumer relationship, and entertainment. Considering the facts conceptual framework was formed and hypotheses were established. Data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed and identified that all the independent and dependent variables have positive relationships. Based on the quantitative analysis, it was identified that social media mix has been highlighted as the highest influencing independent variable for consumer buying behavior.

Social media mix describes as various combinations of social media platforms depending on the business model objective to achieve competitive advantage by leveraging social media. Social media mix entails indicators namely effective engagement, social media composition, cost of marketing, and active hours of the



audience that influence consumer buying behavior. Secondly, virtual consumer relationship has been a greater influencing independent variable for consumer buying behavior. Virtual consumer relationship explains as trading a different kind of value for each other in an exchange relationship that can extend to retain loyal customers. It consists of indicators namely two-way conversation, personalized response, electronic word of mouth, and trustworthiness that influence consumer buying behavior. Moreover, independent variables; information satisfaction and entertainment have been proved that contribute to stimulating consumer buying behavior.

Therefore, the research findings would support identifying extended factors that would impact consumer buying behavior in clothing brands of Sri Lanka.

Moreover, facts would assist in generating new social media marketing strategies on emerging market fluctuations. Based on the research findings, organizations can identify the desired social media platforms and related preferences of the target audience prior to implementing the social media strategies. Finally, business would enable to enhance the revenue portions with the use of research findings for sustainable development of the company and the fashion industry.

### **IX. Implications and Recommendations**

The evaluated data illustrates that the most of respondents in the survey have accepted that content preferences of the social media post had a strong impact on consumer buying behavior. Therefore, retail fashion apparel brands should expand their social media engagement on different platforms which have varied prioritization over the content structure such as visual-based content on Instagram and Facebook, text-based content on Twitter, and video-based content on You tube and TikTok. Considering the target audience, the business shall spread and developed appropriate social media composition. The researcher suggests introducing platform-related offers (Ex: cyber savings, online purchase privileges) that encourage online community engagement with particular brands through social media platforms.

Furthermore, findings have revealed that participants engaged with social media profiles of fashion brands to receive instant updates on the latest fashion collections. Thus, the researcher would recommend personalized notifications sent through social media platforms to update about the latest fashion collection.

The evaluated data indicates that the participants have evidence that the visual clarity and video quality of the content have a positive impact on consumer buying behavior. Therefore, the researcher suggests improving the visual clarity in terms of the high-quality resolution to understand the product features in a more reliable manner which will avoid the gap between a physical store visit and online shopping. Besides, the findings on sufficient product-related information have a significant effect on consumer buying behavior. Hence the researcher recommends designing a separate information dialog box to provide details such as stock availability and movement, current demand for the product, color and size availability, and similar products that would influence consumer buying behavior.

The evaluated data implies that the respondents have acknowledged that the response to comments, reviews, retweets, and shares has a strong impact on consumer buying behavior. Therefore, the researcher suggests implementing live chat from a real person that provides instant support for product queries, and comments. Apart from that, quick responses from a real person to comments and reviews would provide a simulation of the traditional shopping experience instead of automated messages where consumers get isolated. Such virtual consumer relationships would enhance consumer buying behavior.

From the analysis of the collected data has been proven that the space for expressions such as likes, shares, reposts, and ratings has a positive impact on consumer buying behavior. Hence, the researcher suggests designing a dashboard for the consumer or potential consumers for their views which would be addressed on a fixed interval based on voting for a specific view that would uplift the consumer interactions within the social media platforms. Moreover, creative and innovative content on social media has a strong impact on consumer buying behavior. Thus, the researcher would suggest more focus on designing unique innovative content to retain consumer attraction on a continuous basis.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors of this paper would like to express their sincere gratitude to those retail fashion consumers who participated in the survey.

### **References**

- [1]. Agel, J., 1967. Marshall McLuhan Quentin Fiore - Medium is the message - An inventory of effects. s.l.:s.n.
- [2]. Agnese, C. W. D., Canavilhas, J. & Barichello, E. M. M. D. R., 2020. The McLuhan's tetrad in communication research: systematic review of applications in Brazil and Portugal. p. 239.

- [3]. Ahmad, N., Salman, A. & Ashiq, R., 2015. The Impact of Social Media on Fashion Industry: Empirical Investigation from Karachiites.
- [4]. Alharthi, A., Krotov, V. & Bowman, M., 2017. Addressing barriers to big data.
- [5]. Artz, M., 2015. Measuring and managing consumer sentiment in an Online community environment.
- [6]. Asatryan, V. S., 2006. Psychological ownership theory: an application for the restaurant industry. p. 137.
- [7]. Asia Pacific Institute of Digital Marketing Pvt Ltd, 2021. Digital Outlook Sri Lanka 2021, Colombo: s.n.
- [8]. Austin, L. & Jin, Y., 2018. Social Media and Crisis Communication. New York: Routledge.
- [9]. Auxier, B. & Anderson, M., 2021. Social Media Use in 2021. [Online] Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/> [Accessed 04 March 2022].
- [10]. Bandara, D. M. D. (2020). Impact of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Buying Behavior: With Special Reference to Fast Fashion Industry. The Conference Proceedings of 11th International Conference on Business & Information ICBI, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. ISSN 2465-6399, (pp. 476-491)
- [11]. Barger, V., Peltier, J. W. & Schultz, D. E., 2016. Social media and consumer engagement: a review and research agenda.
- [12]. Bhasin, H., 2020. Social Exchange Theory – Concept, Benefits, Examples, Variables involved. [Online] Available at: <https://www.marketing91.com/social-exchange-theory-in-business/#:~:text=Social%20Exchange%20Theory%20is%20a%20theory%20of%20both%20psychology%20and%20economics.&text=George%20Homans%20defined%20social%20exchange,in%20response%20to%20one%20another.> [Accessed 28 January 2022].
- [13]. Blau, P. M., 1964. Exchange and power in Social life. s.l.:John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- [14]. Bolonne, H., 2020. The effect of Covid-19 to apparel sector, Sri Lanka. p. 15.
- [15]. Business Campaign, 2020. Social Media Marketing. [Online] Available at: <https://businesscampaign.lk/social-media-marketing-sri-lanka/> [Accessed 17 January 2022].
- [16]. Cook, K. S. & Rice, E., 2014. Social Exchange Theory. s.l.:s.n.
- [17]. Craig, S. C. a. D., 2019. Social Media Entertainment - The new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley. s.l.:New York University Press.
- [18]. De Vries, L., Gensler, S. & Leefla, P. S., 2017. Effects of Traditional Advertising and Social Messages on Brand-Building Metrics and Customer Acquisition.
- [19]. Deh, R. M. et al., 2021. The Impact of Social Media Activities on Brand Equity.
- [20]. Emerson, R. M., 1976. Social Exchange Theory. s.l.:s.n.
- [21]. Farquhar, J. & Rowley, J., 2018. Relationships and online consumer communities. Business Process Management , 12(2), pp. 162-175.
- [22]. Filho, D. B. F., Silva, J. A. & Rocha, E., 2011. What is R2 all about?. pp. 60-68.
- [23]. Fotis, J. N., 2015. The use of social media and its impacts on consumer behavior : the context of holiday travel.
- [24]. Friesen, N., 2010. Marshaling McLuhan for Media Theory.
- [25]. Gull, H. et al., 2019. Impact of Social Media Usage on Married Couple Behavior. International Journal of Applied Engineering Research, Volume 14, pp. 1368-1378.
- [26]. Hacioglu, U., 2020. Digital business strategies in blockchain ecosystems - Transformational design and future of global business. s.l.:Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
- [27]. Heinonen, K., 2013. Social media activities: Understanding what consumers do in Social Media.
- [28]. Hruska, J. & Maresova, P., 2020. Use of Social Media Platforms among Adults in the United States - Behavior on Social Media.
- [29]. Jacinto, J. X. N. et al., 2021. Social media marketing towards consumer buying behavior: A case in Panabo City. p. 10.
- [30]. Jahan, N. & Kim, S. W., 2020. Understanding online community participation behavior and perceived benefits: a social exchange theory perspective. p. 16.
- [31]. Janse, B., 2019. Social Exchange Theory. [Online] Available at: <https://www.toolshero.com/sociology/social-exchange-theory/> [Accessed 28 January 2022].
- [32]. Kaewkitipong, L., Chen, C. C. & Ractham, P., 2016. Using Social Media To Enrich Information Systems Field Trip Experiences: Students' Satisfaction And Continuance Intentions. Volume 63, pp. 256-263.
- [33]. Kaplan, A. M. & Haenlein, M., 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media.

- [34]. Karatsoli, M. & Nathanail, E., 2020. Examining gender differences of social media use for activity planning and travel choices. *European Transport Research Review*, 12(44).
- [35]. Karunaratne, P. V. M. & Withanage, D., 2020. Consumer demand for linen apparel fashion in Sri Lanka. p. 20.
- [36]. Katerina Petchko, 2018. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA).
- [37]. Kemp, S., 2021. DIGITAL 2021: SRI LANKA. [Online] Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-sri-lanka> [Accessed 17 January 2022].
- [38]. Kingsnorth, S., 2016. *Digital Marketing Strategy - an intergrate approach to online marketing*. 1st Edition ed. s.l.:CPI Group (UK) Ltd.
- [39]. Koironen, I., Keipi, T., Koivula, A. & Räsänen, P., 2020. Changing patterns of social media use? A population-level study of Finland. pp. 603-617.
- [40]. KPMG, 2017. The truth about online consumers. *Global Online Consumer Report*.
- [41]. Kumar, V. & Pansari, A., 2016. Competitive advantage through engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research*.
- [42]. Li, F., Larimo, J. & Leonidou, L. C., 2020. Social media marketing strategy: definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda. [Online] Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3> [Accessed 02 February 2022].
- [43]. Longart, P., Wickens, E. & Bakir, A., 2016. Consumer decision process in restaurant selection an application of the stylized EKB model. Volume 28, p. 18.
- [44]. Malthouse, E. C., Haenlein, M. & Skiera, B., 2013. Managing customer relationships in the social media era: Introducing the social CRM house. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, pp. 270-280.
- [45]. McKinsey & Company, 2021. State of Fashion 2022: An uneven recovery and new frontiers. [Online] Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/state%20of%20fashion/2022/the-state-of-fashion-2022.pdf> [Accessed 13 January 2022].
- [46]. McLean, R. & Griffiths, M., 2015. Unleashing Corporate Communications Via Social media: A UK Study of Brand Management and Communications with Customers. Volume 14, p. 17.
- [47]. McLuhan, M. & Lapham, L. H., 1994. *Understanding Media, the extension of man*. s.l.:s.n.
- [48]. McLuhan, M. & McLuhan, E., 1988. *Laws of media: The new science*. s.l.:s.n.
- [49]. McLuhan, E., 2008. *Marshall McLuhan's Theory of Communication*. p. 19.
- [50]. McLuhan, M. & McLuhan, E., 2017. *The lost tetrads of Marshall McLuhan*. s.l.:s.n.
- [51]. Moore, A. W., Anderson, B., Das, K. & Wong, W.-K., 2006. *Handbook of Biosurveillance*. s.l.:s.n.
- [52]. Morewedge, C. K. et al., 2020. Evolution of Consumption: A Psychological Ownership Framework. p. 23.
- [53]. Naqvi, M. H. A., Jiang, Y., Miao, M. & Naqv, M. H., 2020. The effect of social influence, trust, and entertainment value on social media use: Evidence from Pakistan. *Cogent Business & Management*.
- [54]. Nimmermann, F., 2020. Congruency, expectations and consumer behavior in digital environments. *Retailing and International Marketing*, p. 213.
- [55]. Noort, G. & Willemsen, L. M., 2012. Online Damage Control: The Effects of Proactive Versus Reactive Webcare Interventions in Consumer-generated and Brand-generated Platforms.
- [56]. Orendorff, A., 2022. 10 Trends Styling 2021's Ecommerce Fashion Industry: Growth + Data in Online Apparel & Accessories Market. [Online] Available at: <https://commonthreadco.com/blogs/coachs-corner/fashion-ecommerce-industry-trends> [Accessed 14 January 2022].
- [57]. Osei, B. A. & Abenyin, A. N., 2016. Applying the Engell-Kollat-Blackwell model in understanding international tourists' use of social media for travel decision to Ghana. p. 23.
- [58]. Patricia Mink Rath, S. B. R. P. P. G., 2015. *The Why of the Buy; Consumer Behavior and Fashion Marketing*. 2nd ed. s.l.:Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.
- [59]. Perera, G. A. B. S. & Sachitra, K. M. V., 2019. Customer Satisfaction towards Online Shopping in Sri Lanka: Moderating Effect of Income Level. p. 10.
- [60]. Piccinini, E., Gregory, R. W. & K, L. M., 2015. Changes in the Producer-Consumer Relationship - Towards Digital Transformation. pp. 1634 - 1648.
- [61]. Pierce, J. L. & Jussila, I., 2011. *Psychological Ownership and the Organizational Context*. Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- [62]. Pierce, J. L., Kostova, T. & Dirks, K. T., 2001. Toward a Theory of Psychological Ownership in Organizations. Volume 26, p. 14.
- [63]. Quesenberry, K. and College, M., 2019. *Social media strategy : marketing, advertising, and public relations in the consumer revolution*. s.l.:The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

- [64]. Riskos, K., Hatzithomas, L., Dekoulou, P. & Tsourvakas, G., 2021. The influence of entertainment, utility and pass time on consumer brand engagement for news media brands: a mediation model. *Journal of Media Business Studies*.
- [65]. Rydén, P., Ringberg, T. & Wilke, R., 2015. How Managers' Shared Mental Models of Business–Customer Interactions Create Different Sensemaking of Social Media. p. 16.
- [66]. Sahney, S., 2010. Consumer behavior. p. 21.
- [67]. Samaraweera, G. R. S. R. C. & Wijesinghe, M. D. J. W., 2021. Social Media Addiction of Employees: Does it affect labor supply. *Sri Lanka Journal of*, Volume 8, pp. 97-121.
- [68]. Sozer, E., 2019. The Effect of Social Media Mix on Brand Switching Intention: The Mediating Role of Risk Perception. p. 14.
- [69]. Statista. 2021. Internet users in the world 2021 | Statista. [online] Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>> [Accessed 7 November 2021].
- [70]. Suki, N. M. S. a. N. M., 2020. Leveraging consumer behavior and psychology in the digital economy. s.l.:IGI Global.
- [71]. Tariq, M. H., 2021. The role of digital & social media marketing in present global crisis. p. 8.
- [72]. Taylor, R., 1990. Interpretation of the Correlation Coefficient: A Basic Review. *Journal of Diagnostic Medical Sonography*, pp. 35-39.
- [73]. TwoU, Inc, 2020. Introduction to Social Exchange Theory in Social Work. [Online] Available at: <https://www.onlinemswprograms.com/social-work/theories/social-exchange-theory/> [Accessed 29 January 2022].
- [74]. University, O., 2022. Five Consumer Behavior Theories Every Marketer Should Know. [Online] Available at: <https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/consumer-behavior-theories-every-marketer-should-know/>[Accessed 30 January 2022].
- [75]. University, T., 2018. Social Exchange Theory. [Online] Available at: <https://socialwork.tulane.edu/blog/social-exchange-theory> [Accessed 28 January 2022].
- [76]. Walter, E. and Gioglio, J., 2014. *The power of visual story telling*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- [77]. Wang, F. & Head, M., 2005. Consumer Relationship Marketing on the Internet: An Overview and Clarification of Concepts. *Innovative Marketing* , 1(1), pp. 55-68.
- [78]. Wanniarachchi, T. M. and Thilakarathne, B. L. S., 2017. Factors Influence on Purchasing Intention of Fashion Clothing Through Online Platforms. p. 15.
- [79]. Welagedara, P. D. & Ranaweera, H. R. A. T., 2015. An investigation study of up-cycled fashion consumption in Sri Lanka. p. 14.
- [80]. Wijaya, O. Y. A. et al., 2021. The role of social media marketing, entertainment, customization, trendiness, interaction and word-of-mouth on purchase intention: An empirical study from Indonesian smartphone consumers. *International Journal of Data and Network Science* , pp. 232-238.
- [81]. Yasa, N. N. K. et al., 2021. The role of relational and informational capabilities in mediating the effect of social media adoption on business performance in fashion industry. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, p. 10.
- [82]. Zheng, X. W. Y., 2016. Social Factors that influence consumer decision when buying second-hand cars in China. p. 38.